

## The Misunderstanding

by Harry Dunn  
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I lived in Inverloch, in its sinful salad days  
When the town had quite a reputation  
Or so I've heard them say,  
Way back in the Nineteen-fifties,  
It had rude and raffish ways:  
There was much inebriation,  
And for its courting couples  
Matri - mony was always just an option,  
But most preferred cohabitation,  
And they offered up their surplus kids  
For quick sale, or court- adoption.

The Espy House of David -  
Dave Beaton licensee,  
Observed the Licence laws:  
His pub was always clean and tidy,  
It served no grog beyond the hour of six,  
Unless of course you'd travelled, *bona fide*,  
Which allowed you to stay for hours,  
And all the local *bona fides* knew  
How to work this trick:  
So they'd sign the Traveller's book,  
Then their own sweet time they took  
Boozing on 'til late, in Dave Beaton's house of brick.

Where Inverloch Marine  
Now displays his fancy boats  
Old Aub Briggs set up his carnival  
With carousel, and rides, and greedy laughing clowns  
With soft-toy prizes, small and lousy,  
Arcade games, and spinning wheel, and lucky envelopes  
And a game called Housey-Housey  
In Aubrey's sideshow-alley lingo,  
Which was, in fact, an *almost*-legal version  
Of the game we now call Bingo.  
And this colourful activity,

Which most older folks abhorred,  
Was rendered more exciting  
By the loudest broadcast music and the brightest flashing lights  
That Aubrey could afford.  
And those of us who lived within the range  
Of Aubrey's amped-up music box  
And his gaudy flashing lights,  
Could hear Hank Williams' latest album,  
At least six times every day,  
And the same again, most nights.

Five thousand Christmas campers  
Fought tooth and nail for space,  
And a place to wash their socks,  
Along the crowded Invy foreshore,  
From Screw Creek and Broadbeach sites,  
Past dangerous Flat Rocks,  
But the greatest daily challenge  
Faced by those hardy foreshore campers  
Was to find a vacant toilet,  
With a can not over-flowing, chock-a-block;  
With the sewerage plan still years away;  
We were all in thrall to the *dunny-man*,  
Down here in Inverloch.

The pan-collection service was always somewhat chancy,  
Even during winter, when locals numbered 'bout a thousand  
Became even more chaotic - and it never was real fancy  
During Christmas holidays, when demand for pans exploded  
That's when the dunny-man hired extra staff  
To cope with toilets over-loaded  
And help to clear the decks.

Now, in those un-enlightened times,  
The poor night-cart man had problems,  
Problems of a social nature, with propriety,  
For he was never quite accepted  
By the local toffs and tossers  
In upper Inverloch society,

There was a widely-held suspicion  
Which he bothered not defending  
That he spilled a little more normal  
When he performed his noisome task  
At the homes of local condescending,  
The discerning and the formal,  
But they were all afraid to ask!

So, if the man himself was on the nose -  
Although he offered gen'rous pay -  
You won't be surprised to hear that he was not exactly rushed,  
When came recruitment day  
And he advertised for an extra man  
For the five-week Christmas rush,  
From December twenty-third until the end of Jan,  
When the town was really flush.

Now, enter Gooney Parker.  
A local ne'er-do-well, a rascal and a clown  
Who seldom worked much through the year  
And was known to be attracted  
To other people's stuff, if it wasn't nailed or bolted down.  
Gooney's IQ made it into double figures  
But not a great deal more;  
From time to time he'd spend a month  
At what was known as Gov'nor's pleasure  
Because he broke the law,  
Then old Gooney would return to his home-town, Inverloch,  
With an eye out for his next illegal score.

One year, when Gooney wasn't up to much  
And Christmas fast approaching,  
He accepted a kind offer of employment,  
A position that required very little training,  
No skill or boring coaching,  
And the offered rate of pay  
Was to Gooney most enticing -  
An even fiver, for every night or day.  
The position also offered variety and travel,

If not actual enjoyment,  
Working in the cool of night,  
With immediate deployment.  
Work-related loss, of prestige and social standing  
Never was an issue for old Gooney  
Because he had none to lose,  
The locals knew that he was slow and slightly looney,  
And he never bothered to wear socks, inside his battered shoes.  
The Dunns of Inverloch lived in High street, half-way down,  
Number seventeen was our abode  
And our weekly pan collection  
Was early Monday morn, in normal service mode,  
But the dunny-man changed all the rules  
When he was under stress,  
Like Christmas-time, when his back was to the wall,  
And things got in a mess;  
In fact, we considered ourselves fortunate  
If he called around at all.

One night, or rather, early morning  
My dad stepped out the back, no doubt to have a smoke,  
And in our darkened gravel drive-way,  
Without sound or prior warning  
He spied a scruffy-looking bloke  
Soft-shoeing down towards the gate  
With something on his head.  
Recognising Gooney Parker,  
Bearing something heavy,  
No doubt stolen from our shed.

Knowing Gooney's reputation, his unfortunate renown  
And with no time for sober contemplation,  
He cried in stern, commanding voice  
'Stop right there, you bloody thief,  
And put that booty down!'  
Gooney, never quick at adding two and two  
Said 'Are yer really sure? Yer must be bloody mad'  
'Drop it now and get out of here' my old dad repeated,

'Before I call the cops' you .... (expletives here deleted)

Gooney, spurred to action,  
Did exactly as requested  
And dropped his heavy burden, handles, lid and all  
And the contents therein sequestered  
Splashed car and fence and father,  
And bedroom's outer wall.  
It trickled down the drive-way,  
Behind departing Gooney,  
Who no doubt muttered to himself  
'I wonder what he does with it;  
That bloke must be a flamin' looney,  
And to think they say the same about me-self.'

Our family history does not recall, as far as I can see,  
Who cleaned up that awful mess;  
It must have been my dad, I s'pose  
Although he never did confess;  
One thing I know for certain - it surely wasn't me.

Some nauseating fluids soaked into our gravel drive,  
And some evaporated, I expect,  
But the solids - they were quite another matter,  
They're not easy to collect;  
And for many weeks thereafter,  
The smell of phenyle disinfectant  
Hung foetid in the air,  
And that rotten phenyle didn't smell much better  
Than what was spilled down there.

All clouds have silver linings  
Or so the sages say,  
And this cloud was no exception,  
But for many weeks, or maybe months,  
The silver lining on our gravel drive  
Refused to go away.  
Our place had no certificate of fitness,  
But during all those weeks

We never had a Mormon at the door,  
And not one Jehovah's Wittness.

We heard that Gooney Parker  
Earned many a compliment'ry drink  
Just to tell his little story about that crazy High Street bloke  
Who put such value on his sewage - never mind the stink-  
That he couldn't bring himself to say good-bye  
To all that lovely food and drink!