

Angel Miss September

A Vision of Rural Australia

It was easy to see
The effects of the drought
On their farm,

The bare, empty
Windswept paddocks,

The old homestead
With it's empty tanks
And dead garden,

And just beyond the woolshed,
Down on the flat,
The water tanker
Next to the feedlot
Of breeding ewes.

He wore his Grazier's hat,
Just like his Dad,
And *Great* and *Grand* before,
She worked hard
With kids and family,
And *full time* in town
While they waited for rain,
To keep the dingos
From the door.

But it was much harder
To tell the toll
On the family:-

Only the bank knew
How much more
They'd had
To renegotiate the loan,

She knew
That his little Brother
The Lawyer
Still owned half the farm...

And late at night,
Long after homework time
Laying in their beds,
Only the kids would hear
The raised and bitter
Sounds of fighting.

But no one knew
How much he was hurting,
His loneliness and shame,
Because he wore
His father's *Code of Silence*,
Great and Grand
Of course,
Had been just the same.

Sometimes,
On days when it all cut
A little deeper,
He could be found
Under the spreading
Stringybark,
By the creek
In the Far Paddock,

Sitting in the passenger seat of the ute,
Making love
With '*Miss September*',
With her legs spread
Across the dash...

No one ever knew or saw.
Except
His two black kelpie bitches,
Who looked on
Through the back window
Of the ute,
With curious ears.

Driving back
He would pray so hard
For an 'Angel' to help them,
But deep down he knew
That not even
Miss September's smile
And beautiful curves,
Beaming out from
That expensive,
Glossy Centrefold,
Could make his heart
Warm again.

His two friends
Shared his secret.
Glossy magazines,
Neatly stacked
And locked
In the ammo cupboard,
Next to the box
Of high powered rounds.

Even he
Didn't know
What was the final straw,
One long, hard, lonely
And restless night
Too many,
With a woman
Who had shut up shop,
The loan – the fights,
Little Brother
The loneliness and shame,

That 'Angel'
He often prayed for,
Who could save them all,
But who never ever came...

Just another boring day
During the drought:-
No rain in sight that morning...

He packed them off in the car
To work and school
And said goodbye...

But the dogs knew
Straight away
Something was up,
Straining at their collars and chains
As he walked to the sheds
Without them.

He took the magazines,
And a single 'hollow point',
Out to the rubbish pit,
Where he dropped *his bundle*,
Threw some diesel, a lighted match,
No grass left to burn...

He drove the ute slowly,
Out to the Far Paddock,
Parked in his usual spot
Under the spreading StringyBark,
Pulled the rifle out
From behind the seat,
Neatly shut the door

And strolled off down the Creek.

Late that afternoon
The straining dogs
Knew straight away
That the sound about to come
Round the bend in the drive,
Was not their Master's ute.

The words below
The neatly drawn map -
On the foolscap pad
Left on the kitchen table
Just said:-

So sorry. Gone to find 'My Angel'. Love, Dad.

Epilogue

Settlement
Was six months
To the day
After the funeral,
She took the kids
The Life Insurance
And what was left
After Bank and little Brother.

But two black
And broken-hearted bitches
Stayed on.
Still keeping their secret.
They never stopped listening
For their Master,
Driving round the bend
In the ute once more,
Wearing his Grazier's Hat,

Just like his Dad,
And *Great* and *Grand*
Who did before.

Tim Barritt Feb 2003.
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