

AUSTRALIAN
SHORT
STORIES

GEORGINA FATSEAS

Cheers to the Man of the House!

The boss at work decided to give himself a birthday party. Due to the numbers he had to make restrictions-staff only. The party went well. Most people behaved themselves and those who got drunk, were acting more like clowns than as pests. The person who was very drunk was the boss himself.

The staff made sure he went home in a taxi. They supplied the driver with the address knowing too well, the drunken passenger would be hard to understand due to his slurred speech or couldn't remember where he lived.

The drunken man pays the driver with his credit card, thanks the driver before having trouble to open the door. The driver gets out to open the door and assist the passenger out. The driver watches the passenger sways and stagger to the front door before driving off.

The man fumbles around with different door keys. He looks around in the darkness and curses that there is no light to assist. Eventually, the right key opens the door. He opens the door which gives a loud squeak. Then he recalls, he was supposed to oil that door and a few others. When he nears the steps which would take him to his bedroom upstairs, he falls heavily. He slowly pulls himself up and notices he had stepped on one of the children's roller skates. He curses the death trap.

He looks around for the light switch. He switches it on. He drunkenly points and sways when he sees several toys all with wheels scattered across the floor and down the hallway. He makes it a promise to himself to speak to the youngest boy about being tidy especially with cars and skates.

He goes slowly up the stairs with all attempts to be silent not to wake the others. No matter how he tries, some of the steps squeak underfoot to announce his arrival. He opens the bedroom door which squeaks louder than the front door. He reminds himself again to oil the hinge.

Carefully he takes his clothes off, has a quick wash before silently slipping into bed. He has just crawled in when his wife yells, "Where the hell have you been?"

Months later, an important business deal was consolidated. He had been working on the project for several weeks and now the day had come. The contract was signed. Both parties are happy. Both decide to celebrate the new beginnings. Both get a bit drunk before going their separate ways.

The man goes home in a cab again, pays the driver and opens the door to get out. He slams the door much to the driver's dislike. He races up the front door, the light switches on. The wife organised an electrician to install a light with a sensor. He has no trouble finding the key. He opens the door. It doesn't creek. She oiled it. He carefully surveys the immediate internal area. No death traps. Young master had been good and placed his toys away. He doesn't turn on the light but races up the stairs. Thud. Thud. Thud. No squeaks. He opens the bedroom door. Silent. She oiled that one too.

He takes his clothes off as noisily as he could and washes up while singing almost all the songs out of tune. As he jumps into bed with all the enthusiasm of a red-hot teenager, he calls out, "Honey, I'm home!" She doesn't say a word.

Cheers to the Lady of the House!

After coming back home late from a hen's night, the lady of the household knows all too well she has had a few too many. It was a celebration, and she hadn't had a night out with the girls for over twelve months. They always had daytime outings but rarely a night one.

She comes back home in a cab who kindly assists her out of the cab. She stumbles her way to the front door. The light comes on, but she fumbles with the keys. In frustration she tries the garage door. Seeing her success, she smiles and enters the house via the garage. She closes the garage door. She struggles to the door between the house and the garage. After several attempts opens the internal door, she turns on the lights. *Success* she thinks to herself and sways.

She heads directly to the kitchen to get a glass of water. She also decides to make some toast to settle her growing disturbed stomach. She fumbles with the plates, bread and butter; creating a enough noise that would wake the dead.

The noise is heard upstairs. Her husband comes down the stairs armed with a golf club. She spins around screams when she sees her husband at the kitchen door with a golf club ready to swing. Her scream makes him scream out.

Lights upstairs come on; the children bolt down the stairs. Lights next door and across the road pop on. People can hear him profusely apologising. The lights go off one by one. The children disappear upstairs. He stays and watches her to make sure she doesn't harm herself. The husband had never seen her this drunk. Also, the mess she had created could be cleaned up the next day. He wanted her to see what she had done to the pristine kitchen.

She sees her reflection on the shiny steel door fridge. She doesn't recognise herself. She points and says, "Who the fuck are you and why are you in my house?" No answer.

The lady keeps looking at the image and studies it carefully. She slurs and nods as if someone answered her question. She looks down and cries. There is a puddle on the floor at her feet. She says to her image, "You forgot to turn the

tap off. Look at what you did.” She faces the sink and tries to turn off the tap. She is puzzled. The tap is off. She looks under the sink but there is no leak. In her drunken mind, she sees a leak. She turns to her reflections, “Okay. You can pay for the plumber.”

Gently her husband says, “That is enough. Go to bed.”

She says in a surprised manner, “Gee you were quick to get here. I wasn’t expecting you until tomorrow.” The husband plays along. “Glad to be at your service.”

The wife looks at her reflection. “She’s paying the after hours service bill.” Then she turns to her husband. “ Now, what other after-hour services does your company have?” The husband doesn’t answer but leads her upstairs and towards the bathroom. “Oh my. This company sure knows how to make a lady happy.”

Three Months Later.

The lady goes out on the town again with her friends. She returns five hours later. She stumbles up the garden path to the front door. She notices the light coming on and slurs, “Thanks buddy.”

She hurries upstairs and uses the family bathroom believing she could not hold on a minute more to reach the en suite.

Feeling a bit better, but still quite drunk and a touch disorientated, she opens the closest bedroom door. She frowns at the sight of the bed and thinks it is the unfamiliar consumption of alcohol, that makes her see the bed is narrower than usual. She crawls in and snuggles in and slides her hand down the front of the sleeping figure. Instantly the person jumps out of bed and screams. This wakes the household up. The others come running to see the son panting and pointing his finger, “Mum, get out of my bed.” To his father he says, “She fondled me!”

The lady slurred as she stared at her stunned husband and frightened son. “You two look like twins born days apart.” The husband pulls her out of the bed

and leads her to their bed. She burps as she lies down. She looks blurry eyed at her husband and says as she gives a smile and wags her finger. "Oh! You're the big stiff one."

Before It Starts.

A man walks into a bar close to seven p.m. on a Thursday evening. He places himself on a stool at the counter. The barman notices the man's breath is beginning to reek of alcohol. He knows the man is close to the limit and he may have to refuse service after one or two more drinks.

"What will it be?" asked the barman.

"A pint." The man almost downs the beer in one gulp. He orders another.

"Another pint, please," says the man.

"Okay. Take it a bit slower," warns the barman.

The man looks the barman square in the eyes. "I need to get the drinks down before it gets started."

The barman serves the man another pint. Then he says, "It's Thursday. Entertainment is not on tonight. There is no rush to down the beer so quickly."

The man downs the beer almost as quickly as the first. He orders another. He adds, "I need to get these down quickly before it gets started."

The bartender says as he places the newly filled glass in front of the man. "The entertainment of a live band is on Friday and Saturday nights. There is no entertainment on Thursday nights."

The man nods. He downs the drink as fast as the other two. He gives a soft burp as his eyes survey the room. He spots his wife coming in his direction. He says to the barman, "It's going to start in a matter of seconds."

The man's wife makes a beeline for her drunken husband. "You have had enough. Get home now!"

The man says to the barman, "It has started."

The wife marches him to the door. "Wait here while I get the car closer to the door. There is no way you can walk to the car in that condition. No more drinks. You have had enough."

The man waits. He sways as he waits. A set of twins come through the door. They are wearing similar clothes in a similar colour. They see the drunk and split up to go around him. The drunk turns to see the twins walking side-by-side behind him. He rubs his eyes as he says, "How did she do that?"

The wife just arrives and assists her husband through the door. He starts to struggle and says, "I just saw a magic show. A fat lady split in two to go around me. Come. There must be a show starting up."

The wife struggles to get him out of the bar and into the car. The man is hell bent on returning to see what he believes is a show. The twins walk out of the bar and again split up to go around the drunken man struggling with his wife.

The man points. "Did you see that?"

"What was I supposed to see?"

"The lady split in two and then became one again."

"Oh. I must have missed it. Just get in the car," orders the wife.

The man is placed in the front passenger's seat and immediately searches for the ignition. He fumbles. The wife starts the car up. He sits up straight and smiles with his success. He asks, "Where's the steering wheel?"

"Just a second", she replies. She reaches into the back seat to see the toddler being looked after by her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law hands the wife their child's toy, a toddler's steering wheel on a stand. She places the steering wheel in his hands.

The man nods his approval. He spins the wheel around fully believing he is driving.

The child in the back wakes up and cries. The mother-in-law places a dummy in the child's mouth but the child continues to cry. The child wants the toy.

The man reaches over and tries to calm the child down. He fails and fails to see his mother doing her best to soothe the child. He says to the wife with concern. "See a bit of discipline and the bub learns it is okay to go without. But we better go home before it screams again."

The wife is disgusted. She retaliates. "Put a cork in it will ya?"

The man spins around to look at the baby who is now sobbing with a dummy in its mouth.

"It has one already."

This time man notices his mother is sending daggers with her eyes. He asks, "When did you hire that scary ghost to be a nanny?"

The mother is fuming. However, she says nothing. She is saving it for when they get home, then she will get started.

Riddles.

What do you call a man on a roof without a mobile phone?

Stuck.

What do you call a lady on a roof with a mobile phone?

Busy chatting.

What do you call a teenager watching his parents on a roof?

Doing homework. The teenager boy just is timing how long his father will be stuck on the roof while his mother is using the father's phone.

The Lady and the Parrot.

An elderly lady buys two parrots from the pet shop. She is delighted. She spends her quiet days teaching words to the birds. The parrots learn a number of phrases and even a couple of lines of songs they picked up from the radio. When she went out, she would leave the radio on to make the birds think she was around. This delighted the lady no end. She thought she had the smartest birds in the world. She would speak and they would reply appropriately. She smiled even more when they bounced and sang a line of two from a song.

She went back to the pet shop and asked the attendant how she could identify which was the male bird. She brings out her phone and show the identical birds. The assistant looks carefully but can't decide. Eventually, she admits it was impossible for her to tell. She offers advice. "Watch them carefully every day. When you see the one trying to mount the back of another, you know which one is the male." The lady liked the advice and leaves the shop with a smile.

Weeks go by and she watches the birds from a distance. Then she sees one bird mounting the other. She smiles and now knows which bird is the male. She takes a piece of blue ribbon and ties it around the bird's neck.

Months pass when a priest comes to visit her. The old lady leaves to room to make tea and organise a few biscuits. The two birds watch the priest carefully. The priest tries to talk to the birds and gives an encouraging whistle. The male bird eyes him carefully summing up the situation. "She put a collar on you too!" The male bird flaps his wings and says to his female friend, "Get the popcorn ready. This is going to be good. It's our turn to watch him mount her."

Animal Riddles.

What did the parrot say when he saw a kangaroo with no hair?

He is so roo-d.

Why didn't the parrot like the cockatoo?

He was a bit too cocky.

What did one kookaburra say to other kookaburras when they saw a braying donkey?

The neighbourhood is being wrecked by that jackass.

In the Dentist Chair.

The dentist adjusts the chair when I sit in it.

“Open wide. I want to look inside,” said the dentist.

I opened my mouth very wide. The dentist keeps talking and asking questions while he pokes around inside.

All words I could say sound much like this as he touched parts of my mouth.

“Arh. Buh, Cuh, Dha, Ehh, Fffh, Grr.”

“Please spit out,” said the dentist. Open wide. He keeps on talking and asking questions.

All my words come out garbled, “Hah, Ieh, Jeh, Kurh, Llh, Mmm, eN, Ow.”

“Did that hurt?” he asks and continues. “Sorry about that. We are almost done.

You’re doing a good job keeping your mouth wide open.”

He continues to talk and asks questions.

All I can produce is, “Pha, Que, Rrr.”

“Is that so? Have a rinse and spit out.” he says. He continues to talk and ask questions.

All I can say in my frustration is, “Sss, Teh, Uu, VVVVe, Wh,Wh. “

“That’s interesting,” He says.

He doesn’t know when to stop talking and asking questions, I think to myself.

“Xsxs, Yigh, Zzze,” I begin to sneer as he takes the tools out of my mouth.

The dentist says proudly, “I am all done. Rinse out again.”

He lowers the seat and makes it upright. “Hey, you were really good with that ABC.”

I can’t talk as I feel my jaw is dislocated. I think, *Yeah. I was trying to answer your questions, not say the ABC.*

The South Australian Duck Hunter.

In South Australia, the state government had a ban on any form of bird shooting. However, in one area, ducks became so prolific, the government permitted limited bird shooting. People had to apply. It was restricted to a Saturday one-day shoot, for the entire year. Numbers were restricted to ten shooters who could only shoot a quota of three birds each. Then the person would have to wait another year before reapplying for a permit. Rangers would monitor the shooters and their catch. Dogs were not permitted.

