

You never know the turns in a road

“We were mentally beaten and bloodied by the ordeals of the day”

We left early, around 3am, to ‘make good time’, as my Dad used to say. We were driving to Byron Bay, and when I say ‘we’ I don’t mean ‘me’ – I was drinking. Two cars, two days, six people and 120 beers.

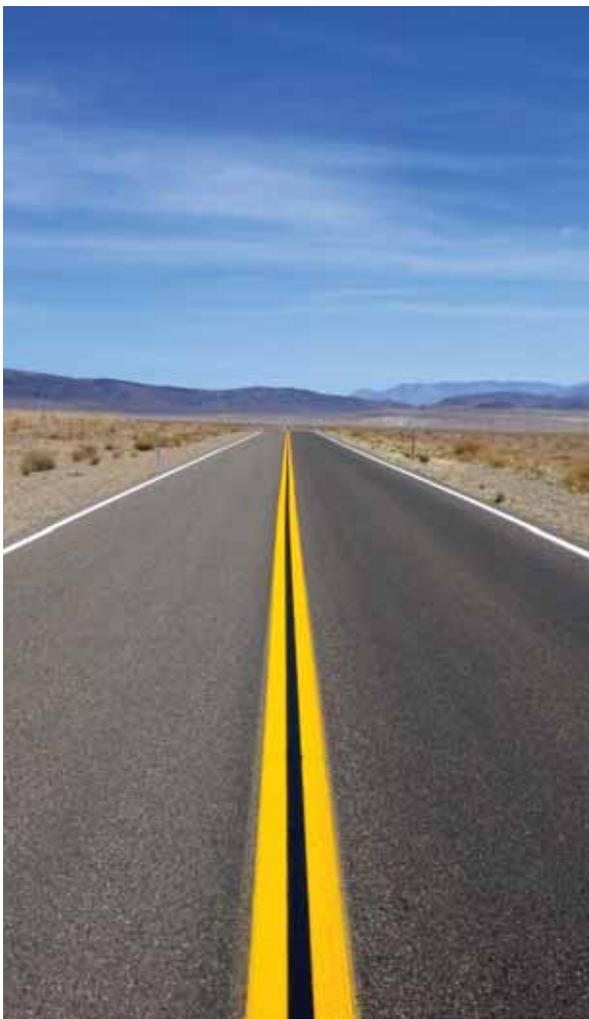
Somewhere between Holbrook and Yass in the middle of NSW one of the cars broke down. We stopped at a truck stop that served the sort of food that fell between old school Maccas and the kiosk that gave the whole football team food poisoning when you were 12.

We waited hours for the RACV. My friend Jake and I each bought a mini polystyrene esky, just big enough to hold about six beers, and some ice. It was my little piece of icy heaven in the midst of the scorching heat and hostile bikies. The car needed to be towed. Someone needed to wait for the tow truck and then ride with it to Sydney, while the others went on ahead. The group turned to face Jake and me, “It has to be one of you, because you can’t drive”.

I think I fainted when the tow truck driver appeared. He was a mix of characters that were real but in a shockingly real way. He was the sort of character that if a cartoonist tried to sketch him, he’d probably break the pencil at least a couple of times. He had a limp and a bad eye, scars and tattoos. I’m deadly serious. My friend and I just stared at each other, silently mouthing the same words, “What...the...f**k”. He had a name like Bob, the simplicity of his name only made the whole experience even more bizarre.

“Hi, my name’s Tex”, I said. Don’t ask me why, it had been a long day already and I was more than a little bit over the limit, if you catch my drift.

For the purpose of this story, she shall be known as Truck Driver Bob’s Wife. She did tell us her name at some point, but she was so visually confronting that her words just hit, and then slid off your consciousness like bird shit on a windscreen. We thought she was just there to say goodbye to the hubby, so naturally we were more



than a little surprised when the beast of a woman said, “If one of youse wants to ride in the front I’ll sit in the back with the other”. There isn’t enough beer in Bavaria that could have prepared my

psyche for the places that one simple sentence took my mind. Eskies in hand we both hurriedly climbed into the back seat.

When you overhear someone giving directions

and they say things like, “Turn off the main road onto the dirt track, and keep going until you reach the wrecking yard...”. It doesn’t exactly inspire calmness.

“Relax man”, Jake says to me.

Well relaxation is kind of hard to achieve when you’re hurtling down a highway in a tow truck at a hundred and something k’s an hour, especially when you’re half naked, half pissed and a thousand miles from home.

Then it grew dark and weird with us all singing Afternoon Delight. They were old and we were Anchorman fans...

We are all at the mercy of the forces of nature. And at about midnight, nature was forcing itself persistently down my urinary tract. Location? A weighing station on a hill in the middle of the bush somewhere outside Sydney. If it had been a holiday house it would have been called idyllic, but it was a truck stop so it was just f**king scary.

Without going into too much detail, taking a piss is traditionally a relaxing experience for me – not this time. My bowels seize up just thinking about it. Enough said.

The first glimpse I had that day of our nation’s capital, I wept, with joy or maybe relief or both. (Ok I know that Sydney is not

our nation’s capital but they think it should be; besides it sounds better. And ok, I didn’t weep. But that’s only because all my tears had been shed at the weighing station). Truck Driver Bob had been strangely quiet, and I got this feeling that Truck Driver Bob hadn’t been this quiet since stalking Charlies in the jungles of Nam. I was worried, then he spoke, “Um, do you guys know where we’re going? Coz I don’t.”

NOTE: Truck Driver Bob had actually fought in Vietnam. He spent at least an hour telling us all about it, constantly shouting and taking his hands off the wheel to make reenactments. It was scary.

Finally we regrouped at a friend’s place in Sydney and farewelled Mr & Mrs Truck Driver Bob.

It was about 1am. We were mentally beaten and bloodied by the ordeals of the day and only halfway to our destination. Jake and I were crashing in the lounge at the front of the house. We were just about to bed down when this girl (Jake’s cousin) walked in, all dressed up, skirt and heels. “I’m going out tonight to some clubs, you guys want to come?” Jake and I both looked at each other and grinned.

“Hi, my name’s Tex.” ☺

Tom Cummins

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