

The Shootout Down Under

(The Boomerang Bloke vs. The Kangaroo Kid)

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Part One

It was a very pleasant Saturday afternoon in beautiful downtown Sydney, New South Wales. One block past Williams Street the commuter train pulled into the station. It was there only long enough to take on waiting riders and unload passengers of shoppers and sightseers and tourists and people on holiday. No one seemed to be in much of a rush. Some pedestrians began their journey towards Kings Cross. Others visited shops and restaurants and boutiques along Princess Highway to wherever. It was a casual day, a relaxing day. The perfect day to go walk-about.

One block up from Sussex Street, not too far from China Town, is a very old establishment known far and wide as The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club. This is where our story really begins. For close to one hundred years anyone who was anyone or thought they were someone in the world of pocket billiards or snooker have at one time or another made their way through these hallowed doors. Cueists from all over the globe have made it a point to drop in for a friendly game. From the United States and Canada, from Europe to Japan many of the worlds best were here. And if by chance these TimeZone jumpers were in the market for, say a little side action that also could be provided. After all, side action was one of the specialties of the house.

There was a lot of talent in the country, but no one with a bigger reputation than a gent known all across the Plains of Australasia as The Boomerang Bloke, often times referred to as The Aussie Bloke. And on one of the most beautiful days in sunny Sydney, having a relaxing pacificatory drink in the back room of The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club was the nation's current reigning '9' ball champion.

A more pleasurable setting could not have been asked for. However, nice as it was, the scene was about to be interrupted by a most detestable and malicious character from the far territories of the outback. A gent known to one and all as, The Kangaroo Kid. Detestable and malicious might be a tad strong. In all honesty The Kid could be half-tolerable. It was the three offsidiers traveling with him that pissed off everyone. They were three of the most unscrupulous and worthless pieces of riffraff to ever crawl out from under a rock, which they literally did. Downright insufferable is being too kind. Anything they could do to get under a person's skin and totally irritate the living hell out of them made these self-deprecating little creeps one-hundred percent happy as pigs in a pool of muck.

It was the likes of these creatures that made the denizens from the outback of New South Wales, and neighboring states, to sign a petition hoping to persuade and encourage law-enforcement officials and politicians to allow open season on them. The destruction by Kangaroos season after bloody season was bad enough. But now another problem complicated the peace and mind of station owners. They had to cope with a tougher adversary. The citizens felt that their petition of asking for one 30-day period was reasonable. They figured that if just one of these filthy vagrants was allowed by each hunter however many were left after this 30-day hunt would be encouragement enough for them to migrate, at a very rapid pace, to Queensland. Once north into Queensland they would be pushed toward the ocean where a more permanent fate awaited. The bounty hunters were out in force. Their plan was to rid the land of these livestock killers and make a few quid on the side. Besides, they were doing a service for the farmers and station owners.

The Courts dismissed the two thousand signatures as a frivolous attempt to wipe out the remaining dens of the Lost Tasmanian Devil-Tiger-Wolf pact. Of course, once the authorities discovered that bounty hunters from Hobart, as well as several other locations, were secretly tracking down these critters, they had to intervene. But until the law was changed, broken it would be.

This small wolf-like marsupial of the carnivorous persuasion sported dark transverse strips across its back. These wily creatures along with the Tasmanian Tigers and Tasmanian Devils formed a union several years ago to lie low hiding themselves away from the human race until the time was right. Their plan was to interbreed producing a stronger alliance. Slowly and methodically they planned to eliminate the ranchers and stations that provided livestock and poultry. These different marsupials combining into one 'superbreed' would not stop until the human population had suffered badly with losses of their animals and property through despicable acts. After a decade of prolific breeding, remaining unnoticed, they now felt that they were ready to carry out their plans. Several raids were made on far outback stations. Because no clues were found as to who or what was causing these destructive and cowardly deeds, they were free to strike whomever and whenever they wanted.

These creatures were discovered one day quite by accident. They were sunning themselves on the warm rocks of Bass Strait, a channel between Tasmania and southwest Australia, where the Indian Ocean and the Tasman Sea make their connection. A couple of fishermen were coasting up the channel when they spied several hundred of these odd looking two foot long creatures acting like fat tourists soaking up rays on Mary Jane Beach. One of the men had a home movie camera with two rolls of film. He knew that if he didn't record this discovery their mates back home would have good cause in thinking that they indulged in too much Fosters on their trips and would be laughed right out of the local pub when they went to tell their story. It has been over ten years since anyone has seen a Tasmanian Wolf and even longer for the Tasmanian Tiger. There was something lolling on these rocks and the film was going to record the evidence.

After the river men had the film developed they played it for their mates at the pub. Not a bloke could believe it. Everyone was aware that farms and stations had been assaulted by mysterious entities but no one suspected these creatures were behind it. A plan was secretly and quickly formulated. Naturally they didn't wish to arouse suspicion from local authorities and at the same time bring back as many pelts as possible before being found out. Bounty hunting was on again in three states and arrangements were made for a price to be paid for each pelt by two anonymous donors. Once the bleeding hearts and animal rights groups discovered what was going on they'd be out in force to protect this new breed of livestock killers as an endangered species.

