

THE CODE OF THE BUSH

“I’m camped down by the old mine if you’re feeling like a beer,
perhaps we could swap notes then, I’d be glad to lend an ear.
The campfire will be lit and you can cook here if you like,
I’ve got some fresh baked damper; come down when you’re ready – Mike.”

The note was on my windscreen underneath the wiper blade,
I’d only just returned to camp as light began to fade.
I felt a little weary from the miles I’d walked that day,
but courtesy demanded I should go and say g/day.

His camp was by the big mine dump, but out on open ground,
and close to crumbling buildings that had all but fallen down.
I knew he was a bushman by the tidy camp he kept,
and everything was in its place, including where he slept.

He met me as I left the ute and offered me his hand,
then handed me a stubbie that had long since lost its brand.
I reckoned he’d be seventy, but still well in his prime,
a quietly spoken old bloke who had stood the test of time.

We chatted for an hour or two; the talk was mostly gold,
he knew a lot of history, about these fields of old.
He’d tried his luck in many spots with moderate success,
but had his share of tough times, he was quick to now confess.

He later told a story that had happened at this spot,
a yarn that’s tinged with sadness, and it’s one I’ve not forgot.
It happened in the early days when this place was first found,
a minor rush had taken place, for gold lay in this ground.

A chap had found a reef of gold but food was running low,
so left his wife and young son there, to guard their precious show.
And headed off to Geraldton to go and get supplies,
but not long after he had left, the poor young woman dies.

That journey took him many months before he could return,
not knowing of the tragedy that he was then to learn
The people of the field had taken care of his young son;
the spirit of the goldfields had ensured their best was done.

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And after days of searching, Mike at last had found the grave,
belonging to this woman whom he knew had been so brave.
His voice showed some emotion as he spoke of what he'd seen,
I just sat back and listened, as he then described that scene

A gentle breeze had blown that day on graves that time forgot,
and stirred the leaves of stunted trees around that poignant plot.
Old post that might have been a fence leant drunkenly askew,
and broken strands of rusted wire showed where the line ran through.

Her grave was with some others in a dusty spot nearby,
now overgrown with scrub and weeds in country harsh and dry.
He'd called again that day to weed and keep the headstone clear,
she'd been his great grandmother and he'd sensed her presence near.

I passed his camp next morning; he was packing up to go,
his campfire flickered faintly as the dying embers glow.
The sun had barely risen but some broken glass still gleams,
I guessed his mind was in the past; so left him to his dreams.
