

One Stripe

The Great Trek

Once upon a time a collection of unhygienic beasts caused a great panic amongst the human folk of the land, for they blamed animals for all the nasty illnesses caught; the nasty red lumps that came after a hundred fleas had visited you, for beasts had been rolling on the heather and making more beasts as well as well as fleas making more fleas; and the beasts were unhygienic for they were not house trained.

“Here is this a rat hair on my tuna and mayonnaise sandwich?” Willmina complained to Farmer Jack and they was having picnics in the open now the wife was in the Antipodes with Fred the milkman. And knew what rat hair looked like for millions of rats were running over their tomato sandwiches.

And since Farmer Jack was staggering about in the mountains man sent in a helicopter, and it had lots of guns sticking out of it and men who knew their job, and the job was Pest Disposal and they did not come cheap. Just more expensive than to catch a Great White Shark eating holiday makers.

“Mr President what is that?” A wild boar asking Keen of Scent who being wily and a dreamer schemer knew what to say.

“Ask the dictator,” and flicked a thumb back at One Stripe.

And One Stripe now on crutches did not like the look of the metal bird and a man threw a hot cigar out of the open door and it drifted down and landed on Mr President and that’s what you get for lying.

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“Puff wheeze suck puff,” a fox can get addicted to these.

“We must go fast as fast as we can,” One Stripe wanting to see next Christmas.

“We are not afraid of you,” Shining Sun and Twitching Snout fainted.

“I will save the day,” Magnificent Air and like a cartoon mouse in a yellow one piece jump suit led his eagles into the air.

“What about you?” One Stripe asked King Batty.

“The air is free,” the bat shrugging holding up his hands for he was an apprentice politician.

“Lend me your ears, your wings, your heroism,” One Stripe finding a high stone cairn and addressing the bats, “fliers are needed, never has there been a time when so many owe so much to so few,” and the badger pointed to the sky where the eagles flew about the helicopter that was no longer alone for three more had arrived and if they weren’t careful did shoot themselves down.

“There is your destiny, you were born for this day, heroes of the sky,” and the badger addressing the bats threw a stick at the sky.

There was silence as a million bats looked at Batty for they were passing the stick.

And Batty saw a million eyes staring at him just daring him to volunteer them as they knew what happens to volunteers.

“If you want to be Mr Vice President sacrifices must be made and all must see you are for all not just the bats,” Keen of Scent taking advice from a devil on his shoulder.

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“Fly with the eagle,” King Batty for no bats ever listened to him but as Vice President there were opportunities to become Mr President when a fox fell, “lots of berries in it for you,” the fox promised also.

“If you help there will be no more sausage only one fur, one nation of beast, safe to bring up babies, an education, free milk, free school dinners, low taxes,” One Stripe for he had learnt from a fox and eves dropping on a fox’s devil.

“Those in power don't have to eat berries, there are lost of big boulders and big shadows,” and the fox whispered this.

“I will lead you, follow me, fly me hearties,” King Batty.

And a million bats flew into the air and “We won’t forget,” came from them and when they were amongst the helicopters one asked, “I don’t pay taxes,” and another “My kids don’t have school meals,” and only takes one.

“Sure that was the right thing to do?” Batty asking the fox for he was aspiring for political office so had stayed where he was, but those who flew didn't know that and was the important thingy?.

“Trust me,” Mr President who had an angel trying to regain her dignity for a devil was smirking and winking and being too manly so she was distracted from giving Heavenly advice.

And as the few took on the hunters in the sky One Stripe led the host quickly west and were easy to follow for they left much muck for berries is not good for meat eaters.

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“As President I did like to know where we are going?” Keen of Scent.

“As Vice President I did like to know where we are going?” Batty pushing his luck.

“To lead humans to Eye, don’t you see mother earth has saved us, we will lie back and picnic while man cleans up Eye and our mess; believe me humans don’t like litter on the countryside, I heard German tourists complain muck was in their sauerkraut sandwiches and the gherkins had rat hair wrapped about them. So go tell everyone we are off to have a holiday,” One Stripe and the fox was shocked, he did not know One Stripe had it in him to be a politician and tell lies.

“I am a leader, a politician and dictator so do want I like,” One Stripe staring out the fox for the badger had read the classics and knew about Et Tu Brutus.

“A picnic, cool, groovy man,” Shining Sun and picked up a leaf and a shrew clung to the underside and headed west dreaming of cucumber sandwiches and pate’ on cream crackers and good Cheddar with bottles of fizz and no rat hairs or muck of course, that as reserved for the tourists, of course so berries was eaten by the mouthful.