Part Two Enter The Kangaroo Kid

The Kangaroo Kid owned and operated a 20-square mile area of ground in the northwest corner of New South Wales. Harvest time was fast approaching and he needed help. It was in the barn that he found three of these creatures hiding out from bounty hunters. He kept them hidden for two days until it was safe. How these three made it out of Tasmania, across the Bass Strait, a 150-miles to the mainland, up through Victoria and into the outback of New South Wales, is still a mystery. To date they haven't revealed to anyone how they managed to pull it off. Probably holding out for the movie rights. Since they have been given a new lease on life by the Kangaroo Kid they now back his play. And at the Kid's signal they make a complete nuisance of themselves when out amongst the populace.

Part Three The Setup

This brings us back to The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club. The front door is pushed open and in struts The Kangaroo Kid. He stands motionless for what seemed like a long minute. He stepped inside. As his eyes focused through the semi-darkness he was surprised to see so many people. There must have been 30 to 40 who had already staked out their chairs. One old-timer held out a flyer. It's headline read, "Shootout at High Noon". It went on to say 'Be early for the third meeting of The Boomerang Bloke and The Kangaroo Kid'. Another patron nodded at the gent standing at the jukebox. The man pushed the play list until he came to the tune he was searching for. He dropped a dollar into the slot and punched up 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly'. It fit the scene perfectly.

Slowly the Kid sauntered to the center of the room. His boot heels could be heard just slightly below the music. His attire was similar to the western character, the man with no name. The Kangaroo Kid looked a sight with the serape draped over his right shoulder and a short stogie pushed over in the left corner of his mouth. One thing was noticeably different, but very indigenous to the Australian outback, was the hat with several corks dangling from the ends of strings that were evenly positioned around the brim. They prevent or discourage flies and mosquitoes from landing on his face and neck. This may have been where the old Australian ditty originated:

Verse 1

There ain't no flies on me,
There ain't no flies you see;
There may be flies on some of you guys,
But there ain't no flies on me.

Verse 2

There ain't no mozzies on me,
There ain't no mozzies you see;
There may be mozzies on some of you Aussies,
But there ain't no mozzies on me.

The Kangaroo Kid eased himself toward the bar. He stood and stared at the large mirror that was hanging on the wall behind the barkeeper. He could see every patron in the house. Every eye was on him, and The Kid liked being the center of attention. "The... Bloke... around?" he asked, taking up twice as many seconds to say the words than the number of words in the question. The Kid let out a prolonged laugh. "I'm looking for the great Aussie hope, matey. Your friend... The Bloke... he here?" The kid opened his long duster revealing the two-piece cue stick that was holstered on his sides.

The bartender looked up from the sports page. "Well if it ain't The Kangaroo Kid, and he's armed and dangerous. Careful Kid, that 60-inch, 20-ounce bamboo-shoot you use as a ball-buster might be loaded." The bartender chuckled as he nodded toward the cue stick. Ignoring The Kid further, the barkeeper motioned to the back room. He went back to his paper as if nothing important was taking place. This kinda upset The Kid for a second. Maybe he wasn't putting on a tough enough act. No matter, on his last visit, as most of these loafers and hangers-on recall, he walked out five thousand dollars richer. Maybe he'll get the respect he's entitled after today's meeting.

The Kid ambled toward the back room where the barman pointed. The Bloke was there all right. He appeared to be out cold with his head resting on top of his little table in the corner. On the table were several empty beer bottles and an ashtray full of spent cigarette filters. The Bloke began to snore.

The Kid placed his boot on a chair and pushed it hard sliding it across the floor crashing into The Bloke's table. The force of the chair hitting the table jolted The Bloke semi-conscious. His squinted eyes were opened just enough to see who was disturbing his siesta. The Kid laughed at the bloodshot eyes as The Bloke fought to focus.

The Bloke looked at The Kid for a moment, then belched. “Well, lookie here. Bless me poor Uncle Harvey, if it ain’t THE KID. The all-important... nationally famous... half-brother to Skippy. Tell us Kid, when did you hop into town?” The Bloke displayed a superficial sneer. He reached for the half spent cigarette butt drooping over the side of the ashtray. “Look at what the dingoes dug up, and then dragged in.” The Bloke turned and yelled at the bartender, “Hey Timmo, did’ya forget to lock the bloody door?”

The Kid took a last puff from the stogie, dropped it to the floor then squashed the life out of it with the heel of his boot. “Well, if it ain’t the world famous boomerrrrrr-rrrrrang... joke! Oh, I am sorry. I meant to say... Bloke. Come now Bloke, have you forgotten the understanding we had about our third meeting for the right to be called Australia’s best, and the loser so acknowledges by kissing the stick of the champion in front of all witnesses?”

“Yeah, I remember. I’m here ain’t I!” slurred The Bloke. “Hey, Timmo, how ‘bout me pint, mate! I’ll shout for the great Kangaroo Kiddie as well. Forgive me for sounding a bit under the weather today matey, but I had meself a long night. Had a go with me trouble and strife. She left and buggered on home to her old lady, see.”

Timmo delivered the drinks. He set two pints of grog on The Bloke’s table and motioned to The Kid which one was his. The Kid sauntered over to the table. “Looks to me like you would be better off with a big bowl of vegetable soup, Boomerang.” The Kid hoisted his glass, half saluted The Bloke then downed the pint with one gulp. He wiped his mouth with the back of his coat sleeve, looked around the room at the crowd and without a bit of common courtesy, belched.