One man who always thought he was the best shooter around tries his luck. After all, he always scored prizes at fairs at any shooting gallery. Feeling confident, he applies for the rare one-day permit. He smiles at his success and feels this is a good omen.

He fronts up at the gates to the park and shows his permit. The ranger reminds him only three ducks were permitted. He would be fined and refuse entry next year if the rules were breached. The government just might place him on the banned list. The hunter agrees. The ranger gives him a map and points to the location he would spend the day. The man drives to hide number six. The man thinks number six is my lucky number. Things are looking good.

He finds hide number six and sets himself up with a flask of cold water and another containing tea. The lunch box is also placed in easy reach. All the home comforts as far as he was concerned were at his fingertips. He looks across the overcrowded lake with rifle in hand. He is patient.

Another shooter fires. The birds fly into the air making a cloud. The hunter shoots blindly into the cloud of flapping wings. He misses. He is stunned. Shooting blind into a flock of birds, how could he miss? The hunter sees the man who made the first shot, wade into the water to collect his dead prize. Other shots go off all day long. He sees others wade into the water to retrieve their ducks. By three o'clock, most of the other hunters have left with their three-bird limit. He has yet to shoot one bird.

Without so many other shooters in the area, he feels his luck will change. He aims. He misses. Another shot is heard. That hunter goes into the water to pull out his final bird. Now he is the only one left in the park. He keeps firing and he keeps missing. The ranger comes along and tells him his time is up. The man packs his equipment and says he will come back next year.

The next year rolls around. The hunter applies for a permit. He is assigned to hide four. The man sets himself up like he did the previous year. This time he has a much better rifle, a sniper's rifle.

By the end of the day, he sees other hunters go home with the legal quota. He has nothing.

The third year he arrives, he goes through his normal routine. This time he pulls out a machine gun.

At the end of the day, he is the only one who goes home empty handed.

The following year, he turns up again. This time the ranger is not sure if this hunter should enter. He is towing a small tin boat behind his car. After a bit of haggling, the ranger reluctantly lets him through. The ranger assigns him to hide one so he could keep a close eye on the hunter.

The man carefully lowers the tin boat into the water. He paddles no further out than ten metres. He is armed with his old rifle, his sniper rifle and a machine gun. The ranger watches carefully and is now worried that the guns this person is using and his position in the lake may put other hunters and himself in danger. The ranger tells him to put the machine gun away as it was too dangerous to use in the park. The hunter complies. The hunter is the last

to leave at the end of the day. He has not shot a bird in spite of the rounds he used on the ducks.

The man says to himself in the following year, this will be the last time I will come on this duck hunt.

He meets the ranger at the gates. The ranger refuses to let him in. The hunter has turned up in a tank.

The man drives his tank away. He manoeuvres the tank to a small hill just outside the park's borders.

He spots a gap in the fence and decides to drive through. He is not far from hide ten. Patiently he waits. The people at hide numbers ten, nine, eight, and seven have packed up. It was only three o'clock in the afternoon. The man thinks to himself, it is safe to fire the cannon on the tank.

He fires the cannon three times, gets his machine gun out and lets loose with it, then fires with the sniper rifle and his old rifle. He is exhausted. The ranger is running towards him. He has to move out fast before he gets caught.

The hunter still had no duck. The ducks have cleared the area except for one which flies overhead. The duck swoops and drops pooh on the man's head and flies off. "Quack, Quack, Quack."

Spooky Brisbane.

Brisbane is one of the most haunted cities in Australia, so much so, Brisbane has ghost tours.

The local guide takes his tour groups who are a mix of young local adults and an occasional tourist from overseas. The tour guide, over time, has become an authority on the historical buildings, their functions and famous tenants which survived the colonial years. Any lost soul who died in the buildings, wander around for today's entertainment.

The man has expanded his business to include school tours which are very watered-down version of the ghost tours. He is careful to select the most historical buildings and rarely mentions to children of ghosts who live inside. He and the teachers focus on the buildings, not the long dead occupants.

The adult tours which are all conducted at night, are graded; mildly scary, medium scary and very scary. All require a degree of physical fitness thanks to the terrain of the Brisbane landscape. He does pre-warn customers, if a person is sensitive and or their physical fitness is not that great, they should limit themselves to tour one, the mildly scary one. He takes no responsibility for those who underestimate themselves and have subsequent mental issues after the tours. He has everyone sign a waiver before the tour begins. Many times, ghosts do appear and give the customers a thrill.

Brisbane has a few odd statistics. For a capital city, it has the largest land mass anywhere in the world. It is built on a flood plain so every so often the city has a bath. The river in the dry season can change colour thanks to the toxic microbes in the water. Don't be tempted to swim in the changing-coloured waters as one can become seriously ill.

The normal colour changes as you go upstream. It goes from muddy to bluish green. That is normal. But every so often and seen at night, the water is neon blue. A few times closer to the mouth it has been neon green. On much rarer occasions, it looks like a massive strawberry milkshake meandering through the

upper part of the city. These phenomena last for two to three days depending on the tidal flows. In the lower reaches, sharks are often seen.

Scary Adelaide.

The capital of South Australia is called Adelaide. The first governor to the area named the town after his wife. It was the only town which was started by free settlers.

The town is full of churches and with good reason. The town is well noted for poltergeists, very nasty ones at that. Running to the safety of a church was the only escape.

On the flip side, the state of South Australia is renowned for its many vineyards which win many international awards. The ocean assists with an abundance of crustacea headed for both the local and overseas markets.

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Friendly Ghosts.

A real estate agent is given a task to sell a deceased estate. It is a stately home which has shown some signs of refurbishment. Two of the four bedrooms have built in robes-very tastefully designed. They don't appear to be more than four years old. He marks it down as a selling point.

He enters one of two bathrooms. One had been refurbished to accommodate the needs of the last elderly resident: wide doors, shower only, hand grips everywhere especially in the shower and around the toilet. The second bathroom is screaming for renovation. The agent assesses the bad state in detail. He marks it for immediate basic repairs.

He goes into the kitchen which has a built-in dining area. This room had been partially renovated. Modern appliances line one wall. The benches and sink area need replacing. The eat-in dining room was passable.

He moves into the lounge. He thinks a lick of paint as a minimum would help sales. The view from the lounge through the glass French doors to an open veranda was a definite selling point. The veranda was in excellent shape with screens to keep out bugs and security a big bonus.

The agent tells the owners of the approximate selling price and suggests a few inexpensive renovations. The people agree to a few items. To save money, the people do the work themselves.

The agent then places a “For Sale” sign up.

An open house is organised. People trudge through. There are no offers. Weeks click over, no one shows any interest in it. He ponders and rethinks his strategies. He adjusts the marketing a little.

Still no offers. His weekly reports to the owners, are disappointing to them.

The agent asks them to remove the house from the market for a couple of months as it has become stale stock. The owners agree. When the house goes back on the market, there is still no interest.

It is close to a year now, and not one offer is given. In desperation, the agent decides to bow out and let the owners try another agency. The results are the same. No offers of any description.

One of the owners decides to live in the house for a short while and do a few more renovations.

All goes well. A few people turned up to inspect the home while he was living there. Still there are no offers. The owners are now getting very frustrated. Dropping the price didn't work. The renovations were done and that didn't help.

When a young couple came through, the person who did the final renovations asked the couple, what they liked and disliked about the house. The young lady replies, “The renovations are well done. The four big bedrooms are terrific. Overall, there is little to be done. But who are the old man and lady who kept following us around?”

The owner is puzzled. "There are no old people living here. They were in a nursing home when they passed on."

The young man replies, "Are you sure about that?"

The owner nods and confirms it is the truth.

The young lady tugs on her husband's arm and is being polite. "I think we can think about it."

The owner tells the second agent about the young couple's comments. The agent is also confused by the comment about the old couple. Days go by. The agent follows up on the young couple. The agent is concerned to hear again about the strange elderly couple who seems to have inhabited the house. He has never seen them. No one else had reported them.

The agent, with the permission of the owners, stays in the house overnight while live in person is away on a business trip. On the first night he sleeps well. Nothing happens. When he goes into the kitchen to prepare a simple breakfast, he finds all the kitchen cupboards doors open. He shuts all of them and doesn't give a second thought.

On the second night, he thinks he sees something. He isn't sure. He puts it down the flickering distant city lights on the glass French doors in the lounge room. He thinks nothing more about the situation.

On the third night he is woken up. Something had pulled back the covers and touched him. He is sweating and thinking the worst. He instantly recalls what the young couple had said. As he dresses, the old lady appears. She calls out to her deceased husband who also appears. "We have a free loader here. Help me get him out of here!"

The agent is now scared. He doesn't know what to do. Sweat pours down his face. He stutters badly before saying, "I am the real estate agent. Your children employed me to sell the house."

The old couple consider the agent's words. Eventually, the old man says, "Prove it." The agent shows his business card. He explains sale contracts are

at his office and will bring one tomorrow. Then he adds, "A young couple are interested in the place but are not sure about sharing with you."

"The old lady says, "You mean that nice lady and her husband who were the last to come?"

The agent nods. The old man says, "Of all the people who came through this place, they were the nicest. They were not riff-raff. We offered them free child-minding as well, but the young couple were not sure about that."

The agent nods again. "If I can bring them back here, can you," he searches the right words to say to the two ghosts, "let them stay and have a peaceful life?"

The old couple agree but they make a condition. "They fix the house up to the way we like it."

The agent is not sure if that could work.

He contacts the young couple the next day and convinces them to take another look.

Still hesitating and understanding the conditions of the sale, the couple still are not sure. However, they eventually relent to have another look.

The agent stays overnight again in hope to speak to the ghosts. The ghosts consider the new information. The old lady says, "Okay, some compromise. They can decorate the bathrooms and the bedrooms as they wish but we have a say on the rest of the house."

"Will you vacate when the work is done?" asks the agent.

"No. We will hang around to mind the children and keep robbers out."

The agent returns the following night with the news. The agent shows the contract. The young couple have signed it. The old lady and the old man look at the contract and nod their approval.

The old lady says, "Now we have funds for our retirement."

The agent is a bit baffled by the comment and dismisses it. The contract is signed by both living parties.

The family moves in. The young couple and their children happily co-exist with the old lady and old man. The parents get used to their children chatting and laughing when the ghosts are about. The young couple feel safe and accept the ghosts as a part of their family.

One week there was a report of a spate of break-ins. People in the street began watching each other's yards for unknown people. Then one night, the couple heard a noise. At first, they thought it was one of the ghosts. They dismissed it. The noise and footsteps seem to be coming down the hallway. The couple sit up. Someone is inside. The wife calls the police to report the disturbance.

There was a scream and heavy footsteps were heard running down the hallway, and the back door slams and locks are heard to click into position. The burglars are trapped inside. By the time the couple reach the back door, the teenage burglars were shaking and white with fear. The old lady and man were jumping back and forth through walls and acting as if they were vampires. They stayed in that state until the police arrived. Then they disappeared.

When the police arrived, the teens hugged the police. Thinking the owners had abused the invading teens, the police began to question them. Not totally convinced, the police left with the teens. The couple would go to the station when child minding was arranged.

At the police station, the couple are questioned. Some irregularities need to be tidied up.

The policeman asks, "What work do you two do?"

The young man says, "I do special effects for t.v. shows and an occasional movie and the wife does sound special effects."

The policeman nods and smiles. "You must have a darn good set up at home to keep burglars out of the home. Those kids are telling me the place is haunted. Two ghosts were jumping back and forth into the walls and contorting their faces to be like vampires."

The young man lies, “That is one of the programs. You should see the others we have devised. But don’t tell the teens that it was a hologram.”

The policeman smirks. “Can you show me the hologram here. Show me the device.”

The young man pulls out an ordinary remote control for a garage door. He quickly searches the room hoping either the old lady or the old man will appear. He senses someone is nearby. He pushes the button.

The old man appears and is somewhat put out by being summoned. “What is it now young man?”

The young man points to the teens and the policeman. “Please tell them what you did?”

The old man explains, “Boo. It is generally enough to keep burglars out.”

The policeman thinks it is another holographic ploy. He smiles. “Very convincing. How much does a system like that cost?”

“An arm and a leg; the mortgage of a house,” say both the young man and the old man at the same time.

The old man rubs his tired eyes. “Yep.” He turns to the young man and says with a grin and a wink. “How many other systems are you intending to make?”

“Why?”

“I just want to know how many ancestors I need to wake up from their sleep to fill the orders.”



TRICKS ONLY

Halloween Night.

Two very bored ghosts are sitting on a veranda of a dilapidated house. They are complaining that all the houses in the street were being renovated or pulled down to make way for new houses. The only visitors were the occasional teens who were on dares. When this happened, the ghosts would vacate the house.