“Hi ho hi ho,

We are off punting the river,

And surf on beavers.

Hi ho hi ho,

To frolic on the riverbank.

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Wild berries to eat.

Kippers to heat.

And we are all called Frank.

So can't be blamed for litter.

So blame the baby sitter,

Or the one called Frank.

Hi ho hi ho,

A picnicking,

A cricketing,

Hi ho hi ho."

And as Shining Sun that led the din westwards into the purple and orange setting sun, helicopters shot themselves out of the air and not a single eagle or bat was hurt for they was the few heroes who saved the many; and the sky opened so all saw a bright light and swore heard an orchestra playing martial music not angelic harps.

And amongst the heather a famous vermin band on orders from a Field Marshall was on over time, cheese not berries had been promised.

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"Here did you see that, a waste of good tax payers money," Farmer Jack complained watching a helicopter land in a lake and sink because it is supposed to land on a field.

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And the hunters aboard had to swim and there was thumping music as something big swam underneath them.

“Thump thump thump,” went the music but the bad hunters were safe for it was a prehistoric monster that knew if it had lunch it would be discovered, so swallowed lots of water to quench the hunger pains and sought tourists to frighten instead for they are never believed.

.”Here give me some of that clean water the labourer has on his back,” a hunter and his friends saw it had a good effect so demanded some also; so now there were Farmer Jacks and hunters all staggering about the mountainside wasting tax payers money.

“Do I hear seven dwarves singing?” A pilot hearing the beasts sing and the humans followed for they thought a Disney Film unit was ahead and saw opportunities as drunken extras.

“I might be hired as Snow White’s double,” one Farmer seeing double.

“I could be Prince Charming,” a Jack seeing pink elephants with big ears.

“Or the Big Bad Wolf,” a hunter wanting to meet little Red Riding Hood and find out why she was called Red?

“I could be Little Red Riding Hood,” a pilot and the hunter changed his mind.

But they went west to fame and glory for Hollywood was that way.

“Here what is this I have stood on?” Was asked many times also and not cleaned up but added to with empty barrels for the clean water had been drunk up; and the

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labourers concerned was relieved for have you tried lugging a barrel of XXX up and down mountains all day long. And left unattended barbecues for if XXX is concerned a barbecue is an essential, so whole forests burnt down.

And toilet paper was everywhere for this was the countryside made for humans to litter for they knew they could go home and watch a repeat of the Queen's Christmas Speech and eat a TV dinner and have more XXX.

And further west a Caesar was worried about Eye hanging limp from the mouth of Rover for he had heard whispers and did not want to be accused of murder. For when a cut-throat murders it must be done so no one sees, besides someone had spread a rumour Caesar was raising the taxes to build a Jacuzzi in his castle Roma.

"Wake up Eye," Crassus Caesar sweetly and opened a buzzards eye lid and saw X staring back. "Blooming buzzard," a Caesar thought and thought ugly ways to waken the bird like pluck the remaining feathers on his parson's nose off, slowly with a blunt tweezer.

For the Caesar's knew how to be cruel for they had a nasty habit of feeding the lions with you; besides that was why they didn't want a Caesar anyway.

And Crassus was not in the mood for Eye's games for he was covered in lumps for the roll down the ravine had not been smooth. There were many trees in his way and did not miss a single one; then the place was infested with nettles that sting good and tall thistles to get you places where the lowly nettle missed. Which explains why

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Caesar did not look very imperial for he had scratched lumps of fur away so looked mangy and unkempt like wolverines do but worse as if he was an extra on a Peter Cushing vampire movie/.

“Here that beggar better not be our Caesar, I want ruled by a movie star like Richard Burton who played Mark Anthony Caesar’s mate,” a dog who knew how to sneak into THE movies for dogs like kids don’t have money, or shouldn’t? But the days of a 6penny Saturday matinee watching the Lone Ranger and his Indian friend Tun too were not like Friday the 13th or Eddie Scissor hand, and a packet of fags now replaced a packet of hot chips smelling of vinegar and salt. And in the back pocket not a greasy comb covered in Brill Cream but a sharp serrated dagger to do you good while your wallet disappears.

“Yes that Caesar looks like an alcoholic vampire extra stuffed with sauerkraut that is leaking places,” a brother wolverine out of jealousy for now Crassus was looking meaner and tougher than her.