“My deepest sympathies dear Bloke,” says The Kid. “Parramatta Patty always did have a mind of her own.” The Kid slowly stepped back five paces until he was in the center of the room. He laid the serape over the back of a chair then unbuttoned his long duster-coat and took it off. With a mighty toss the duster flew across the room and found the hook on the wall. It swayed back and forth for a couple of seconds before coming to rest. He slowly turned to face the spectators. He had a captive audience and he was laying it on good and thick. No one could see his eyes through the swinging corks but The Kid could see all of them. The Kid had everyone’s attention. Even The Boomerang Bloke lifted his head off the table letting it rest on his fist.

The Kid was ready. He set himself for the fast draw. Quick as lightning he whipped out the butt of his cue stick from the left side with his left hand and began to spin it around. Just as fast the shaft comes out from the right side with his right hand. He twirls the shaft around for a few seconds. He then tosses the shaft into the air, spins the butt into it and presto, the 2-piece stick has become one prepped and ready for action. The Kid reached in his vest pocket and brought out a cube of chalk. Slowly he began applying the chalk to the tip of his cue stick. Then he wet his thumb and wiped around the ferrule to eliminate any dust that may have settled there. With that accomplished, he again eyeballed The Bloke. “I didn’t come to the big town to listen to some sad tale of woe concerning your cheap-ass love life, Bloke. I made this trip to play ‘9’ ball, not to hear all about your problems with your hugs and kisses. Of course, if you don’t feel up to it, and I can see that you might not be, I suppose you could forfeit to me the wager of another five thousand, or have you forgotten our agreement on that issue?” The Kid was playing with him.

“I haven’t forgotten a bloody thing roo-boy,” retaliated The Bloke. He followed that up with a hand gesture. “And I haven’t forgotten about someone spiking me drink from our last meeting. But it looks like you forgot something. Where’s those three goofy looking partners of yours, Kid, hidden in your pouch?” The Bloke let out with a hearty laugh. The room full of listeners joined in, albeit lightly. “I didn’t think you were allowed out of the loony-bin without your playmates, Roo.” Another round of laughter went up being led loudest by The Boomerang Bloke.

Part Four
The Dancing Trio

At that remark The Kid snapped his fingers and pointed toward the front door. “Wha-la, Mr. Bloke; ask and thou shall receive.” Through the front doors of The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club entered three of the surviving critters from the Tasmanian Devil-Tiger-Wolf den. They line-danced past the startled customers with flare and attitude. When they reached the center of the room they paused. Some spectators were amused and others couldn’t believe what they were seeing. Most of them came closer as they knew something was about to happen.

The trio was dressed in three-piece suits. The Kid had them tailor made special for this meeting. Their trousers were pegged at the bottom and folded on top of the pointed-toed boots. The 3-inch high boots were black and adorned with silver fringe that danced when they pranced. The jackets were square shouldered and padded. A short-stemmed red rose protruded from the large lapels. The wide-brim hat was a good 6-inches higher than it should have been. At first glance they almost looked respectable. The height of the boots and hat made them look much taller than the two feet they really were.

When the three critters took their places in the center of the room The Kid began snapping his fingers. A show was about to begin and the rhythm caught everyone’s attention. The Kid continued the rhythmic beat until the entire room listened with anticipation. The entertainment was about to begin. The Kid started it off and the three critters played backup on the chorus:

Well lookie here, it’s the Boomerang Bloke,
Let’s have a hand for the Boomerang Bloke.
You call yourself the Aussie Hope,
When you ain’t nothing but a low-down joke.

** A low-down joke, a low-down joke,
** He said you ain’t nothin’ but a low-down joke.
Look in the faces of all these folks,
They know you’re nothin’ but a big time hoax.
** A big time hoax, a big time hoax,
** You ain’t nothing but a big time hoax.

You lost your nerve and you lost your stroke,
You can’t run a rack, that ain’t no joke.
Your five-thousand dollars I got in my poke,
And you call yourself the Aussie hope.

** Listen up folks, listen up folks,
** He lost his nerve and he lost his stroke.
** He can’t run a rack, that ain’t no joke,
** Your five-thousand dollars he has in his poke.
** And you claim to be the Aussie Hope,
** The Aussie Hope, the Aussie Hope,
** You ain’t nothing but a low-down joke,
** A low-down joke, I said a low-down joke.
** Look in the faces of all these folks,
** They all know you’re a big time hoax.

Boomerang Bloke, Boomerang Bloke,
You ain't nothin' but a low-down joke.
You call yourself the Aussie Hope,
When you lost your rhythm and you lost your stroke.

** Here we have, The Kangaroo Kid,
** Who sent The Bloke down on the skids.
** With his head on the table sitting right here,
** All night long he's crying in his beer.
** What'da'ya say, hey Boomerang Bloke,
** Why don't ya light up another smoke.
** Take another toke, take another toke,
** You already let down all the folk.
** You call yourself, The Boomerang Bloke,
** When everyone knows, you're a big time choke.
** You lost your edge, that's a natural fact,
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back.

** It won't come back, it won't come back,
** The Kangaroo Kid won't cut you no slack.
** Cut you no slack, cut you no slack,
** Step aside friends, THE KID IS BACK.
** You're a galah, and you're a bunyip,
** From the looks of your eyes, you're on a bad trip.
** You can't play '9' ball, you can't play pool,
** Why don't you take up the didgerido?

The Boomerang Bloke, the Boomerang Bloke,
You call yourself, The Aussie Hope.
Everyone here kinda took a vote,
We all agree you're full of smoke.
All you do is gag and choke,
Keep messin' with me and you'll go broke.
Your five-thousand quid I got in my poke,
Just like a bullfrog you're gonna croak.