Halloween was coming up. The two ghosts had noted the children, more so than the adults would dress up and approach each house in the neighbourhood asking trick or treat. The older ghost, Peter says, "Last year, a couple of kids were escorted by their parent to our door. We vacated the house for the night. I think they were disappointed. I know for some kids, walking up the path to this house is scary enough. This year, we should do something."

The younger ghost, John agrees. Following the cues of last year, the ghost erected a sign: Tricks Only. Sorry No Treats." A dim light lit the sign. That gave it a greater eerie feel. The lights were turned on. The lights highlighted the rundown state of the house. It was perfect for Halloween. They sat back and waited.

About seven-thirty the first visitors arrived. Soft voices and soft footsteps approached the house.

There was a knock on the door. The door creaked open adding sound to the already creepy atmosphere. John answered the door. "Hello my sweeties. Welcome."

The adults gasped. For the sake of their five-year-old daughter dressed as a bunny, the man and woman dressed as vampires pulled themselves together. They gave a weak smile. The man coughs and builds up more courage, "Wow the visual affects you have made are really outstanding. Congratulations. It is the best spooky house display in the street, may be the entire neighbourhood."

John is flattered by the comment. Peter appears. The daughter clings to the mother's leg. The mother feels the vice-like grip and gives her a reassuring pat on the head. Peter and John say their names. "Our sign says tricks. Now we will do our tricks."

John walks through walls and doors. Peter flashes on and off.

The man flashes his eyes around looking for the power source and any equipment to make 3D images. He sees none. He begins to clap. The wife follows. The bunny is now curled around the mother's leg and is shaking white with fear. The parents fail to notice.

Peter leans down towards the girl. She begins to cry. The parents try hard to uncurl the child from the mother's leg. She resists. Peter asks, "Is the bunny related?" The man is taken aback by the question. He eventually confirms the child is theirs. Peter sighs. "I wasn't sure if she was yours or a treat for us. I still think she must be adopted as vampires don't have bunnies as offspring." The parents are now beginning to think differently. They begin to move down the path away from Peter and John.

John calls out to the escaping trio, "Don't go. We want to see what other tricks your bunny can do?" The parents are curious. Peter points to the puddle where the bunny once stood. "I see why you adopted the bunny. She is gifted. We can't do that trick."

Ghost Riddles.

What did the ghost say to the skeleton?

You better eat something. I can see your bones.

What did the skeleton say to the ghost?

I can see right through you.

Why did the skeleton give the ghost a mirror?

To prove he wasn't lying that he could see right through the ghost.

Why did the ghost give the skeleton super glue?

Because he was in pieces.

What did the drunk say to the man changing out of a wolf costume?

You were wolf.

More People
and Animals.

Jury Selection.

A man is summoned to court to be on the jury. He arrives late. The judge is not impressed and reads the riot act citing the possible consequences of his actions.

Finally the judge asks the potential juror, "What is the excuse?"

"I am sorry your honour for the delay. My alarm failed to go off. I got dressed in a hurry. I skipped breakfast but I did take a slice of toast off my wife's plate in a bid to make up time. Then I discovered, the car had a flat battery, so I called a cab. The cab did his best to weave in and out of the traffic to get me here on time. When we had to cross the bridge, all traffic came to a major stop. No one was moving anywhere."

"What was the cause of the traffic jam?"

"The people who were doing a promotion were using a horse to pull a buggy loaded with promotional materials. The horse suddenly died."

The judge wasn't impressed and had the man repeat the details. He does so perfectly. The judge orders the man to sit down with the rest of the people. The judge notices he was still two short of the required jury quota.

Another man opens the door. The man is seen puffing. He apologises for being late. The man tells a similar story. "The alarm on my phone didn't go off as I forgot to recharge the phone. I got dressed quickly and rushed out of the house after pinching a slice of toast out of my child's mouth. Then I discovered the car had a flat tyre. I called a cab. The driver did his best to weave between cars, to get me here on time. However, when we got to the bridge, there was a major traffic jam."

"What is the cause of the traffic jam?" asked the judge.

"A horse pulling a buggy loaded with promotional item suddenly died."

The judge rolls his eyes. "Are you sure you are telling the truth?"

The man nods and confirms that was the truth. The judge sighs and directs the late comer to sit beside the last person to enter the room. The judge notes, there is still one person missing.

Suddenly, the doors are thrown open again. The third man rushes in and is panting and dripping with sweats. The judge gives him a minute to catch his breath. "Why are you late?" asks the judge.

The man is still out of breath and manages to puff out, "I ran from the bridge to get here."

The judge says, "Let me explain your situation."

The man was expecting the riot act to be served to him. He is prepared to listen quietly and take any punishment he was going to be served.

The judge says, "Your alarm didn't go off." The man nods.

The judge adds. "You got dressed in a hurry. You rushed out of the house taking a slice of toast off someone's plate." The man nods again. "Then you had car trouble, so you called a cab." The man nods again thinking this judge is really brilliant and so perceptive. The judge continues. "The cab driver does his best to weave in and out of traffic until you reach the bridge." The man nods again. The man's breath is returning to normal. The judge adds. "The traffic jam was caused by a dead horse on the bridge."

The man says, "It is much worse than that. There were two dead horses on the bridge."

The Magician and the Parrot.

A recently divorced man decides to begin a new life. He packs his meagre contents into the back of a van and heads west. He has in mind to find a suitable outback town live in. He feels confident he could support himself. He was a qualified plumber, and his carpentry skill were just as good.

He was approaching his fifth small town. He was just two hundred kilometres away when he decides to pull over and take a rest under a tree. While he is

resting, a small bird falls out of a nest and hits the ground with enough force to injure itself. Carefully, the man examines the bird and decides to place it in a shoe box with some padding to prevent further injuries. He decides to look after the injured bird until he reaches the next town.

When he arrives at the next town, he seeks out a vet who confirms the bird is a baby parrot and has injured its wing. The man is soft hearted and asks the vet to fix the wing. He would be happy to pay the bill. The bird stays at the vet for three days. The vet says, "The bird may never fly again as the injury was worse than first thought".

The vet gives a long list of instructions on how to care for the injured bird. He is given a list of foods to give to a juvenile bird and another for when the bird is older. The vet says, "Because this is a native bird, I have organised a permit. You will have to renew the permit every two years." The man thanks the vet.

While the bird was in the vet's care, the man had visited the local bookshop. He wanted something to read instead of going to the local pub every night and drinking his life away. He was going to change for the better. He spots a book about magic tricks. He thinks this could be the start of a new hobby. If he becomes very good at it, he might pick up a few small gigs.

Every night he practices. He makes a few props for the tricks he wants to perform. When he builds up confidence on his small repertoire, he does a few tricks in the bars. He slowly gets used to performing with a crowd. On his travels, he would approach the publican if he could hone his skills and provide the locals with a bit of entertainment. He is always given the go-ahead. His pet parrot always sits on the man's shoulder whenever he performs. As he goes from town to town, his skills improve. He was beginning to get a following. His reputation was beginning to spread, the magician with the parrot.

Out of the blue he receives a letter from a cruise ship. It asked if would entertain children twice a day. The man jumps at the opportunity, but he needs to confirm if his pet parrot could come along.

The man must get to Cairns, in north Queensland within two weeks.

The man goes to the main office of the cruise liner, introduces himself and the parrot. He is directed to go on board the night before the guests arrive.

The man settles in. He takes his parrot out and considers how to make the parrot a part of the show. He knows the parrot can talk and is now stronger and can manage short flights. It is just a matter of making the parrot say the right words at the right time. He would give the bird spoiler phrases like it's up his sleeve, it's in his hat or it's in his pocket. He practices with the bird all night.

When he does his first children's show, the man lifts his top hat. The bird calls out, "It's in his hat."

The audience laugh. He does a simple trick. The bird jumps onto his arm and bounces up and down saying, "It's up his sleeve." In the next act, the bird goes for the man's pocket and pulls out a ball attached to a string. The bird calls out, "It's in his pocket." When the bird is placed on the man's head again, the bird calls out, "Good night, everybody. I hope you enjoyed the show."

It was on the fourth night of the cruise when the magician, like other staff members and guests alike were told to be prepared for a severe storm. A notice was issued to all that all performances will be cancelled. The dining halls will be closed. The magician packs his things up. He has the life jacket ready. The parrot is placed in a cage and with a black plastic over the top. The magician knows this will stop the bird from panicking in transport. The storm becomes worse. The ship is rolling. The captain makes an announcement, "The ship will head for the coast, towards Coff's Harbour." An hour after the first announcement, the ship's hull develops a leak. Nothing can be done but get the ship close to shore as possible. The captain is forced to announce for all to abandoned ship and for all to go to the assigned lifeboats.

Everyone goes to their lifeboat and each assigned crew ask the guests to help paddle the boat towards the distant lights. By this time the plastics cover on the cage is torn to pieces. The magician removes the last flapping shreds. The parrot is exposed to the weather. Like many others on the lifeboats, the magician and the parrot see the ship slowly sink into the water. The parrot which can now

fly very short distances, suddenly leaves the safety of the magician's cage when the door flew open. The parrot flies a little way out to sea. The parrot returns. It says nothing as it is too busy panting. Flying wasn't his strongest forte. The magician places the parrot back in his cage.

When most lifeboats arrive on shore, there are no town lights to be seen. The captain does a few measurements. He announces that they have all drifted further south than expected. He will send a few crew members to Coff's Harbour to raise the alarm and have everyone transported to the town.

As they all wait, the parrot is freed from the cage and flies back and forth, always going out to sea. He never travels inland. The magician brings out some bird seed for the parrot. He notices the parrot pecks at the food at a much slower speed than normal and begins to think the bird is ill.

The bird jumps onto the magician's arm and says, "I don't get it. It beats me."

"What beats you?" asked the magician.

"Where did you hide the ship. Where is the other one?"

The magician doubts if the bird will understand what he was going to say but he tries. "I didn't hide the ship. The storm damaged the ship and caused it to sink."

The bird considers the answer but is not convinced.

He sees the captain wearing a hat, the only person wearing any headwear. The bird looks at the magician. "So other magician did the trick?"

"What magician and trick are you talking about?" asks the magician.

"The magician wearing a flat hat. He made the big ship disappear. He found all these people and put them small boats. Then the small boats all came here. Amazing!"

The Lion and the Poodle.

A woman takes her toy poodle on an African safari. When the vehicle she is in stops for a while, the guide points out the distant lions and other animals close by. The poodle jumps out of the woman's grip and runs into the bush. The lady screams out for the dog. The tour guide holds her back.

From the safety of the vehicle, everyone is directed to look for the pooch. No one sees the dog no matter how hard they try.

Meanwhile, the poodle has run deep into the jungle, does his business and then realises he is lost. He can't hear the lady's voice or any other human voice calling out his name or saying any other words. He wonders what he is going to do. He keeps trying to find his way back to the dusty track. No matter how he tries, he knows he is lost forever. He realizes, he will be dinner before dusk.

In a tree near the dog, a monkey quietly observes the intruder. He thinks the new small animal in the area is interesting. He also thinks this new four-legged creature that makes an odd yapping sound will be history before dusk. He continues observing to satisfy his curiosity.

Back on the ground the dog sits quietly trying to sort himself out and escape his predicament. Then poodle sees a lion coming in his directions and knows he is going to be dinner. The poodle spots some old dry bones and starts to chew on them while having his back turned to the lion. The lion goes into stalking mode and thinks this new exotic creature would make a tasty snack.

When the lion is in full pounce poodle barks out, "That lion was absolutely delicious." The lion is thrown off balance and misses the dog and slinks away all the time watching this strange new animal.

A monkey sitting in a tree was watching this drama unfold. He knows lions like to eat monkeys as well. The hungrier the lion becomes, the greater the chance the lion will start looking at the trees for any possible morsel. The monkey decides he must make a deal with the lion in order to save his own skin.

He approaches the lion cautiously with an offering of a severely injured bird. The lion accepts the peace offering and eats the bird. He listens to what the monkey has to say.

The monkey tells the lion he was made a fool. He quickly explains what the new animal did in order to survive. The lion feels he was truly an idiot to fall for such a stunt. The small animal was opportunistic and began chewing on dry bones which had been sitting around for many days. The dog was a small and an appetising snack, a rarity in the jungle. A prize which would make all the other lions jealous.

They draw up a plan. The monkey would lead him to where the dog would be hiding, and the monkey would live many days longer. The lion agrees not to eat the monkey if the monkey rides on his back and be his guide and if necessary, be a negotiator. The lion lets the monkey climb on his back. A deal was struck.

