THE DAY THEY CAME TOGETHER

The day as I recall it now was just like any other
As normal as a Saturday would instigate a brother
To be picking up the dog and bone with fine Australian zest
The mower out of petrol and a relevant request
"I'm as dry as Simpson's camel mate - I think I'll have a tub
It's ten past now – say three o'clock? I'll meet you at the pub"

As brothers do, I met him and I thought he'd gone insane
When he told me that he'd parked beside an early model plane
And I might have thought the scoundrel was already on the sauce
But tied to the verandah was this bloody big red horse
And it kinda' looked familiar, well, enough to send a chill
So I took my brother's word for it and headed for a swill

Not every hotel's got one but the Ellangowan did
A hat stand where the traveller can hang his dusty lid
As I found a peg for mine, I felt an awkward moment fall
It wasn't with the two guitars that leant against the wall
I must admit, it stumped me when the baggy green appeared
But the iron mask beside it? Crikey! This was getting weird

Nervously excited and suspiciously perplexed
Nothing could prepare us for the sight that followed next
As we turned to face the bar room, we were positively gawking
For there were Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson talking
The faces from our wallets, unmistakably they chimed
And believe me when I tell you that the conversation rhymed

I couldn't really recognise the bushman they were with
But with his goggles by his schooner, there was Charley Kingsford Smith!
My brother had to whisper, "See I didn't have you on"
But all I did was smile cos he was drinking with the Don
Invincible with greatness, sitting proudly in his blazer
Then Smithy made some room as they were joined by Dawny Fraser

The whole thing was amazing and we couldn't stop from grinning
But what we'd seen was only just the fairytale's beginning
For sitting in the TAB, a gentleman so dapper
It was little Tommy Woodcock – Phar Lap's legendary strapper
"The horse, of course!" it hit me, as the country's finest shearer -
Jackie Howe, walked through the door, with Albert Namatjira

Gazing out the window, Albert's Dreamtime eyes were tainted
By a blood-red summer sunset, which, I'm sure he must have painted
Back beside the bar and things continued just as eerie
With Mister R.M Williams tossing two up coins with Weary
"I've got ya' beaten Dunlop" cried the man in self made boots
But Weary's coins were working like a pair of fine recruits

While Charlton dazzled Lindrum with his snooker playing skills
The pairing in the corner looked a lot like Burke and Wills
The barman saw them too and bellowed "What ya' havin' here?"
"A coke for me" yelled Burkey "but my camel needs a beer!"
But Wills was far too busy getting good advice from Kay
And if anyone could help them, Mrs Cottee knew the way

Action at the dart board and a likely pair of rogues
The Mallee boy, John Williamson had partnered up with Hoges
Their opponents for this true blue game were Slim and "Deadeye" Ned
"I hit the mark at Stringybark" was what the outlaw said
And again, he had his eye in as he nailed another twenty
Cheered by Dusty, not so rusty, cos *this* pub had beer aplenty

The moon replaced the sun as we conversed in celebration
A coldie to remember with the heroes of our nation
The only thing we knew was we were there and we were staying
And I hadn't shed a tear 'til the piano started playing
The man who sat behind it sang a patriotic poem
About this land they called 'Australia' – the place he still called home

The singer winked; the others blinked to stem a teary tide
Then we figured out the bushman sitting close by Banjo's side
Yes he left his swag behind and he was waltzing to the chorus
With the jumbuck from his tucker-bag! It happened right before us!
Now I've always been the type to wanna' go out on a high
And it seemed the perfect moment for that theory to apply

So as final drinks were called (and I was still a trifle teary)
I pulled my little brother from his two up game with Weary
We bid goodbye, we walked outside – our faces must have glowed
We bear-hugged there, we punched the air, then floated down the road
The last thing I remember were the words my brother planted –
"This country and its magic – we should never take for granted"

A nest of opportunity for birds of every feather
Never was it clearer than the day they came together
And the day as I recall it now is one I'll tell my kids
The greatest story witnessed on the back of sleeping lids
Because I could have killed the rooster and his cock-a-doodle scream
When Sunday morning told me that it must have been a dream

Rupert McCall ©