** Keep messin' with The Kid and you'll go broke,
** Your 5-thousand dollars he has in his poke.
** Take another hit, have another toke,
** You're staggering around like a Nanny Goat.
** Have some weed you loco fool,
** It'll ruin your nerves, you'll lose your cool.
** Drink your whiskey, and smoke those smokes,
** Everyone knows you're a big time hoax.
** They look at you, and they make jokes,
** Cause you're way down with the no-hope folks.

You lost your nerve, and you lost the knack,
Just like your boomerang it won't come back.

** It won't come back, it won't come back,
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back.

Hey look at me, you know what I did,
I sent The Bloke down on the skids.

** It won't come back, it won't come back,
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back.

Here I am, The Kangaroo Kid,
Everyone's talking 'bout what I did.

** It won't come back, it won't come back [clap]
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back [clap]
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back [clap]
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back [clap]
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back [clap]
** Just like your boomerang, it won't come back [clap]

As the trio of two-foot tall aggravating little devils danced their way out the front door of The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club, The Kangaroo Kid and The Boomerang Bloke began eyeballing each other. The Kid is standing in the center of the room between two pocket billiard tables. His taunting expression peering through the dangling corks slightly swaying from the rim of his hat was focused on The Bloke. He took a hit from the stogie. Even after the corroboree put on by The Kid and his kooky coppers, The Bloke still was not fully cognizant.

Part Five The Apparitions

The Bloke slowly raised his head up off the table. A startled look crossed his face. Suddenly, there appeared not one but two apparitions. The Bloke looked at the apparition off to his right. In a hair-split second The Bloke moved his hand as a large knife came flying through the air and found its target in the center of his table. The knife landed perfectly to the side of the bottle of whiskey The Bloke was reaching for. The large knife was instantly recognized. It belonged to his old hunting mate, Crocodile Dundee.

"Crocodile Dundee!" whispered The Bloke. "Ga-day mate. To what do I owe this pleasure?" The Kangaroo Kid and the patrons in the room looked at each other. The Bloke had obviously flipped his bonnet. Was he talking to ghosts? The Kid let off a low laugh and blew a huge smoke ring into the air.

"Ga-day Bloke," came the voice from the second apparition. "Long time no see, mate." The Bloke saw the familiar face of Fast Eddie Charlton, his snooker-playing friend of many years. Eddie was knocking the balls around on a table. "I say old boy, you look a bit sickly. Haven't you been feeling well?" Eddie Charlton was genuinely concerned. The onlookers in the house, however, were beginning to have doubts about The Bloke's mental soundness. When he whispered Eddie Charlton's name, no one could be seen. Was he the Boomerang Bloke, or, as The Kid alluded to, someone who was slowly becoming the loony-rang joke?

"He does appear to be a bit peaked, doesn't he Eddie," said Crocodile Dundee, allowing a small smile to cross his lips. "Do you think there's any hope for the lad?"

"Hard to say Dundee. From the looks of'em, I'd be willing to bet good money I could give him a fair go on this table." Eddie Charlton pointed not at the snooker table, but at the pocket billiard table.

The Boomerang Bloke has earned the reputation of the greatest '9' ball player in all of Australasia and was beginning to feel insulted. The gentlemen of The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club have been listening to The Bloke hold a dialogue with invisible chums. Crocodile Dundee and Fast Eddie Charlton are both very well known personalities to the gathered crowd, but still, no one has been able to see or hear them. Was Ned Kelly next, or, Harvey the rabbit?

"Well, Bloke, I don't have all day to visit," says Dundee, as he retrieved his long bladed knife from the table. "There are Crocodiles to wrestle ya'know. Before I take me leave I want-cha to get straight mate, and send this boomer and his three kooky cousins hopping along to the outback, say around Ayres rock. Who knows, maybe it'll roll over on top of 'em, ha ha ha."

The commentary brought a smile to The Bloke's lips. Just visualizing that monster of a rock landing on the four of them was too much to keep inside. He couldn't contain himself. The Bloke let go with a loud burst of laughter. The apparitions disappeared and The Bloke was at last coming around to the real world. To those witnessing this change, they still were not sure of The Boomerang Bloke's sanity.

"Hey Timmo," he yells. "What's the line in the sixth race?" The radio on the shelf behind Timmo was tuned to 2KY for the races. Ian Craig was at the microphone calling the gallops that were being broadcast from Gosford. It was five minutes to post time for the 6th race. The back-room boys were figuring the odds for the up and coming one and an eighth miler. Jim Tregonning, b.k.a. Trigger T, was at the board over at 2KY giving the totes when Les Mead punched up the jingle. This was the cue informing listeners about which scratchings would be for the remaining races.

Most of the gang had already decided on their picks and headed around the corner to the TAB. They had a few minutes to put down their bets before the window closed. Another spot was pitched for the Greyhounds that would be running at Wentworth Park that evening. Paul Ambrosoli would do the calling as usual. Timmo reminded The Bloke that his favorite jockey would be in the saddle on the long shot. He would have to hurry to make the window. The horse was going off at 25 to one. The Bloke checked his pockets and came up with four fifty-dollar notes. At 25 to one The Bloke would have a chance to see the Kangaroo Kid's offer. The Bloke staggered to the bar handing Timmo the four fifty-dollar bills. "Put this on me long shot, will'ya mate," asked The Bloke, still trying to pull himself together.