And Crassus became annoyed for he heard the whispers so poked Eye in the eye, both eyes so as not to miss to wake the buzzard and because the strip demands a torture scene to keep the readers interested.

And that made Eye stir and moan a little.

“See the buzzard lives,” Crassus Caesar, “no murder has been done.”

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And “No murder has been done,” was whispered amongst the cut-throats and Crassus’s mood brightened but he also heard for it only takes one, “That’s what Caesar wants us to believe.”

“Remember our Caesar is an alcoholic extras fired from a vampire movie,” another for sometimes it takes two so were believed: their Caesar was a bum.

And Caesar in his wrath pulled the feathers out of Eye’s bottom and Eye at last woke up and who wouldn’t?

“The buzzard didn’t moan much?” And “Because he was dead, murdered that’s why,” and “Murdered now after that plucking,” or “cur that bare rump looks ugly, someone cover it up,” and the cut-throats had to look the other way so Crassus seeing that he was not watched grabbed the buzzard by the throat and throttled him good, “Wake up and get on you feet or I will throttle you good,” Crassus threatened but he was doing that anyway and had to stop when the cut-throats attracted by gurgling sounds looked back.

And saw Crassus stroking Eye and kissing his beak and saying sweet things like “A warm bed for you Eye in Roma,” and meant a warm bed of hot coals, and “Lots of hot food for you Eye to get better,” and meant cold gruel and “As leader who led us east you can be Caesar,” and meant the cut-throats want to do Caesar for that booting well then you are Caesar for a day, “We have two Caesars?” And “So it was Eye that led us east to get beaten up, well I never,” was not whispered but said loudly for cut-throats are a thick bunch of well, cut-throats for they do not the have intelligence to

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be brain doctors or astronauts even or makers of blue Stilton cheese that smells so fine but have nasty memories of boots and want to give some boot back, to a Caesar who ordered them east..

Now Eye knew the same trick as a badger cub and played dead for as all animals know a dead animal is carrion and tastes bad as it is off, so don't tear it too pieces.

"When we get to Roma Caesar Eye can be tried for treason," Crassus openly for Eye was past meat although Crassus still visualised the buzzard with cranberry sauce and Yorkshire pudding.

And plenty of gravy and Brussels sprouts, the little sweet ones not the horrid bitter big ones mummy makes you eat to grow healthy.

"Look Crassus dribbles, an omen," someone without something between the ears and all the beasts craned forward to see what was stuck on the hot saliva of Crassus that stuck to Eye.

"A feather," a weasel and, "It came from the sky so we can expect the sky to fall on our heads," another weasel for they are only good at looping about pastures ripping the stuffing out of cuddly rabbits.

"The sky is falling on our heads, we are goners then?" A ferret that is just a little smarter than a weasel.

"I can save you, the gads above are not happy," and it was a recovered Eye appealing to the cut-throat sense of superstition. "The Gads want Caesar and Caesar is Crassus who has fooled yooooooooou," for effect and Crassus made to grab the

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buzzard by the throat but the sky did fall upon him from the Green Barron zoomed down and scooped Crassus up so he dangled by a hind leg a thousand feet above; for birds of a feather stick together.

“Help,” he screamed and “mummy” also much terrified.

“It is Eye who has fed you with tenderest partridges and geese, Eye who gives you baby yellow fluffy Easter chicks, Eye who kisses your babies and the face of Crassus that gives them nightmares, look at Crassus,” and Eye pointed at the sky and all saw Caesar not looking regal upside down.

“Revolt,” “disgusting,” “what are those thingies?” “Shut your eyes junior.”

Then there was a growl for Rover was loyal to his Caesar who had promised him mutton to gnaw on covered in Rosemary sauce. And Rover looked big and nasty and had lots of teeth showing over his gummy gums and his fur was up and he was going to gobble Eye up just like that and catch something bad.

And that is why The Green Barron dropped Crassus so he could fly down and save Eye so Rover did not help Crassus at all.

“My kingdom for a parachute,” all said they head after or was it “My kingdom for wings,” no it was “My Rover is an idiot,” no it had to be “I hope the grass is soft,” so you see the cut-throats were undecided what Crassus screamed as he gyrated to earth for there was a gusty breeze that day. So the animals had much to talk about in the coming winter months so would not be bored.

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And that is how the civil war started so the cut-throats were really busy that winter; for Rover shook Eye this way and that so “Cur I can’t look, it is horrible seeing a bird loose its plumage,” for a plucked bird looks “Revolting,” and “I am going to puke,” and “Retching sounds,” so “Hey watch where you puke,” was heard often so “Take that,” and “in your eye Jimmie,” and “Ouch my family jewels,” as cut-throats lived up to their name.