Together they go to the area where they both last saw the dog. They both do a small search to find the dog resting under a tree. The dry bones were nowhere to be seen. The dog spots the monkey on the lion's back and instantly knows he is in trouble.

The poodle scans the area for more bones. He spots one and just meters away from the previous bones. He settles near the bone and begin chewing again while keeping watch on the lion and the monkey. He kept turning his back to the slowly approaching couple as they inch their way towards him. The dog figured out the two animals had struck a deal and he better think of something fast. Two against one were very bad odds.

Slowly the lion and the monkey progress towards him. Just when the lion pounces again, the poodle barks loudly, "Where has that monkey gone? I told him to bring back another lion for me to eat!"

The Green Thing.

An elderly lady goes to the local convenience store. She collects from the shelves all the items she wants and places each item carefully in a basket. Slowly she carries the now weighty basket to the check out.

She asks the young lady behind the counter, “Do you have a plastic bag for me to put the groceries in? The one I was using many times broke.”

The young lady says, “No we don’t. This shop likes to keep the environment clean and green.”

The old lady slowly puts the items on the small conveyer belt. She becomes a little annoyed when the young lady continues speaking. “It was your generation which didn’t look after the environment and now this generation is doing its best to clean up the mess we inherited.”

The old lady looks the young girl in the eye. “My generation didn’t have labels for doing things. We just did it automatically.”

The old lady points to the glass bottle of milk she has placed on the counter. “All soft drink and milk bottles were made of glass. When the bottle was finished and quickly rinsed out, we would return the empties to the store. Depending on the manufacturer there was a refund. The shop keeper would give us a refund immediately. When the courier from that company came to pick up the bottles, the shop keeper would be reimbursed. The bottles would go back to the factory to be thoroughly cleaned and sterilised before they were refilled. Now, you drive your car to a depot where the glass is crushed and then reformed into new bottles. We didn’t have a name for what we did. It wasn’t a green thing.”

“We didn’t drink water from bottles. We used water fountains or took a flask of water with us. We didn’t have this so-called convenience and water quality differences. Water was water. We didn’t have brand names et cetera. We didn’t have bottle disposal issues like you do. The straws were made of paper, some were waxed to help keep shape. Any unused straws were converted into decorations for parties, Christmas and Easter. We didn’t have this green and clean thing.”

The old lady spots a stand of disposable nappies. She says, “In my day, we had towelling nappies. We washed them and reused them. Most times the nappies would last for two babies. We didn’t have disposable nappies which were added to the land fill.”

The lady steps aside to allow another customer to be served. She notes he buys a newspaper.

“When I was young newspapers were reused in many ways. When we bought eggs from any shop, the shop keeper would wrap the eggs up in newspaper. At home the newspaper was used in children’s artwork like paper mache or making makeshift hats when one of us left a hat behind when we were on picnics or other outdoor outings. We turned them into paper boats as well. The newspaper lined kitchen shelves. It was also used as insulation to keep food hot or cold. Many mechanics would reuse newspaper to line many greasy places. It kept cleaning with chemicals to a minimum. We didn’t call it a fancy name then. It did stop junk doing down drains.”

The old lady continues when she feels a puff of cool air coming out of the air conditioner. She glances up. “We didn’t have air-conditioners then. Some people had fans but that was about all.

We just opened the windows and let nature provide fresh air. Not many shops or office building had air-conditioning, elevators or escalators. We walked up and down the stairs. We didn’t have electricity guzzling air conditioners and other equipment at home or in stores. We didn’t have a green thing.”

The old lady points to a box of bagged lollies. We didn’t have lollies pre-packed in plastic bags. They were sold loosely, and customers could select whatever they wished. The shopkeeper would put the lollies in a paper bag. Sometimes our parents would come with glass or metal containers which were filled to buy lollies in bulk for a kid’s party. We didn’t have plastic bags for lollies back then. We did have little cardboard baskets that we children and parents would fill up as a thank you gift for coming to our party. We didn’t have pre-made plastic bags of lollies then.

“We also did something else when we had large family get togethers or even on picnics. This might rattle your brain. There were no disposable plastic plates or cutlery. Paper plates slowly made their way onto the market. Now, I see they are coming back, and the plastic cutlery is being replaced by bamboo cutlery. It still needs guzzling power machinery to produce. At parties in my youth, guests would help with the washing up of plates, cutlery and glasses. We would rinse our plates and cutlery at picnic sites if they had running taps and take everything home. Now, the bins overflow with disposable everything. The wind blows everything around. I see beach goers leave their drinks and take-away food containers on the beach for other to pick up. It wouldn't hurt if they took a garbage bag or paper bag and filled it up and placed it beside the overflowing bins. We cleaned up after ourselves. Today, people think they are entitled with servants.”

The young lady suddenly said, “You did have cars. You drove cars.” The old lady gave a sigh.

“Of course, we did but not many people could afford them and then it was limited to one car per family regardless how old the kids were. People used buses, trains, cable cars and ferries. It is now called public transport. We didn't call it a collective name back then. Now families can have more than two cars when children reach a certain age. Parents drive their children everywhere, even to school. In my time, children used public transport, walked or rode bikes to school. Now young people expect their parents to be a twenty-four-hour taxi service. People these days get into a car to drive two blocks to the local shops. All that puts more cars on the road and makes the air smelly.”

The young lady leans on the till. The old lady continues. “Tills and many other devices these days require power. All the electronic equipment these days have made sure every room in the house has more than one power outlet. Look at the modern kitchen for example, toaster, dishwashers, microwaves, cake mixers and juicers to name a few. All require electricity. We didn't have those things. We did things by hand and used our brains for all sorts of things like doing maths to tally up items for the customer to pay money and to give the right change. We

wrote letters or used a manual typewriter. We didn't have power guzzling things at home or at work. We didn't have this green and clean thing like we do now."

The young lady pulls out a paper bag and slowly adds the old lady's items inside. She says, "We only have paper bags to keep the environment clean." The old lady responds, "We would reuse our paper bags all the time. We didn't have plastic lunch boxes for either adults or children. We used paper bags from the shops. Lunches were wrapped in grease-proof paper or wax paper. Kids would reuse the bags to do artwork. If the bags were in good condition, they were turned inside out to cover schoolbooks in a bid to prevent damage. The paper bag will be fine. Unused paper bags in bad condition would be added to the garden. Many people had gardens and chooks.

"I noticed back there," the old lady point to the back of the room, "One of your fridges is out."

The young lady says, "It is old, broken and expensive to repair. The boss is looking for a new one."

"How old is it?" asks the old lady.

"Just under five years old." says the young lady.

"That is not old," says the old lady. "When I was young, many appliances, radios, televisions and anything you could think of, had technicians who could repair things. Things like that didn't go to land fill unless it was very, very old like over twenty years old. Things were built to last. They didn't have this built-in redundancy thing as you call it. Good equipment is tossed out without a second thought and created this environmental issue, this green thing. I know the councils are doing their best to recycle all the steel, but it would be cheaper and create employment if things were fixed."

As the young lady places the pre-packaged fruit in the bag, the old lady says, "All shops had scales for customers to weigh their own fruit. Then it was doubled checked at the counter. We didn't have bags. Berries were sold in cardboard containers, not plastic ones. Now, farmers pre-package the food and the containers goes to landfill."

As the old lady leaves the shop, she mutters, “We didn’t have names for things we did. It was common sense.” She pauses for a second to adjust the weight of the bag. “It is all common sense. I don’t think this generation has discovered that. They have to wait for someone to tell them what it is and teach them how to do it. It has to have a label before they recognise it. Then they call it new or modern responsibility.” She sighs before getting on her bicycle. “Common sense is such a scarce commodity these days.”

Riddles.

What did the plastic wrapper say to the punnet of strawberries?

I have got you covered.

What did the clothing stain remover say to the splatter of red wine on some clothes?

Are you coming out with me?

What did the recycling machine say to the bottle?

I have a crush on you.

What did the solid timber table say to the table made with a chipboard top?

You’re the type which flakes out when it floods.

See Attached.

When I was born my parents didn’t know what to call me. They asked friends and relatives for suggestions. They still couldn’t make up their minds, and they didn’t want to disappoint their relatives and friends. So, they wrote down all the names on a piece of paper and selected what they liked. This gave me the longest name in the world.

When they filled out the birth certificate the space for the name was too small. They wrote in the given name/s, ‘see attached’. They wrote all the names they liked on a separate piece of paper. They stapled it to the birth certificate.

Here is my real name attached to the birth certificate.

Alexander, Benjamin, Charles, David, Edward, Francis, George, Harold, Ian, James, Kenneth, Leonard, Mark, Nicholas, Owen, Peter, Quin, Raymond Steven, Timothy, Urban, Vincent, William, Xavier, Yates, Zerxes.

Now you know my full name and why it doesn't fit in the boxes for the birth certificate. I have everyone's names. That's the longest name in the world and it is much too long for most people to say and write.

When I went to school, the teachers never knew what to call me and my name never ever fitted into the required name boxes. When teachers call out a person's name for the roll, I would answer multiple times until they decided to use surnames instead of first names. That became the new tradition for each class I ever attended through my school years.

My closest friends call me A-to-Z. This freed up my friends who had the same first names. It certainly stopped all the confusion. It kind of caught on with the teachers when they were rostered to supervise outdoor play time. They would call me A-to-Z if they ever needed me.

There were a few positive sides to having so many names. Easter and Christmas were the best. At Easter, I would line up multiple times as I could use a different name to receive more chocolate eggs. I got away with that several times until there was an egg shortage. But I wised up to that and would list my name several times. It gave me the opportunity to try as many different flavours and brands of chocolate eggs. Yummy chocolate eggs.

Christmas was lots of fun. I got more presents than anyone else as my name was on every present. Naturally, others would complain that I opened their presents and spoiled their surprise. I did keep telling people to write A-to-Z on the small Christmas tags or use an envelope to write all my names. Of course, the following year, many had forgotten what to do. I scored again.

As I got older, I came to realise that such a long name was more problematic. It was more of an issue when I was an adult than as a child. My parents would always carry with them a loaded mini stapler to attach my name to the forms.

In the name box they would write 'See Attached'. I also became very diligent and carried a mini stapler around with me for the very same reason. One day I decided to change a negative into fun and play tricks on different staff doing their best to serve customers.

In medical waiting rooms, I turned the annoyance into amusement. Before I would cringe when the receptionist called out 'See Attached' instead of calling out my name. I could see and hear the sniggers coming from the caller and others in the room softly chuckling. But now I get my own back and ask, "Who exactly who were you calling?" There was always a cough and a flash of guilt before the person would say sorry, "I was after Alexander or another name was given. Most times this permitted me to jump queue. Then, I would smile and thank the receptionist. When the doctor saw me he either quickly switched the name on the computer to bring up my information or send me back to the waiting room. The doctor would softly scold the receptionist for the error. They rarely repeated the same mistake.

A couple of times I wrote A-to-Z. (P.T.O.). I was frequently told, "That was not acceptable and stop being funny." They would hand back the form for me to refill. I reverted to 'See Attached' and all the names attached on another piece of paper.

People didn't know my name until they asked me. Some just didn't bother to ask for my name. They just called out with a smirk across their face, "See Attached".

Sometimes I just didn't bother attaching my name to any form. I just wrote 'See Attached'. It was fun watching people search the floor or piles of paper looking for something that didn't exist. Then they would call me by my surname and profusely apologise for losing the attached paper. It was quite fun doing that at random times at government offices, but more so in the army. It would drive the staff into a frenzy. All I could think of, when I did it to staff in these organisations, I provided them with some exercise. Walking around and bending over made them stretch their legs.

When I got married, I entered, 'See Attached' and had prepared all the names I had on a separate paper and attached it to the paperwork. When the priest

started reading out all my names, he paused for a drink of water, held up the paper and said, 'See Attached.'

When I had children of my own, I gave them short names; just one on its own.

I made it simple for them in their life, and they liked it better that way.

On my death bed the paperwork was prepared, the death certificate even said, 'See Attached.' When they buried me, I flipped over in my grave and smiled when I read:

In loving Memory:
a husband, a father, a brother, and uncle.
Here lies A-to-Z.
To read all his names this man had,
See the gravestone attached by his bed.

I think to myself, *Thank God, someone has finally got me dead right.*

Snow, the White Bull.

Somewhere in the south-eastern highlands in Australia was a small cattle station with a small herd.

One year, many male calves were born but only one female.

The farmer and his wife named all the calves.

Besty was the only cow. She was brown all over and had white feet.

Bobby was black and white, and he looked like his father.

Grumpy was black all over and had a bad temper.

King was the biggest. He was brown and with white patches.

Sarge was brown and white with a patch of black over his left eye. He was very thin at birth and always stayed that way.