"Sure thing, Bloke," said the barkeeper. Timmo grabbed his topper and started for the TAB. Trigger T finished up final totes and scratchings as Ian Craig came on the air. "They've jumped at Gosford," he announced, with the usual touch of excitement in his voice. Ian always calls races like a professional speaker who is in total control of his voice and emotions, yet exciting enough that made every race sound like the bettor made the right selection. The listeners always feel that they are there at the rails watching their steed as it comes past the finish line for the trophy.

The Bloke plays nothing but long shots. His reasoning is that if just one came in out of every fifteen races he could win enough to support his gambling habit. Not that he needed the horses, his '9' ball tournaments and exhibition matches more than supported him and Parramatta Patty. The ponies were only a sideline. Ian was his usual self with an exciting ending. It was a nose to nose finish, and when the photo was developed, The Bloke's nose prevailed. At 25 to one, the two hundred dollars was turned into a whopping five thousand. The Bloke didn't have to call Patty for money after all. He sent Timmo to the TAB for his winnings. He bought a round of drinks for the railbirds and motioned for The Kangaroo Kid to get ready. That's when The Bloke turned loose with his reprisal:

The Bloke's Reprisal

Well lookie here, it's The Kangaroo Kid,
Telling everybody 'bout what-cha did.
Going around bragging, making a joke,
About the 5-thousand dollars you got in your poke.
You got it from me, and we both know,
That you spiked me drink you dirty Dingo.
You told your story, now I'll tell mine,
I passed right out, when you spiked me wine.

Spreadin' the news all over this town,
To show me up just to knock me down.
Just for the record, I wanna make it clear,
You came to town and I'm glad you're here.
You been talkin' loud and drawing a crowd,
Been huffin' and puffin' up like a big cloud.
I'll get my stick and show my stuff,
What little you know ain't barely enough.

Wow, look at that hat, take a peek at those clothes,
Check out the leather he has on those toes.
Corks may bob and corks may swing,
When I'm through with you, you won't own a thing.

"The Kangaroo Kid? What a joke! You're more like what Johnny Williamson sings about... a comic strip cowboy. Only it's not going to take six boys in blue to put you down. Only one and that would be me." And with that, The Boomerang Bloke began to dazzle the crowd of onlookers with the most superb display of shot making in his 20-odd years of playing. The Kangaroo Kid had no choice but to watch. He tried every trick to distract The Bloke. He gave out with an occasional cough, played the jukebox, and even dropped his two-thousand-dollar cue stick to the floor. The Bloke was in the zone. Not a thing disturbed him; not a sound could he hear.

Somewhere around the sixth game while The Bloke was running another rack it was quite obvious that The Kid was beginning to feel the pressure. He became fidgety. He changed chairs. He ordered double shots of hard stuff and two beer chasers. The Kid complained about playing conditions. The table was off. The felt needed changing. He insisted on moving to another table and was accommodate. That proved as unsuccessful a ploy as the others did. Nothing, but nothing rattled The Boomerang Bloke this day. It was by far his finest hour. Not a member of The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club could ever remember anyone, not even Fast Eddie himself, running off eight racks of '9' ball. If The Bloke could make it one more, he would be up the first leg in their 5-thousand-dollar freeze-out match.

It took less than a minute. The Aussie Bloke was in dead stroke. He steamrolled the Kid, 9-0. The railbirds gave it up for a standing 'O'. It lasted a full 60-seconds. Even at the applause and excitement The Bloke seemed unaware of everything going on around him. He was in another world.

The Kid called for a time out. It was within the rules. After each set either of the players may ask for a ten minute rest period. The Kid had to think of some way to slow The Bloke down. This was something Sagas were made of. The reports were already going out over the phone lines that The Bloke ran nine games and out from the break. It was worthy news of much attention indeed.

The rest period now over, both players approached the table for the second set. Timmo flipped a coin; The Kid called heads. The coin hit the table, bounced a couple of times and landed with the head side up. The Bloke began racking the balls for the opening game. The Kid chalked his break stick, put another stogie in the side of his face and sent a long stream of smoke toward the ceiling. He stroked four times then smashed the head ball sending the rack of balls racing around the table. The two, five and seven balls found pockets.

“Now THE KID is in charge,” he yelled. If he could duplicate what The Bloke did, it really would be a day to remember. Everything seemed to be going The Kid’s way until the middle of the fifth game. Two balls were frozen on the rail and the breakout shot failed to separate them. He couldn’t get a decent shot for the out. The only chance The Kid had was a long shot. Had he not been ahead 4-0, he wouldn’t have taken the chance. But to keep The Bloke in his chair, he had to give it a go. Somewhat over extended, The Kid got a little too far under the cue ball. It resulted in a miscue. Seeing that, the railbirds let go with their own razz:

** Did our ears deceive us, or did you miscue,
** Tell us all Kid, what-cha gonna do?
** I’d use the chalk if’en it was me,
** In case you forgot, chalk is free.

A good laugh went up from the spectators who were getting involved in the excitement.

** A little off your game there ain’t-cha Kid,
** Is it something he said or something he did?
** If you lose your cool, then you’ll lose you touch,
** But some folk’s say you never had much.

** Your only chance is not to choke,
** But remember you’re up against The Boomerang Bloke.
** You don’t want to choke, you don’t want to choke,
** You’re up against The Boomerang Bloke.

Reaching the table for the first time this set, The Bloke ran out the rack and took charge from there. He didn’t run out the set as before, but the results were close to the same, 9-4. Friends of the Bloke’s got in on more fun at The Kid’s expense.