And Rover spat Eye out for the bird was tough and foul tasting for the buzzard did not like the warm scented water of a bath with soap. “What have I eaten,” Rover coughed just before The Green Barron raked him with talons so he; “Blooming hell,” he shouted loudly so loud in fact all the cut-throats stopped doing nasties to each other.

The sun even stopped in shock and the gusty breeze that had Crassus froze so the wolverine fell the last sixty feet onto a nettle completely flattening it and the nettles went somewhere so, “Blooming hell,” Crassus shouted louder than Rover so The Green Barron who had caught Eye being spat out of Rover got distracted so flew into a pine tree and got wedged amongst the pines and some went places so he “Blooming hell,” even louder and Eye shot away from him and landed on a weasel called Scenting Droppings and a ferret called Black Fur.

“Blooming hell,” the ferret rubbing his nose.

Blooming hell,” the weasel rubbing his nose.

“That hurt,” Rover.

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“Mine was horrendous injuries,” Crassus.

“I sorely stuffed full of pines places,” The Green Barron.

“My nose is swollen,” Black Fur.

“So is mine,” a weasel unable to think of anything original for they are not bright creatures but just go about pastures ripping cuddly bunnies to bits, so don’t suffer from much stress.

“I landed on something soft so am not sore,” Eye but seized the chance to turn the tables on Crassus who wanted to wear the imperial purple.

“We are brothers and sisters of the Association of Thief’s, The Union of Carrion Eaters, The Brotherhood of Offal Cookers, The :Ladies Iceland Society of Volcanic Studies, but we are all cut-throats and so we don’t eat each other,

“We drink and be merry,

We eat what we see,

And don’t pay for its free.

We drink and be merry,” and quickly Scenting Droppings and Black Fur handed out XXX that fallen off labourers back.

“Woof and howl,

We are cut-throat wolves.

And eat the hoof.

Woof and double howl,” and it was revolting seeing wolves drinking XXX and slobbering and unable to stand as they hugged a Falcon and did not eat it for;

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“We are of the brotherhood.

Whose small, print.

We will give you a hint,

Mentions sisterhood,” and the sisterhood was ugly, big dogs so mangy the dog warden unable to look upon them had set them free; and they winked at the wolfs and all the cut-throats sang,

“We are cut-throats,

We don’t love,

But your valuables we move,

And you we roasts,

With trimmings,” and there was much howling and “Hey Jimmie got a fag,” and “Hey Jimmie lend me a twenty,” and the friendship was fake, revolting and all knew as soon as they got back to Roma they did see who would be Caesar for their dislike of Caesar and going to the galleys and lions had been forgotten. Also that if a wolverine that hung upside down flashing his botty could be Caesar and a buzzard with little plumage were it should be could be Caesar then anyone could be Caesar.

“Our Crassus will be Caesar,” a skinny dog used to being thrown out by Framer Jack and would now be thrown out by Crassus Caesar who would not invite him into the warm rooms of Castle Roma for the dog was a plebeian, nor could read or write and had mange too so was almost bald. So Crassus should not be judged too gravely. Would you show kindness to such an ugly dog, no the First Framer Jack going home

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late smelling of XXX would scream in terror and crash into a tree and the cause of the crash never known, for the mangy animal would sulk into the pine forest and howl.

Then snigger for revenge was sweet, “Snigger howlllllllllllllllllllll.”

“Our Eye will be Caesar,” a forgotten Eagle Owl and forgot Eye would send it to the Rovers for lions were in short supply; for having such a ferocious eater standing nest to Caesar was just tempting fate. Besides it was foreign and spoke funny and bathed every morning so had strange habits and brushed its teeth after eating and worse kept its windies silent so was really deadly. Yes it was domed for Caesar wanted to live and not wash his hands after well you know. That was why slaves stood next to Caesar as they was mobile towels.

And then the Rovers did shout, “Hail Caesar Eye,” and waited to see what Caesar Crassus would give them to eat, of course with the trimmings. But Crassus had no trimmings so should have shouted, “I will give you America to loot and the moon that is made of cheese if you make me Caesar,” and “I will give you extra trimmings the sage and onion stuffing to go with the buzzard,” but he did not so failed his first lesson in crowd control, the country bumpkin.

“Perhaps we have made a mistake with Crassus the wolverine as Caesar?” It was woofed very quietly so was whispers really.