Then, there was Snow, the all-white bull. Even Snow's mother called him Snow.

The months ticked over, and the calves were able to leave their mothers' side.

They would play on the mountain side.

Sarge would run around and charge at anything moving, but sometimes he would join the others to play their favourite game which was hide-and-seek. Everyone liked playing that game except for Snow. For him it was no fun because he was always the first one found.

He complained to Betsy, "It's not fair. You and the others can hide, but I can't. I don't know what the problem is."

Betsy gave him a sad look and swung her tail onto Snow's tail, the cattle's way of holding hands.

"Maybe it's your coat. It so bright. Come with me."

They walked to a shallow puddle. "Now get down and roll in the mud." Snow did as he was told. When he thought he had enough, he stood up and flicked.

The mud went everywhere including on Betsy. Betsy moored her dislike. "You're supposed to keep the mud on you!"

He rolled in the mud again. As he stood up, the mud slid off his body. He was white again.

Betsy shook her head and sighed. She slowly walked away.

Snow looked at his white coat. There wasn't a drop of mud except on his feet.

He sadly walked behind her. "Thank you for trying to help."

Snow asked King, "When we play hide and seek, you are one of the last bulls to be found. Please tell me how to stay hidden."

King looked at Snow and considered what to do. "I think it you are not big enough. You need to eat more."

“Thank you,” said Snow. Snow began eating and slowly he put the weight on. When they played hide and seek again, Snow was still the first bull to be found. King’s idea of putting on weight didn’t work, but he thanked King for trying to help.

The next day he asked Sarge, “When we play hide and seek, you are one of the last bulls to be found. Can you tell me how to stay hidden a bit longer?”

Sarge looked at Snow and walked around him looking at his body. “First of all, you are too fat.” Then he whispered, “Not as fat as King.” In his normal voice he said confidentially, “You need to lose weight and be slim like me. Eat less and start running around like me.”

“Thank you,” said Snow. “I will try losing weight.”

Snow ate less and followed Sarge around the cattle station. Snow lost weight and everyone noticed his new muscles and leaner build. Even the farmer noticed and grew concerned. He fed Snow and the other bulls worming medicine. When they played hide and seek, Snow was still found first.

Snow sighed and was sadder than before.

The weather became cooler. The calves grew bigger.

The farmer and his wife locked the small herd in a big shed overnight to keep them warm. Through the day the animals were left to roam outside.

As the winter came and the snow began to fall, the farmer and his wife kept the cattle in a shed day and night to keep them warm.

One night there was a fierce snowstorm. The wind howled its way over the small cattle station and dumped a large amount of snow on the ground. The ground was now covered in a knee-deep blanket of snow.

The next morning after the storm, Snow was very bored standing in the shed. Snow lifted his big white head to look out of the window. To his surprise everything looked white.

He asked Bobby, Grumpy and King, “Let’s go outside and play hide and seek.”

“It’s cold out there,” said Grumpy. “I’m staying here.”

King looked over to his other friends and said, "I'll go if they go."

Bobby, King, Betsy, Sarge and Snow went outside to play hide and seek in the snow.

Besty closed her eyes and counted to five while the rest hid themselves close by.

Besty spotted King, then Bob, then Sarge but couldn't find Snow. After a while, she and the others called and called but Snow didn't reply. Bobby and King also became worried.

They knew Snow was always the first to be found. But this time he wasn't.

They hoped he hadn't injured himself and was on the ground.

Bobby ran back to the shed to raise the alarm, "Snow is missing!" The herd walked out of the shed to look for Snow.

The farmer and his wife heard the noise outside. They looked out of the window to see the herd walking around in the snow and making a dreadful noise.

The farmer said, "The herd has escaped the shed. Help me round up the cattle before their teeth start to rattle."

One by one the cows and the bulls were led back to their shed. The farmer counted them all. One was missing. "It's Snow that's missing," said the farmer's wife. "He will be hard to find in the snow."

From behind some bushes not far from the shed Snow stood still and watched them.

The farmer and his wife called out Snow's name, but Snow remained silent. He thought to himself,

I have never seen the farmer and his wife join in the game. This is really fun.

He watched them look behind the trees and point to places where others had been.

Feeling cold and tired from standing still Snow gave a bellow. "I'm here," he said feeling very proud of himself for being the last to be found in the game.

The farmer and his wife ran to the sound of the bellowing. They found Snow hiding behind some bushes covered in the snow.

The farmer pulled Snow back to shed. "Do this again, I will paint your backside red."

Snow bellowed his apologies. The farmer was pleased all the animals were back in the shed.

The days click over. The land became warmer. The calves were now bigger and stronger.

Instead of playing games, the calves of last year, spoke of their possible careers.

Grumpy said, "I want to be in the rodeo. It will be fun shaking men off my back."

King said, "I want to go to the local and district shows and win trophies. I really want to be a prize bull."

Bobby had thought what he'd like to do. He had no idea.

Grumpy said, "Until you work out what you want to do, work at a fast-food place flipping burgers.

It must be good. No one comes back."

"No," said Bobby thoughtfully. "I think I know what to do. I'll be a travelling salesperson for bull bars."

"Oh!" said Betsy somewhat disappointed. "What happened to that dream we shared; you serving drinks in a bar somewhere out west, and me, a writer collecting bull tales to put in a book!"

"Well," said Bobby trying to make Betsy happy, "I can sell bull bars to the customers who come into the bar or open a shop next door."

Betsy blinked her big eyes. “That is a wonderful idea. Bull bars and bull tales will make a lot of bull sales.”

Sarge smiled as he said, “I’m going to Spain to work in the bull ring.”

“I have heard that it can be painful,” said Bobby shaking his head.

“If it is,” said Sarge, “I’ll charge higher per head.”

They asked Snow who was listening while chewing grass. He was deep in thought. Snow told the others what he had heard before.

“Earlier this year Derby went to work a china shop. He was too fat to fit between the shelves of chinaware and caused a lot of damage. Sadly, he was sacked and never came back.

“Target came back from a country fair. He was very tired, sore and complained someone drew a target on his side. They threw balls at him. If someone hit the centre of the target they would yell, bull’s eye! When the farmer heard what happened to Target, the farmer brought him home again. Target now keeps to himself and becomes angry if he is called Target or Bull’s Eye.

“Podge went to work in historical tourist town. He pulls a bullock dray twice a day to give children a ride.

“Arabus was an artist and sold many paintings. Many were good copies of famous painting. He did so well, I was told he now lives in a government holding where he teaches his new friends how to be a bull artist.

“Colby went to work at a development site. He used a dozer all day and slept all night. He soon left the job. He wrote in a letter, being a bulldozer was dusty work.

“Pascal went on board a ship to sail the seven seas. He was promoted to captain and is now the world’s first bull shipper.

Leon went prospecting for gold. He worked very hard for his first million. He always sleeps with the bullion under his head.

“Jeremiah had an identity problem. He thought he was a bullfrog and croaked instead of bellowing. His best friend was the farmer’s old bulldog, Fleabag. When Fleabag died, Jeremiah croaked it.”

Snow thought hard as he chewed on grass. He looked up and said, “I like it here and will stay here for heifer and heifer.”

The noise of a truck pulling up diverted their attention. They saw the farmer load feed and water into the back of the truck. The farmer led Barnsie, the oldest bull, up a ramp and into the truck.

He closed the truck with a loud bang and clang. Snow sighed, “It looks like the farmer is going to the markets again. “That’s a load of bull.”

* * * * *

Most people who have taken on an internship or an apprenticeship know the pay is low, hours are long, and you can be the butt of jokes. But what happens when the beginner comes through the task which would normally send the other workers in a frenzy of laughter?

The Apprentice.

A builder employs an eighteen-year-old who may have some potential as a carpenter. In the interview, the teen has shown his basic knowledge of tools and safety. He is employed at a new house site. The teen arrives every day on time and is always cheerful. He carefully listens to instructions and most of the times, he gets the task done correctly and as good as most seasoned carpenter. The boss is happy, and the other workers are impressed.

One day the boss hands him a shopping list of items that need to be urgently delivered. He wanted them in less than two hours, but every hardware shop said delivery will be in four to five hours. He has no other choice and gives the teen the keys to the ute and his credit card. The teen heads off to the nearest hardware shop and loads all but two of the items in the back of the ute. When he arrives, he helps to unload the urgent goods. He apologises for the missing

two items. Confidently, he says, “I will get those items now, but I have to go elsewhere to get them.” The boss agrees. The kid has done well to bring the most urgent items to the site quickly. The young lad says, “I still need to hold onto your card to make the purchases.” The boss agrees.

An hour later, the teen arrives back with a smile across his face. He carefully unloads two containers of paint, one white and one black. He says with a smile, I did a ring—around to the hardware stores and paint stores and all said the stripped black and white paint will take months to arrive from China. They said we can stripe up the building just by using the white and black paints in alternative fashion. It will give the same results.” The teen hears the others sniggering in the background. He ignores it.

The boss winks to the others and asks, “What about the glass hammer?”

The teen says, “I got that too. The glass blower made one for you. I just picked that up as well.. The glass blower knew it was an urgent job.”

The teen walks back to the vehicle, rummages through the glovebox and pulls out a blue and pink gift box. He hands it to the boss who is looking very puzzled. “Open it,” says the teen.

The man carefully opens the box and is surprised. There is a beautifully crafted glass hammer no bigger than two and a half centimetres long. The pale blue hammer head has a garnet insert. The handle was pale pink. It was a brooch complete with a safety chain with a safety pin. The apprentice says, “I saw the list and thought it strange, but I went along with the unusual gift idea. Your wife’s name appeared on the second side of the list, under it was D.O.B. 17th October, and then the words, ‘glass hammer’. Today is her birthday.”

The Moral to the Story Is ...

The Pheasant.

The farmland was dry. It was not quite a dustbowl but was heading that way. Many animals had already left the area. Those who stayed were often too weak to leave. One of those animals was a pheasant. He was thin and lacked energy to fly. He could barely walk.

He was on his last hours when he spots a small pile of dung. In desperation he pecks at the dung.

It didn't taste great, but the pheasant felt nourished. For two days he pecked at the dung. He gained some weight and strength. He tested himself out by flying to the bottom branch of the only tree in the area. He achieved his goal.

The next day, he ate more dung. He was able to fly to the second branch of the trees. For the next fourteen days, the pheasant ate the dung and each day he was able to go to the higher branch in the tree. When he reached the top, the pheasant admired the view and gave a few pheasant calls.

He was so proud of himself for his survival achievements. His calls attract a farmer who was spreading hay for the cattle.

The farmer quickly finishes the tasks, drives the truck as fast as he could to his home. He loads up his rifle and takes extra bullets with him. He isn't confident if he can shoot a pheasant as he was used to hitting bigger targets like feral bores. He drives to where he spotted the pheasant and thinks if he gets the pheasant, it will be dinner.

He parks the truck a short distance away and walks quietly towards the tree. He looks up. The pheasant is still there. He takes aim and fires the rifle. The pheasant falls to the ground.

The moral of the story is, if you bullshit your way to the top of the tree, then don't expect to stay very long.

The Lion's Pride.

One day, a lion wanted to check out his kingdom. He wanted to know who is boss. He spots a monkey. He asks the monkey, "Do you know who the king of the jungle is?"

"Yes. You are," says the monkey. Satisfied the lion walks off. All day long he asks the same question to all animals and even insects. They all confirm he is the king of the jungle.

On the second day, he sees a zebra. He asks the zebra, "Do you know who the king of the jungle is?"

The zebra says, "Yes. You are." The lion walks away happy with the answer.

In the afternoon he sees a bull elephant. He casually walks over and asks, "Do you know who the king of the jungle is?"

The elephant had already heard whispers that the lion was trying to intimidate others by asking the question. The elephant doesn't reply. Instead, he curls his trunk around the lion and tosses the lion into the air. The lion lands in a heap at the elephant's feet. The lion roars, "You didn't have to be so aggressive if you don't know the answer!"

The moral to the story is, if you constantly piss people off by big noting yourself, someone will eventually cut you down to size.

The Elephant and the Ant.

An elephant and an ant fall in love and want to get married. They do so against all the advice of their friends. On their wedding day, they made passionate love.

The next day they begin their honeymoon by travelling to the Niagara Falls. After a day of sightseeing, they make love again.

Suddenly, the elephant has a heart attack and drops dead. The ant is upset and laments, "Two nights of love and a lifetime of digging a grave."

The moral to this story is if all your friends and family see something in a relationship and you don't, they could be saving you from long-term heartache. All that glitters is not gold.

You Get What You Ask For.

Three wise men, Buddha, Confucius and Jesus were discussing their methods of teaching morality.