** I said hey Kid, come on Kid,
** With all that talent, why you keeping it hid?
** It looks to us you’re a real choker,
** So now which one is the real no-hoper?

** Looks like it’s you that’s startin’ to choke,
** Can’t be because you’re playing The Bloke?
** Playing the Bloke, playing the Bloke,
** You know you’re in a game with the Boomerang Bloke.

Ha, ha, ha! The railbirds were letting The Kangaroo Kid have it good. The Bloke was hitting them like Fast Eddie Charlton in his prime. Down two sets to nothing The Kid called for another time out. He slowly walked to his table and slumped down in a chair. He placed his left boot against the side of another chair and kicked it across the floor at the laughing onlookers. The corks from his hat were swinging

wildly from side to side. That alone would have gotten the average man dizzy; but The Kid just growled and gazed through them. He ordered nothing. It was one of the few times The Kid went this long without firing up a stogie. He sat motionless the entire ten minutes as if in deep meditation. One railbird, watching with great interest, mentioned to his companion that “he hasn’t blinked, even once.”

“Yep,” replied his mate. “That’s a big fair-dinkum.” One spectator sitting close to the Bloke mentioned, “The Kid was definitely in a world of his own.” When he heard that The Bloke turned to the gentleman and whispered, “If you think the hopping fool is in a deep freeze now, just wait until after the next set. I’ll have him in a bloody coma before dinner.”

“One observer reminded some others, “...wasn’t The Bloke in another world earlier?”

The Kid stood, hesitated then picked up his cue stick. He headed toward the playing table to begin the third set. The Boomerang Bloke joined him. Timmo flipped the coin and The Kid got the call.

“I’ve been doing some serious thinking, Bloke,” said The Kid, trying to make it sound rough. “Let’s not carry this grudge out any longer than necessary. It’s time to cut the dung. This next match for the whole Cockatoo, bright feathers, comb and all. An extra five thousand; any problem with that?”

The Bloke reached over and picked up his coin from the table. “All or nothing, aaaye Kid. What an inviting proposition.” He reached up and rubbed the stubble on his chin. “The perfect solution in fact. It would get you and those little creepy bozos out of town faster, wouldn’t it now!”

The Kid pulled out his pocket watch and flipped open the lid. Not only did it reveal the time, it began playing a tune, a very recognizable little tune. It was identical to the melodious tones that were playing when the shootout took place in the dessert at the end of the movie, ‘The Good, The Bad and The Ugly’. But here, in the middle of the room at The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club, on this beautiful sunny day, instead of Clint Eastwood, Eli Wallach and whoever that other bad guy was eyeballing each other in the shootout for revenge, and/or whatever the amount of gold involved, it was The Kangaroo Kid and The Aussie Bloke. They were going for five thousand dollars plus the right to laugh the other out of town. Sometimes movies are as exciting as ‘9’ ball.

The Kid turned toward the front door, then back to his watch. The corks dangling from the strings were swinging ever so slightly. Was he expecting company? Maybe those heinous little creatures were going to put in another appearance. He certainly was concerned about the time. Come to think of it, the little buggers haven’t been seen throughout the match. The Bloke was at the table preparing the rack for the first game of the third set. The Kid approved the rack, chalked the tip, stroked a couple of times then blasted the cue ball into the head ball to open the match.

To make a long story short, The Bloke never gave The Kid a chance. It took only thirty minutes for a 9-2 victory. The Bloke was five thousand dollars ahead. As far as he was concerned, they were only even for all the matches they had played. One railbird remarked to another how The Bloke was staying on his side of the room. “No one was going to get close enough to spike his drinks this year.”

“There’s no two ways about it,” responded another, “...not too many players could stand up to The Bloke’s game.” Another said, “Not the way he’s hitting them today. Maybe that was just a drunken act he was putting on, you know, for The Kid’s benefit.”

“Whatever,” echoed another. “I wouldn’t want to be in The Kid’s boots.

“For two reasons,” said another. “Not the way The Bloke is stringing racks, and, looks like the heels need to be replaced.”

The Kid utilized his option again and called for another ten-minute break. This time he ordered a pitcher of beer. To go with it, he got himself two sandwiches and a new box of stogies. It was quite obvious The Kid was settling in and had no plans to vacate the premises. He figured the tide had to turn

sooner or later, and he didn't have any pressing engagements elsewhere. During the last match he peeked at his watch and at the front door several times. He couldn't understand why his companions were staying away. They had strict instructions to report every hour and it's been over two hours now.

The Bloke used some of his break time to make a couple of phone calls. Afterwards he ordered a pitcher of beer, one veggiemite sandwich and a deck of weeds. On his table lay the five thousand dollars he had been paid. He picked up the colorful bills and ruffled through them. Then he brought them up to his face and smelled them. A wide grin appeared. From his hip pocket he brought out a wallet. The wallet had a chain that was hooked to his wide belt. After placing the winnings into the wallet he tucked it into his left hip pocket and lightly tapped it a couple of times. The Bloke finished his sandwich, downed half the pitcher of beer, fired up a smoke and leaned back to relax.

The Kid took a long drink and fired up a stogie. He turned toward The Bloke, "I saw you on the Al Capone, Bloke. I take it that you were trying to smooth things over with Parramatta Patty?"

The Bloke sucked in a long drag then slowly exhaled. His eyes followed the light blue cloud sailing across the ceiling toward the smoke detector. "Parramatta Patty and I have our differences. It was only a small spat, nothing major. Besides, Patty is looking forward to visiting St. Louie, USA. I called for a spot in the 'Million Dollar Shootout' tournament later this week. After that, we're off to Disneyland and then to see The Tonight Show in Burbank, California."