“Snigger howlllllllllllllllllllll.”

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“The Athens of the north was a call,

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‘Edinburgh on that rock.’

But was just a wet sock,

Full of damp hall.”

The beasts of Crassus and Eye sang happy to be home for

“Roma,

Where pasta boils,

And salads mixed with olive oils,

Roma,” that was seen in the distance that ruin that Eye had found. And escaped vultures roosted in the windowless windows; for they were ignorant in how to put the glass in.

“Reinforcements,” Eye seeing them and was heard to chuckle maniacally for remember the horrid torrid nasties done this bird for he had been in the mouth of Rover that went about sniffing other dogs well!

“What about our bread?” A nameless Rover for it needed a human to give it a name so was unhappy, listless and a lout.

“And the free XXX,” another Rover who could not stop scratching for he needed humans to deflea him, and he had ticks and lice so Eye and Crassus distanced themselves.

But it was Roma and the smell of cooking fires with welcoming meat broth was imagined so that is why; “Where are the free school hot meals promised?” By a polecat and snapped at Eye for it saw Eye as drumstick in bread sauce. Also “Where

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the free day trips to Amsterdam for the listless unemployed?” A hyena that had escaped from a circus.

“Ha ha ha he he ho,” it went right in the face of Crassus who made a mental note ‘To the tin mines without pay.’

“Friends what are we to eat?” Eye suddenly full of courage for the vultures where eating things.

And Eye heard the rumblings of many empty stomachs for the humans were not here to feed the wild life thrown away cheeseburgers and plastic bags and golf balls that gave you bad constipation.

“We can eat Eye,” it was said every so quietly and was rumoured Crassus said it behind a handkerchief. *A handkerchief with teddy bears printed on it.*

“And the hyena bit Eye on the heel so Eye screamed something bad.

And the reinforcements did not fly down to save him for they were eating things.

“Ha ha he he ho,” the hyena went and had to open its mouth to laugh so eye escaped and flew to an exposed wooden rafter.

“Friends,” he started but the rumblings was much louder for the cut-throats were seeing him as a roasting bird dripping fat and gravy, for hunger had them.

BLOOD LUST.

And Eye trained in crowd control shouted, “There am I,” and pointed at Crassus, “with all the trimmings,” and Crassus fled with the host after him shouting, “Stop and get eaten,” but Crassus did not stop.

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“What’s for dinner lads?” Eye amongst the vultures and he saw and was ill for vultures were worse carrion eaters than buzzards.

And Eye disturbed some of the things the vultures were eating so they dropped to two faithful followers of Eye.

“See our leader always provides,” Black Fur tucking into six month old tripe, that was not fit to be made into mince pies so was given to pig a farmer but since the pigs had run away this Framer Jack threw it over a neighbour’s hedge and was irresistible to the escaped vultures.

“Yes our leader always provides,” Scenting Droppings tucking into year old mince pies made with discarded tripe that the pigs before they had run away had refused because they knew they were running away to eat wild fresh acorns and funny mushrooms that make you dream of female pigs in bikinis; if you are male piggy and if you are in a bikini you dream of Mr Universe living in Southern California. Not fat porkers so no little piggy's were made and another reason why the price of Hot Dogs was up for we all know what hot dogs are made off? So a fox who had shares in a butcher shop in Aviemore was mega rich; secret shares of course.

Anyway: the sky was glorious when the sun was setting for it was obliterated by oranges, pinks and purples

A warm wind was blowing up the Atlantic current and the banana trees swayed gently; it was to be a mild winter on the west coast.

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“Share some of my delicious mince pie for some of your slurpious tripe?”

Scenting Dropping asked his mouth covered in what was living in the year old pie.

“Sniff sniff, smells heavenly, let’s trade,” Black Fur offering some of his six month old tripe to his friend and what was living in it.

But they were happy, a good trade had been made.

They was friends for life even if it would be short life’s.

And because they was eating the same stuff could not smell each other's breath for food that old really stinks.

And a fox leaves this chapter with these thoughts, “Human kids buy balloons of sharks so why not rats, I will be mega rich. I can see kids in shopping malls with balloons of them all made by me.” But who is 'made by me?'

Do we see a president at a sewing machine 17hrs a day stitching ratty balloons together.

Certainly not, presidents ride around in black Cadillacs with men in black losing weight running next to the Cadillac that your taxes paid fer.

And it is a blow up dummy of a fox waving to the crowds as the real fox is in a heated underground swimming pool in Santa Barbara.

Remember, 'who is me?'