Socrates who was sitting nearby says, "Sorry for interrupting your wonderful conversation, but I am wondering just how you all came up with these fantastic values?"

Buddha was first to reply, "I left my home and walked the continents observing and listening to as many different people in different cultures as possible. Then I listed all the commonalities."

Confucius said, "I did a bit of that. I mediated disputes and meditated. God gave me answers."

Jesus replied, "So it was you who pestered me with so many questions." He looks across to Buddha, "I marked your exam papers. You scored very well. Some sections you got ten out of ten and in the more difficult sections of the exam paper you scored nine out of ten. Very impressive."

Confucius said, "He cheated. Jesus told me the answers and I passed them onto Buddha."

Socrates was stunned by the revelations. He summarised the personalities. *Buddha is the most hard working and studied before he sat for the test. Highly commendable but his integrity can be questionable if he cheats on answers to questions. Confucius was sly and handed out answers to difficult questions and then took credit for the wisdom. His integrity is also questionable. Jesus is just a know-all.*

Socrates asked Jesus, "How did you become a know-all?"

"Simple. I know everything for I am God."

Buddha and Confucius were stunned. Buddha asked, "If you are God then why didn't you mark me wrong on the answers I cheated on?"

"You created your own interruptions which were also right," replied Jesus.

Confucius asked, "Why didn't you punish me for passing out exam answers?"

"Simple. My phone died and I needed someone to do the gossiping on social media."

Just then, Saint Michael came by. He was in a lather of sweat. He puffed as he relayed the news.

The Pearly Gates are padlocked. Saint Peter is missing. There is a massive queue waiting to get into heaven.

The four wise men looked at Saint Michael. Socrates was first to reply, "Don't panic. He's in the loo."

Confucius replied, "Good things will happen to those who wait. Patience is a virtue."

Buddha replied, "I will start checking the name list. When Saint Peter comes back, all he has to do is cross check each person. That will speed things up."

Jesus walked over to the growing queue. He calls out to the crowd, "All politician please form another line in front of me. Thirty politicians rush over thinking they were going to get preferential treatment. Jesus hands them a fish and a loaf of bread. "Come back later when you have consumed the food." The politicians looked puzzled but were not game enough to question the order. They all went away with a fish and a loaf of bread.

Days later the group returned. Saint Peter was manning the Gate. He was ticking off the newcomers as they said their names. When the politicians arrived, there was a special note beside their names. Saint Peter calls Jesus on the phone to say the politicians have arrived. Jesus rushes down to the Gates and examines the list and the notation. He calls out, "All the politicians make a line in front of me." Dutifully, the politicians line up. Many are thinking, *here we go again.*

Jesus checks their record on how they consumed the fish and bread. He sees that three have made an offering to Buddha. Jesus gives them the nod. They are permitted to pass through the gates. One other consumed the fish and bread with three other people while they were discussing Confucius philosophy. He also gets the nod and passes through the gates. The rest are still waiting for the word they can pass. Instead, each is questioned about their beliefs. Depending on their reply, they were allowed to pass through the Pearly Gates.

There were ten politicians left over. Jesus gives them each a bottle of red wine and a loaf of bread. He again instructs them to return when the wine and the bread are consumed. Days later the ten arrive at the Gates again. Saint Peter calls Jesus over. This time Jesus brings Buddha, Socrates and Confucius. They were to assist Jesus in deciding who enters the Pearly Gates and who either goes back or makes a detour to Satan's door. All four wise men ask a different question. If the politician got all four questions right, they would be permitted into heaven.

At the end of the test, only one politician remained. The wise men point to the Satan's door.

The man is upset. He yells out, "I was good, I ate the fish and two loaves of bread and drank the wine. I did as I was told."

Socrates said, "You failed because you didn't share anything with anyone. You took and squandered."

Confucius said, "On Earth you mixed with the wrong people and did bad things. You never repented to anyone or forgave those who you felt crossed your path."

Buddha said, "As a politician, you were retroactive and only acted when pushed or to cover up your laziness or wrong doings. You took bribes and abused your power, especially over women."

Jesus said, "You pretended to be righteous. You were misogynistic, and narcissistic. Next door is especially reserved for people like you. Just let Satan know which gang you would like to join. He may rebut that suggestion. The final decision is always his."

The politician is horrified. He asks, "Do you know what the gangs are?"

Before Jesus could answer, Satan walks out.

Satan uses his index finger and beckons the politician towards him. Satan places an arm over the man's shoulder to prevent him from escaping. "Now my dear man, you have a choice. You can pick from a list of gangs or be with the gang you knew about when on Earth. No matter which gang you join, I preside over the lot."

Satan reads out the list of gangs. The politician has only seconds to weigh up the information.

They all sound horrible. The politician decides to go with a new gang called Neanderthals thinking they were one of the many bikie gangs on the extensive list.

"Good choice," says Satan. He clicks his fingers. The man is thrown back to pre-historic times.

The politician is confused and frightened. He calls out, "Satan you're a devilish arsehole. J.C. You're sly "

Satan yells down to Earth, "If you going to be an arsehole, make sure you're the biggest."

Jesus yells down to the politician, "I am the biggest know-all. Don't forget that."

Confucius yells down to the man, "They are right. Satan is the biggest arsehole and Jesus is the biggest know-all"

Buddha yells out, " Now you are in a place where you are the biggest arsehole and know-all."

A Neanderthal lady sees the politician and is instantly attracted him. He tries to run away from her, but she catches him. She grunts in her language and smiles salaciously. She forces herself onto him.

All he can do is scream and try to defend himself. She is too powerful. She has her way. The politician is left sobbing and humiliated. "Oh God, why did this happen."

Satan responds instead. "You're the most intelligent bastard down there. Work it out."

The moral to the story is if you are a talented asshole, someone above will recognize and acknowledge your skills. You will be transferred to a more suitable position and location where you can exercise your skills with impunity.

Australian Slanguish.

Where did that accent come from?

When Australia was settled, it was a penal colony. The so-called worst of inner London which had the cockney accent were sent far away for their crimes. There was a mix of serious law offenders and those who stole food to stop themselves and their families starving. The jailers were frequently more violent than the inmates.

The situation in London, in particular was appalling. Many people were displaced by the fast-moving industrial revolution. People starved and begged on the streets. There was no such thing as government welfare. The rich paid very little tax.

Free settlers, very few came with the first fleet, came later. Still the greatest exodus was from London but the Scottish and the Irish came in larger numbers. There is one section in the state of Victoria where the Irish accent is heard and dwarfed into an accent similar to the New York accent.

Up until the 1980's many Australians cringed at the thought that their ancestors were convicts. Now it is a badge of honour.

Where did the Slang Come From?

Remember the first settlers, the mixed bag of criminals, jailers and free settlers? They were largely illiterate and uneducated. They just didn't have the words to express themselves and fewer had the ability to write. Some places in Australia have misspelling. For example, in the state of Victoria there is an inland sign which was intended to be a warning to fellow travellers to go around the thick deep mud that was once a dusty road. The well intended traveller wrote Kape Klear. Kape Klear is inland, not on the coast as the name suggests.

Going back to expressions, the early arrivals had a hard time describing the unfamiliar environment.

They had to invent words or expressions for what they saw. Metaphors and similes were used to describe things and still are used extensively in everyday speech. The slang is descriptive and at times an exaggeration of the situations.

For example, a person wanting a very small amount may say, just a bee's bum instead of a few drops or a mouthful. The listener instantly knows a very small amount is required.

Slang is largely handed down and is now in the DNA. An Aussie can with a few seconds of delay instantly understand an expression they never heard before. They use their imagination to understand each other. At times Aboriginal words were adopted. But they are few and far between.

Sailing terms were applied to many pieces of machinery which were brought over. An example, the car brakes were called anchors. Many sailing rules were applied to the primitive road system at the time. To many Australians drive on the wrong side of the road. No, they are just using sailing rules.

To understand the next short story, please go to a website which has Aussie English dictionary.

Have it beside you for translation. What is not in the dictionary, use your imagination. Think cartoon-like and you will get the story.

Please note, this is purely fictional. But incidents like these are part of the modern Australian culture. It is merely a sample of the rich language. It is enough to make migrants from non-English speaking countries feel they didn't learn English at school.

It's a Hot Day.

It is a stinking hot arvo. The tools are down as the boss sees the staff beginning to fry. They all knock-off at four instead of five. Spinner, one of the younger blokes, goes to his ute and strips down. He is now wearing thongs, budgie smugglers under his broadies and singlet.

He begins to waltz towards the local. His tongue is dragging on the ground for a hair of the dog.

He is stopped at the door by a passing copper. The copper points to the dress code. Quietly Spinner returns to the ute and changes the thongs for some hard caps. He returns and enters the local.

There are not many seats left in the place. He spots a stool at the bar. He strolls up and asks the bloke on the left and the sheila on the right if he could park himself between them. Knowing there isn't much choice they nod their consent. After a while a convo starts up.

"Stinkin' hot, ain't it?" says Spinner.

The sheila nods and says, "Bloody oath. Enough to fry an egg on the ground. The name is Lil"

"Can I shout you another?" asks Spinner.

She nods. "Only half. I just about there."

Spinner orders two halves. He continues to yap about nothing.

Eventually, Lil leans towards Spinner and whispers, "The bloke on the other side is a poofter. Don't get me wrong. A nice bloke who will give his right arm for you." She leans across the bloke beside her and says, "Hey Bluey. Wanna join us?"

Bluey grins like a cat in a fish shop. "Yep. Waitin' all day for a chin wag."

The first bloke introduces himself. "The label is Spinner."

"How did you get that?" asks Lil.

"Slipped on my bum on a wet floor while at work. Apparently, I spun like the hands of a two-bob watch. I don't recall anything. The lights went out."

Bluey shows some concern. "Stones the crows. You gotta take care of the noggin."

Spinner agrees. "The block is still in good shape thanks to the boss who rang the ambos. The docs treated me like a new-born bub. No complaints."

Lil asks, "When did that happen?"

"Centuries ago," replies Spinner. "Has any stuff come your way?"

Lil nods as she sips her half. “Nearly bitten by a King. The bugger crawled into the office to escape the cold in winter. The bloody thing was coiled in front of the heater like a mat. I only saw it when it lifted his head and hissed like Satan cursing.”

“Gees. What didja do?” asked Bluey?

“Called the friggin’ catcher. He said for me to eyeball it so I can tell him where it goes. He was lickety-split. The bloody thing took possession under the sink. Bloody hell, my nerves were shakin’ all day. Couldn’t get the block to fully function.”

Bluey decided to throw in his two cents worth. “I was on a tinny off the Heads. In the arvo, my mate Pete and me saw a storm brewing. It looked it would rival a black hole. We packed up. On the way back to the docks, a rogue wave came and turned me and Pete upside down. Yep, the drink with all the gear bobbing up and down before disappearing. Pete had his head screwed on and managed to grab the first-aid box. All I could think of good-bye to the catch and all the gear which cost an arm and a leg. Pete and I managed to climb onto the upside down tinny. We were glad to get out of the drink. It was getting cold. I kept wondering if my Johnny was going to be snapped frozen. I was packing it as I knew grey nurses could be around. I didn’t want to be dinner.

“Pete pulled me together. Great guy. In the first aid box were a couple of flares. Pete let one go as I pointed out a distant fancy yacht. We were lucky. They saw the flare and came over.

“Love a duck, we were ever so grateful. It turns out the bloke was a big-wig from the north side. His name was Charlie. He introduced us to his crew. Nice mob.

“We met up a few times, after that rescue and me doling out all the time. One day we met Charlie at a coffee shop. He was going to do an exchange with the kids. When the ex came along with the tribe, he quickly introduced us to gang. Well, she was quick on the pace and eyeballed Pete. Pete didn’t want to do the dirty to Charlie, so we split. Blow me down, days later, Pete gets a call.

The forward ex wants to meet up with him. He quickly put the brakes on that by blocking her. You don't get tangled up with a guy's ex after he saves your neck."

Spinner and Lil are chuffed for Bluey. All three sat in the local downing more hair of the dog.

Bluey excuses himself. "Sorry. Got to go to the boy's room." He trots off to the dunny.

Lil is accosted by a drunken Shorty. She does her best to shake him off, but the soggy wheels are not turning. Spinner takes a gamble and slips an arm around Lil's shoulders. She obliges by holding it. The message sinks in and the bloke wobbles off to another table.

Blue returns and sees my arm slip off Lil's shoulder. He asks' "Didn't know you two were together."