The Bloke paused for a refreshing drink from the pitcher of beer. "After that, a one-week stopover in New Zealand to see her sister. We should return in about three weeks, maybe four, depending on how things are going. It'll be a well-deserved holiday, Kid. We're leaving tomorrow. I was telling Patty to dig out the passports and call for airfare. I'd be home with the money and she could start packing. And we owe it all to you, Kid. Thanks!" The Bloke was reaching his goal of getting under the Kid's skin, and loving it. "By the way Kid, what are your plans for the next four weeks?"

The Kangaroo Kid sat staring blankly at The Bloke. One observer leaned over and whispered to a mate, "He isn't just angry, he's pissed off!" His friend whispered back, "I can't tell for sure but I would wager that the whites of his eyes were turning yellow!" Their laughter broke the silence. It was hard to get a read of expression on The Kid's face. He was still wearing his hat with those corks dangling about. Only now, ever so still as he continued staring at The Bloke. A backer didn't have to hedge his bet none on this. After listening to the put-down remarks made by The Bloke one could get odds that The Kid was seeing bright red.

"You really think you got your act together, don't-cha Bloke! Anytime you want to have a go for some real bob, just fancy on up to the table, son." As he spoke, The Kid reached into his bag and pulled out another five thousand dollars. He spread the bills across the table for all to see. "I'm here to make it plain to you rail-rats, I didn't travel all the way from the outback just to let some overrated drunk make insults at my expense. Dig it out joker. Five big ones; race to three. You didn't hear me stutter; I said three... if you can handle the heat."

The oooo's and aaaah's went up from the crowd. It had now grown to 75 since the word got out about the big money showdown. This was something The Bloke had not counted on. The Kangaroo Kid made an offer. Everyone in The Sydney Snooker and Billiard Club was wondering if it was going to be refused. The Bloke thought for a moment. He stared at the room full of players. He looked at The Kid suspiciously. It has always been suspected, though not proven, that somehow The Kid had his cronies spike The Bloke's drinks when they had their shootout last year. Retaliation was motive enough. The Bloke put a real job on The Kid the year before. It was a solid beating that The Kid said he would never forget. He went on record as saying that things would be different in future meetings.

Part Seven The Beginning

It all began three years ago. One Saturday afternoon The Kid was in the city looking for action and challenged the first person he saw with a cue stick. It just happened to be The Bloke, the newly crowned 9-ball champion of New South Wales. The Kid had no knowledge of who this character was, calling himself The Boomerang Bloke and all. Just an upstart with a big head, he thought; a big head and a big mouth. But mainly it was because he had been out of circulation nine months and a few changes had taken place in the 9-ball world. Being out of action for that length of time and lack of quality competition was the primary reason that The Kid was not on his best game.

The Bloke, however, was in top form. He had just finished competing against most of the top cueists in the state and hadn't missed a ball in six months. Basically, a new comer to the tournament scene, The Bloke preferred to keep a low profile rather than to become a known player. He certainly opened a lot of eyes by going undefeated in the field of 128 entrants. Coming off that championship tournament he traveled three months on the road putting on exhibitions and taking on all comers for any amount. It was a very profitable venture. When he and Parramatta Patty returned to their humble abode on McCartney Street in Ermington, a suburb of Sydney, they were 37-thousand dollars richer. And while The Bloke was on the road promoting the game and making a name for him, The Kid was working his land totally unaware of what was happening in the world of '9' ball.

The Kid dropped five thousand hard-earned dollars that afternoon and insisted he be given another chance to win it back. There were no hard feelings as far as The Bloke was concerned. He simply took it as just another match. It was nothing personal toward The Kid. He agreed and told The Kid that the next time he was in town to look him up. It was to become an annual event and their second meeting has always been in dispute. The allegations made by The Bloke, accusing The Kid and/or his pals of wrong doing, were vehemently denied of course, and nothing could be done about it. The Bloke, knowing full well he had no hard evidence, not only paid out the five thousand, but made a decision on the spot that he would never allow The Kid, or his three vicious vagrants, near his table at any of their future meetings.

The Kangaroo Kid began to laugh. As he did so, the corks dangling from the rim of his hat started to dance. "What's the verdict, great Aussie hope? We got a match, or did you turn clucker? Clluuck, clluuck, clluuck!"

The Kid roared with laughter at his own imitation of a dying hen. The spectators and The Kid waited for an answer. The Bloke reached for his pack of cigarettes and set fire to one. After taking a couple of drags he poured a glass of beer and drank it down. The Bloke looked at his watch, sucked in another drag and let out a stream of smoke that sailed across the room straight at The Kid. The Kid showed no emotion at this childish display. He fired up a stogie and blew a big cloud of smoke back at The Bloke. This caused one old-timer to whisper to another, "...from a pool match to a smoke fight, what a thrill." Then he yelled, "Hey, what are you half-wits trying to do, don't you know that second-hand smoke causes cancer?" The onlookers gave out with a roar. The Kid joined them. He was laughing loudest of all. The Bloke peeked at his watch again.

The Kid couldn't figure out what the big delay was all about. Unless, did The Bloke need permission from Parramatta Patty? That brought another grin to his weather-beaten face. Whatever, the match was on. The crowd was getting restless. They wanted to see more action and moved closer to the pool table. No one wanted to miss a single shot of this match. A race to three could be over in a blink. Was The Bloke headed for a ten thousand dollar payday, or were they going to break even? The Bloke

won the toss to break the first game. He slicked up the shaft, scuffed and chalked the cue tip then approached the table. Having just racked the balls the Kangaroo Kid stepped back from the table. Just as The Bloke was about to smash into the cue ball, the door of the billiard club opened. It was Parramatta Patty. She went straight to The Bloke, whispered something to him and smiled. The Bloke nodded his head approvingly. He waved to The Kid, "Did ya'say a race to three, matey, for five big ones? Hope you brought a cut lunch!"

Part Eight The Final Showdown

The Aussie Hope began this final reframe:
I say, now it's time for me to have fun,
Sending you and your playmates on the run.
Back to the outback where you belong,

To your stagnant surroundings, the billabong.
So grab your billy, and the rest of your crap,
Adjust the corks swinging from your hat
You're about to be put in your proper place,
I'll rid this town of your ugly face.

** Your ugly face, your ugly face,
** He'll rid the town of your ugly face.
** You got no style and you got no grace,
** The Bloke will put-cha down in your place.

The Bloke took his place at the table once again. "Hope you're in the mood for sight seeing Kid. Cause after this match you can travel this big country round." He stroked four times then sent the cue ball into the pack with such force pedestrians out on the foot path stopped and looked around to see what the noise was about. The Bloke made four balls on the break. The remaining five were spread about for the pickings. It was an easy run for an early 1-0 lead. To a person the house patrons were rooting for The Bloke. Most of them witnessed the shootout last year and knew The Bloke got stung. Now they were willing to get behind him and join the festivities. They pointed their fingers at The Kid and began:

** Your ugly face, your ugly face,
** Showing it in public is a big disgrace.
** He'll rid the town of your ugly face,
** The Bloke will put-cha down in your place

I'll rid the town of your ugly face [clap]
** He'll rid the town of your ugly face [clap]
I'll rid the town of your ugly face [clap]
** He'll rid the town of your ugly face [clap]

"Yes sir, Kid. Mark it down, when I leave here today I'm-a gonna feel like J.C. Bulginpockets." The Kid tightened them up for game two. The Bloke let fly a rocket of a break. The scattered balls flew around the table. This time five balls made their way into pockets. The Bloke had another easy runout. Now with the score 2-0 the partisan crowd really gave it to The Kid. The Kangaroo Kid waited a very loooonnnng moment before ungluing himself from his chair. Disgusted, he made it to the table to rack for the third game. He rustled the balls together, racked them, stepped back and waited for The Bloke's

approval. The Boomerang Bloke ignored the rack. He wasn't going to worry about perfection, not at a time like this. Not the way things were going. He was a runaway train out of control. Step aside mister or get laid out across the tracks. "Just somebody try to stop me!" he yelled.

As The Bloke addressed the cue ball The Kangaroo Kid moved away from the table. "This is your highway to the grave, Kid." The Bloke sent a laser beam into the pack making a great spread. The '9' came out of the pack and began rolling toward the left corner pocket. Everyone thought it was going to be a walk-off '9' ball. But no, it stopped just a mere two inches from dropping in. No one in the house could believe what was about to happen. Suddenly, The Kid realized his chances were Buckley's and none. The 3-ball shot out from the pack and was making its way around the table. Three rails and a carom off the 5-ball altered its course. The '3' was headed straight for the '9'. A ray of hope was out of the question. There would be no divine intervention, no call from the governor, nothing.

When the balls met, the '3' bumped the '9' into the corner pocket for the win. Not only was The Kid shocked at what took place, but also the most incredible thing happened. Every old-timer in the club will swear to it until the day they leave this solar system. The Kid's neck jerked straight out in front of him about a foot and a half, as the old-timers will tell it, and the strings and corks dangling from his hat were so shocked, that they too shot straight out into mid air... and hung there for several seconds. It was the most unbelievable and strangest thing any of them had ever seen. It was game, set, match and ten thousand big ones for The Aussie Bloke.

It took a few minutes for The Kid to recover. When he did he killed off what was left of his beer. He reached in his bag, pulled out five thousand dollars, walked over to The Bloke and dropped the bills on his table. "You can kiss my royal ass if you think for one minute I'll stoop to kissing your stick."

The Aussie Bloke tipped his tit for tat. "See ya' next year, Kid. Leave the critters at home."

Without comment The Kid half-heartedly waved to the gents of the club, turned and headed for the door. As he rounded the corner to the parking lot he could still hear the applause and shouting from the crowd echoing through the walls. Upon approaching his wagon The Kid noticed that his three companions were in the back seat fast asleep, not that they could do anything had they been awake. Somehow they managed to get themselves all tied up and gagged. Parramatta Patty no doubt. So this was the reason they didn't check in. Bloke and Patty thought of everything.

The Kid began to laugh. Through it all he managed to keep his sense of humor. Serves them right, he thought, letting a woman get the best of them. For all The Kid cared they could stay bound and gagged throughout the 300-mile trip back to his station. He started the engine, fired up a stogie and drove off into the sunset. Next year, he thought, I'll be better prepared.

Thanks for taking the time to read this fable. I hope you got some enjoyment from it. If you wish to know how The Boomerang Bloke and Parramatta Patty did in the 'Million Dollar Shootout' in St. Louis, Missouri, you can read all about it in the book that will be coming out in the near future. The title is "Billiards on Broadway".

Later, Jay