Lil jumps in and nods towards the clown fumbling at every table he nears. "Spinner was posing to get Shorty away from me. "Bluey frowns at the drunk. "Goo' onya. He's a regular fart. He's goin' to gedit sooner or later." No sooner than Bluey says the words, there was a thump, a beginning of a brawl. Bluey and Spinner escort Lil out of the watering hole. They were quickly followed by a string of drinkers and some furniture. Someone rings the coppers and the ambo. Shorty is muscled away in the back of a paddy. The ambos give a quick check to all before leaving. Everything is back to normal.

The Trials of a Civil Servant.

Because of the multitude of languages in small areas and the varying degrees of understanding English and the variable English accents, many institutions which include banks and insurance companies may have signs near the front door. The signs clearly state if that branch has a speaker of that language on premises and could help with translation.

Adding to the service of communication is federal, state and council departments frequently have brochures and even forms in foreign languages.

The websites have a translation button. Generally, ten languages are displayed. What is on the screen is a phone number for interpreter assistance.

There are towns or suburbs in Australia where English is the second or third language. Parts of each capital city has enclaves where one ethnic group reigns and other have a multitude co-existing. Here are a few examples. In Melbourne, Greek is the second language. There are more Greeks in Melbourne than in Athens itself. In Sydney, the suburbs of Cabramatter and Parramatta one hundred and thirty five different ethnic groups co-exist. In Marrickville, the main street is divided. Greek and other Mediterranean food on one side and Vietnamese and other Asian on the other. The road dividing means nothing. It just happened that way. Brisbane has two China towns. The first one is in Fortitude Valley. The second is in the outer areas of the southern suburbs. The outer suburb has flourished due what the Chinese believe the good fung-shui in the area. Behind one shopping centre is a street that looks exactly like traditional Asian markets of the 1940's.

Then not far away is the city of Logan. Europeans manage to live in peace with everyone in the area. However, the Polynesians and the aboriginal people clash. What has caused the bad blood is not very clear to outsiders of the city. The police walk a thin line sorting youth disputes. Somewhere along the line, the fights become less with maturity, but grudges still remain.

Each state has its own unique mix of populations. It is not uncommon to enter a town where English is the second language. In Western Australia there is a coastal town where Indonesian and Malayan override English along with their religions. The people build their own lives blending their cultures and religion. The mining towns are interesting places. They are very multicultural. No language reigns supreme. Medical service are interesting. You have no idea which nationality of doctor or nurses will assist you. With much trial and error and pointing to charts, the doctor manages to diagnose you or write you a script of some kind. You seem to get better. For more serious injuries or illnesses there is always the Flying Doctor Service to help out.

Now spare a thought for this civil servant where the strong accent in speaking English causes misunderstanding. This happens many times until there is a light-bulb moment.

These Will Fit Her!

Two Indian men apply for permanent stay. They go for their interview. The clerk looks at the first form and sees the migrant doesn't really have any skills which will enhance Australian society.

"What job did you do in India?" asks the clerk.

The first Indian says, "I sell lady's stockings and shoes in the markets. I did a good business."

The clerk is not sure. "Sorry. Australia has no need for such salespeople."

The clerk looks over to the silent and patient friend. "What did you do in India?"

"I am a diesel fitter," say the proud second Indian.

The clerk smiles, "We do need skilled diesel fitters in this country. There are jobs up north. Are you willing to go north?"

The second Indian shakes his head. "Not without my friend. He runs the stall and I chase the customers saying, "diesel fitter her" when showing the stockings and shoes to the customers."

* * * * *

You know you are in
Australia when you see
signs like thESE.



ROAD CLOSED
RED CRAB MIGRATION
NO ENTRY OF VEHICLES
BEYOND THIS POINT

NULLARBOR PLAIN
EASTERN END OF TREELESS PLAIN

90 MILE STRAIGHT
AUSTRALIA'S LONGEST STRAIGHT ROAD
146.6 km

LAST SHOP
for 1000 km

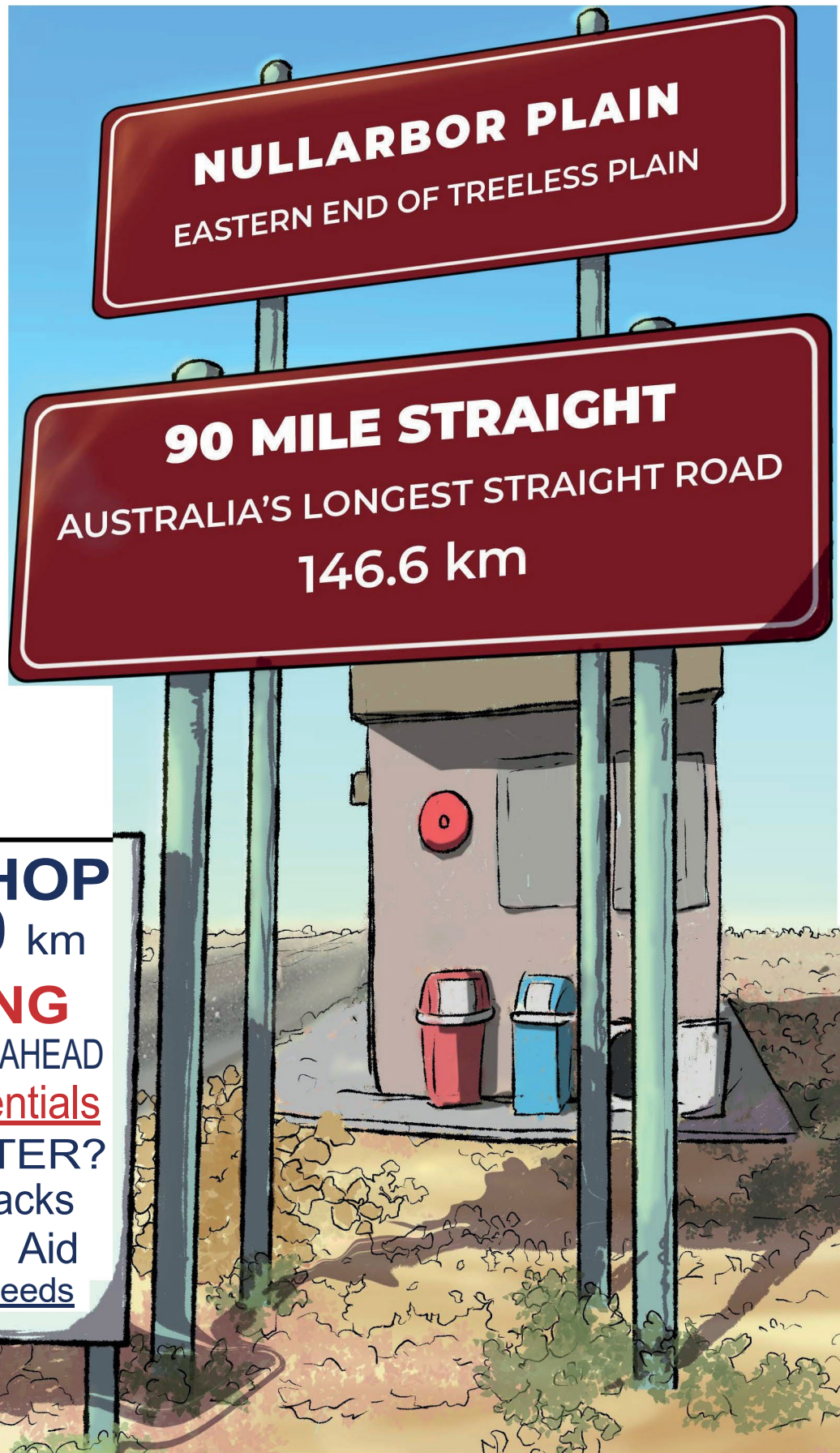
WARNING
REMOTE ZONE AHEAD
Nullabor Essentials

- COTWATER?**
- 00 Food/Snacks
 - 00 Gas-First Aid
 - Camping Needs

-X - ;r
? ffB'S

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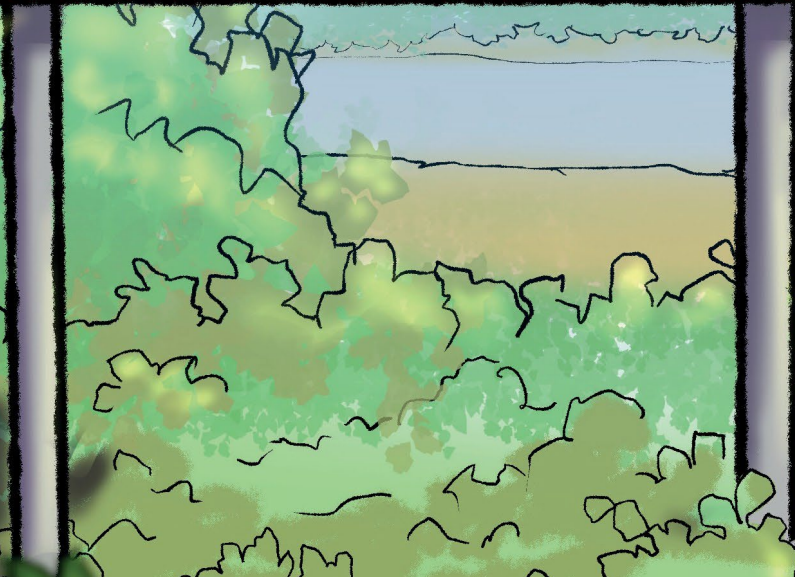
ii



**CAUTION WILDLIFE
IN THIS AREA**



**BEWARE
UNFENCED ROAD
FOR NEXT 150KM**



A1

BRUCE HIGHWAY

Nambour	103
Maryborough	251
(Bunda berg)	356
(Gladstone)	538
Rockhampton	634
Mackay	968
Townsville	1354
Cairns	1699



GREAT NORTHERN HWY

Dalwallinu	231
Mount Magnet	549
Meekatharra	743
(Newman)	1164
(Port Headland)	1613
(Broome)	2154
(Derby)	2308
Fritzroy Crossing	2482
Halls Creek	2771
Wyndham	3139

A 2

WARREGO HIGHWAY

Ipswich

36

Toowoomba

128

Dalby

211

Miles

339

Roma

479

Mitchell

566

Morven

665

Charlesville

754

TO GUNBARREL HIGHWAY

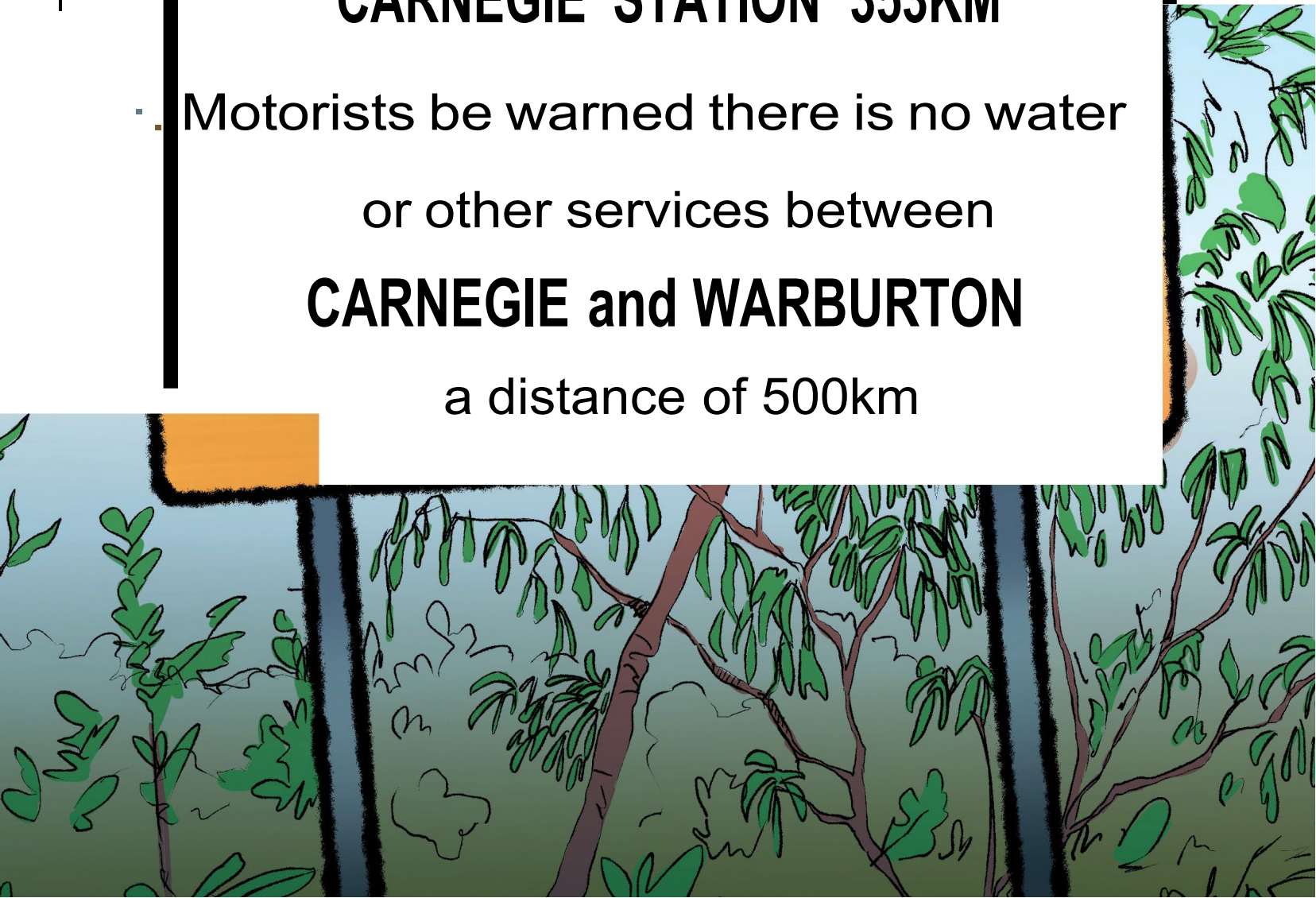
Next Stop for Fuel, Water and Supplies

CARNEGIE STATION 353KM

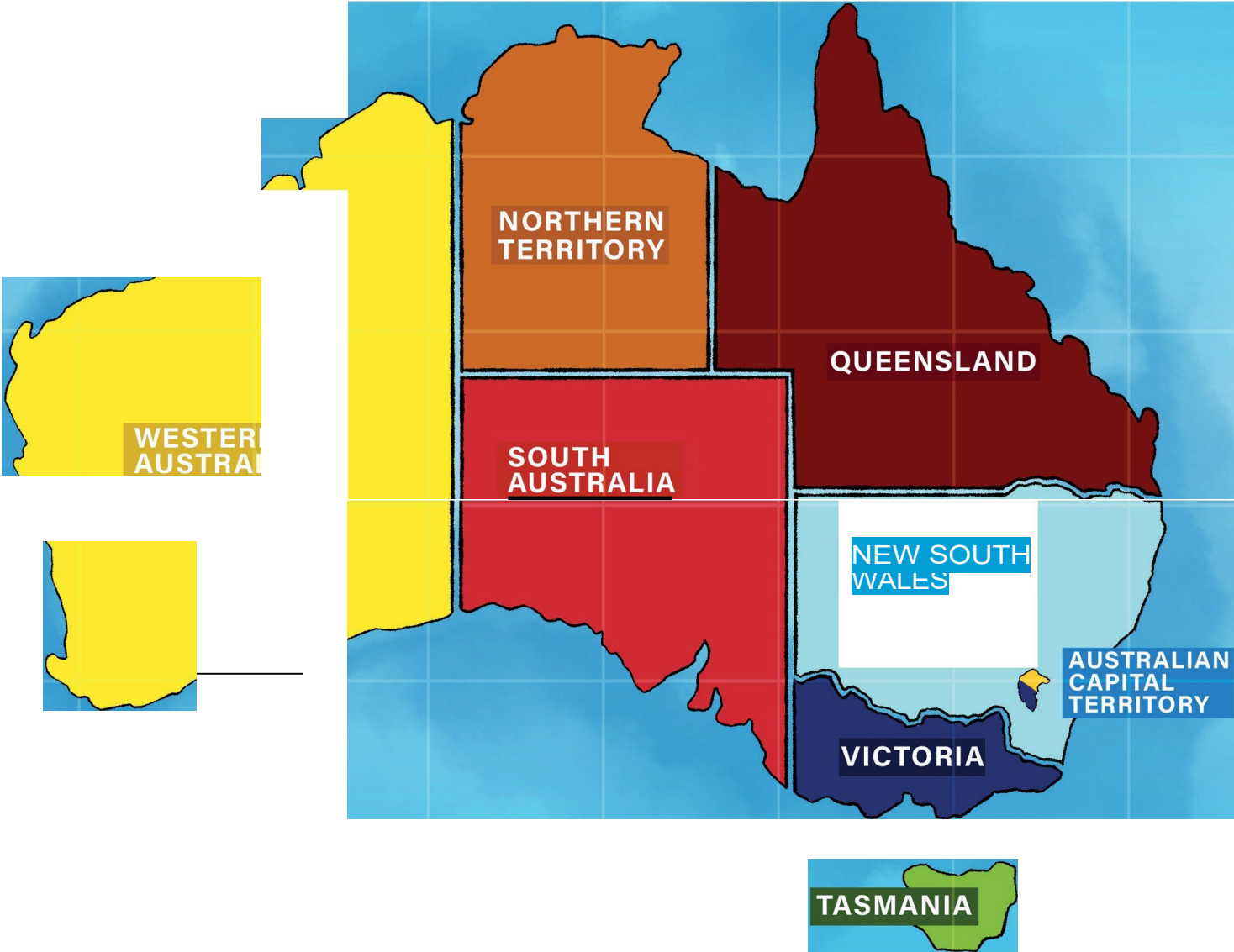
Motorists be warned there is no water
or other services between

CARNEGIE and WARBURTON

a distance of 500km



AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COLOURS AND NICKNAMES



The map shows each state has a sporting colour. Sports are organised between towns and between states. The clubs are huge and offer massive social venues for its members. They raise funds through assorted poker machines and other competitions within the club confines. Promising players from any club can be selected for the state team. From the state teams, players can be selected for international teams.

Here is a list of state names and the sporting colours.

Queensland (Qld): Maroon.

New South Wales (N.S.W.): Pale/Sky Blue.

Victoria: (Vic.): Navy Blue.

South Australia (S.A.): Red.

Western Australia (W.A.): Yellow/Gold.

Tasmania (Tas.): medium Green.

Australian Capital Territory (A.C.T): Blue and Gold.

Northern Territory (Nth. Ter.): Reddish Brown/Sienna.

Australians have given nicknames for people who come from different states. It is all friendly banter. Most names have derived from a historical cause or event.

Queensland: Banana Benders, Bananalander, Kanakas.

New South Wales: Cockroaches, Ma, Cornstalks, Welshies.

Victoria: Cabbages, Cabbage Patcher/Gardeners, Mexicans, Gum Suckers.

Northern territory: Top Enders. Centralians.

South Australia: Crow Eaters, Wheat Fielder.

Western Australia: Sandgroper, Sandgroperland, Westerner.

Australian Capital Territory: Round-Abouters, Actarian,

Vicelander, Polilander, Fairylander.

Tasmania: Apple islander, Islander, Barracudas, Taswegians, Jam Eater,

Hoilday isle, van Dieman's Land.

Anyone from W.A. refer to every other person from any other state as an Easterner.

Anyone from the eastern states call anyone from W.A as Westies.

Regardless of where you live, anyone who visits a state or even a house with friends or relatives in any location is called a blow-in if the visit is short. When the person leaves as suddenly as they come, they are called blow-outs.

If you are rude and visit a person's house without letting them know and the visit disrupts their routine or plans for the day and the visitor remains on premises offering the stay until the task is done, the person is called a bomb-thrower. This generally applies to interstate relatives who just blew in for a short visit.

Capital Cities and their Nicknames.

Qld. Brisbane: Brissie, River City.

N.S.W. Sydney: Harbour City, Emerald City.

A.C.T. Canberra: Bush City. Before Canberra was officially named, the following list was dismissed.

Union City, National City, Architectville.

Vic. Melbourne: Smellbourne, Melbs.

S.A. Adelaide: City of Churches, Addie, Heidi.

W.A. Perth: City of Lights.

Nicknames for Australia.

The word Australia was coined by Mathew Flinders who and his crew of three were the first to sail around Australia. Australia name was derived from the Latin words, Terra Australis (south land).

A few other names are: Oz, Great Southern Land, The Antipodes, The Land Down Under.

Dear Reader of Short Stories,

You just proved to yourself, you do have time to read novels. Just read them in bite size amounts or just a chapter at a time. Now get reading my other books.

Science Fiction Books. (Trilogy) Amazon, Stores, sanobook.com.au, publisher's website.

Portal 106 and The Pleiadean Experiment have been inspired by the ancient Sumerian myth.

Portal 106.

The galaxies of Oberon and Amada have been at peace for over a thousand years. Their civilization is now under threat by a race of humanoid lizards, the Lacertians. The people of Oberon and Amada look to Price Alcyn, a figurehead leader who is more interested in research into neutrino travel technology than the complexities of politics, to save the two galaxies.

Jed Lawson owns a horse stud in south-east Queensland, Australia. He is accidentally sucked up through Alcyn's neutrino viewer in Portal 106. Alcyn appeals to Jed and ultimately to Earth to assist him to save his people of the two galaxies who have lost their ability to fight.

Realising the two galaxies can never win against their enemy, the planet leaders begin mass evacuations. Alcyn carries the burden of the beginning of war into space by using unconventional means. As a result, the Lacertians place a bounty on his head. Not all of the reader's questions will be answered in this book. Some will be answered in the sequel, The Pleiadean Experiment.

The Pleiadean Experiment.

Millions of humans in the Oberon and Amada galaxies have died in the war. Many are held captive to be slaves or eaten. The refugees on new planets assist the small rebels still living on the overrun home planets. The Pleiadean refugees know this cannot continue and morale is at a low. The president decides to

build a long-distant spacecraft to explore other galaxies. In doing so, he lifts the morale of his citizens. They have old, corrupted maps of ancient explorations to what they called a mythical planet, Tiamat (Earth). The ship is sent to explore the long-ignored galaxy and finding Tiamat would be a bonus.

When they find Tiamat, they send one of their agents down to see if Pleiadeans could live amongst Earth people. They find a small group of refugees living on Earth. This becomes a catalyst for refugees who escaped to new planets to unite.

Sector 19.

The Draconians come to the human universe via a hole or rip. The Draconians are beginning to enslave the Lacertians. This splits the Lacertians into groups; those who are loyal to the Draconians and those who side with the humans.

The humans begin to reunite under the control of the Lords of the Universe. Earth people create the equipment, the Pleiadeans and the Lyrians help deliver the wares to the skirmish groups. The humans assisted with Lacertian intelligence, have recommenced skirmishes. These are decoys for the Lords of the Universe while they find a way to destroy the hole or rip in the universe.

The hole in the universe is found. Just finding the right technique to close the hole is troublesome.

One mistake could be the end of the universe to create another Big Bang.

Crime/Action.

Destruction. Amazon. www.sanobooks.com.au, publisher's website.

Stephen Nowak witnesses a crime just over twenty-five years ago. He and his adult son, Szymon are placed in witness protection when police fail to ensure the criminals are kept behind bars. There are moles in the system. Everywhere they hide, the Nowaks are found by the Polish and Russian mafia. There is a bounty on the Nowak's heads. This sends the criminal world into a frenzy.

The honest Polish police have their hands full and have realised things are more sinister than ever before. The mafia are just disposable foot soldiers to cause instability. Just how far up the Russian government has the mafia penetrated? Who are the true masters or old guard who want to reclaim Poland and East Europe in a bid to restore the glory of communist Russia?

The Obelisk.

This World War Two story was inspired by three Austrian deserters. Oskar, with his sister Kiana and their friend are the only survivors of their massacred Austrian village. They escape into the mountains. They are later joined by two other run-aways, Paul and Lori who desert the German army after being enrolled at gun-point. They too witness murder of their villagers. They travel extensively through Italy, become Italian soldiers assigned to Albania. Kiana is assigned to hostess duties in local bars and eventually to the Vatican. The men escape and rescue Kiana.

They travel to Switzerland where they settle down. They are enlisted into the Swiss army. Oskar, Lori and Jaro are required to go under cover into France and Germany. After two years in Switzerland, Kiana is kidnapped. Oskar leaves the group and travels through war-torn Europe to find Kiana.

To cross borders he changes uniforms. Just how far does a brother go to save his sister who is his only surviving relative?

Children's Books by the author. www.sanobooks.com.au, amazon, publisher's website.

The author has used the name Gina Sano.

When is it Going to Rain?

The Magical Eggs on Dragon's Lair.

The Coin, The Ring and the Key. Book 2. The Magical Eggs on Dragon's Lair.

Traffic Lights.

Follow the Leader. English and in dual format: English and Spanish.

Animation only from Sano Books.

Hickory Dickory Dock Book 1. English. And a dual format: English and Spanish.

Hickory Dickory Dock Book 2.

Traffic Lights: An Introduction to Play Reading.

Leap Frog.

Any title not on Sano Book website will appear in the 2024.

