

*The Breeze
in the
Blue~Gums*

by

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(A Satyr)

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*The Breeze
in the
Blue~Gums*

These are the rhymes
Of the lives and the times
Of the Fauna of Billabong Tree
Where Breezes tell Blue-Gums
In murmurs and mimes
Of a Wide Brown Land
Which was once Free.

*Where the Rainbow Snake created
As the Dreamtime dreamers dreamed:
As the patient aeons waited,
We Native Fauna teemed:
But
Our Dreamtime dream was broken
By 'White' Men, in ships, and hats –
And we found we had awoken
To Guns, Fire, Dogs – and Cats.*

*To a world of ploughs, and Sheep and Cows; of graziers in khaki collars
Who reckon all that heaven allows in terms of dirt and dollars:-
But on top of all the loss of native Faunal habitat
There's one who notches a "Gotcha!" Cross each time it KILLS: The Cat!*

*For though many creatures kill to live, from the Blue Whale to the Krill,
The savage pet "domestic" Cat is the one which lives to kill:
We Fauna of Wide Brown Land must find some means, if we can,
To teach Humans to Save Our Species – So, we've come up with a PLAN.*

*Ancient Jo, the Mopoke, teaches: "We must reach all the youth!"
Whether you surf the Net, or beaches, we must teach you all the Truth.
IF SOMEDAY YOU WANT YOUR YOUNG ONES TO SEE US, SAVE US NOW!
[HIST! The Breezes in the Blue~Gums are whispering: "Here's How!"]*

*Let Platypus play!
Let Koala-Trees sway!
Let Billabong Fauna roam free!
Let us strive for the day
When Humans will say
In Wide Brown Land:
"LIFE – LET IT BE!"*

PART 1: The First Meeting

Narelle the Numbat sobbed in grief; her little heart was broken.
Old Queenie Quoll tried to console her, though no words were spoken.
Between her sobs Narelle had told her, “ *My poor husband’s dead!
I saw evil Tom Cat catch him! - I wish it was me instead!*”

Old Queenie knew the story all too well. In her long life,
She’d seen her bushland cobbers faced with every kind of strife,
And *she* knew how it felt to lose a husband, since a Fox
Had eaten *hers*. – She knew that, for she’d found his spotted socks.

There are no words to ease such grief, and Queenie also knew
That Narelle had had six babies, but that Tom Cat had caught two;
A Fox had killed another three, and that left only one:
Tiny Norbert, Normie-and-Narelle’s last living Son.

No power on Earth brings back to life the dead, they both knew that;
And both wished that the *opposite* would happen to Tom Cat.
Narelle could not be comforted: She fretted and she wept
For days and days at Queenie’s place, until, at last, she slept.

* * *

When she awoke from haunted dreams, to face a lonely life
Raising little Norbert as a widow, not a wife,
Narelle gazed in amazement at a truly *wondrous* thing:
A crowd of creatures ’round her in a sympathetic ring!

There were Bandicoots, Mulgaras, Possums, Cuscuses and Bats,
Kangaroos, Jerboas, Bettongs, Native Water-Rats;
There were Wallabies and Wombats, Tassie Devils, Spotted Quolls,
And some *eye-less* yellow fellows: “*We’re Marsupial Not-Moles!*”

Above her in the branches, and beneath her on the ground,
Every native animal she knew was gathered ’round;
There were Birds she’d never even *seen*, of every shape and hue;
The Amphibians and Reptiles had all made the meeting too.

So *many* creatures! Poor Narelle could scarce believe her eyes;
She clutched her toddler Norbert, who was wide-eyed with surprise,
But before she’d had a chance to grasp why this had all been done,
Big Eva Emu’s booming voice called, “*Silence, everyone !*”

The murmurs in the crowd of creatures suddenly were hushed;
The few who didn’t heed the order instantly were *shushed*.
Galahs and Fruit-Bats even, much to everyone’s relief,
Were silently respectful of Narelle the Numbat’s grief.

A minute passed in silence, as each creature bowed its head,
Imagining heroic Normie Numbat lying dead;
Killed by a vicious Tiger-beast, whilst fighting for the life
Of the last of his six children, and Narelle, his lifelong wife.

Then from a branch quite close at hand, from a Bottle-Brush's blossom,
Tiny Flicka Feathertail, an orphaned Glider Possum,
Tried vainly to restrain a sob, sadder than any word:
The sound was soft, but in the silence, *everybody* heard.

Then one of those blind yellow creatures, Muffie, the *Not-Mole*,
Mourning for her children, was the next to lose control :-
*"They were trampled by a tractor, as a farmer ploughed the ground;
Our families had lived there for aeons, for miles and miles around."*

Hen Robyn Redbreast wept, *"A foreign Sparrow killed Cock Robin . . ."*
And she became the next to fall to sorrowing and sobbing;
Then, one by one, the Fauna who'd been victimised for years
Could hold their sadness back no more – They all dissolved in tears.

They wept upon each other's necks, they held each other's paws;
The Tiger Snakes and Falcons safely sheathed their fangs and claws;
An Eagle comforted a Crow – for Faunal Folk aren't snobs -
And all around, the only sound was deep, heartbroken sobs.

This was a quite *unprecedented* scene to be believed.
Al the Fauna had lost loved ones; every single creature grieved.
In the multitude of animals, there wasn't one dry eye -
But they all felt not-*quite-so*-bad for an all-in, full-on *Cry*.

So Eva dried her eyes, again called "*Order!*" - Then she spoke:
*"This Faunal Council Meeting's called by Ancient Jo Mopoke;
She is the wisest of us all, she sees and is not seen,
She listens well, she's much to tell, there's nowhere she's not been!*

*"This meeting is so vital –so extra-ordinary – unique! -
That we need to keep a record of her when she starts to speak;
Who'll keep the Minutes?"* – Euclid, an Echidna cried, "*I will !
I might walk and talk quite queerly, but I'm quite quick with my quill . . ."*

[Narelle the Numbat was the *only one* who *didn't* know
That *she* was *Number One Concern* of Ancient Mopoke Jo;
She didn't realize that in the time she'd been asleep,
Queenie Quoll and Eva had done more than merely *weep*: -

They'd sent *mud-maps* out, with messages that simply said, *Be There !*
All 'round the coast *Sea-Lion Post* - Inland by *Eagle Air*,
By *Not-Mole Network Underground*, they spread throughout the land,
And *OZZIE Magic Kangaroo* had lent a helping hand.]

Old Queenie Quoll then took control, and said “*Before we start,
We must ensure no ferals can upset our apple-cart;
We need a Special Marshal - and he mustn’t be a wuss ! -
To throw them out . . .*” - There came a shout: - “*ME! Plato Platypus!*”

Some animals expressed some doubt: He wasn’t very big!
(?!) - Could *he* throw out a mammal like a *Camel*, or a *Pig*?
But Plato knew of David and Goliath, and the Stone –
And he knew, like little David, he’d a weapon all his own.

The Fauna fell to whispering – *Where is that Ancient Jo ?*
No-one there had seen her since a day or so ago;
She had called for this Convention, then she’d simply *disappeared*,
But everybody trusted Jo, though many thought her *weird*.

Just then a *sprog* on a weathered log that lay quite handy by
Shook itself like a *feathered dog*, and opened one wary eye!
- And then another! - Then the *sprog split open* at its peak!
It was Ancient Jo the Tawny Frogmouth’s yawny, horny beak !

The whisperers were *gobsmacked* - Jo had been there *all along!*
A chilling sense of *Destiny* thrilled through the thin, ill throng.
Though no-one knew how old she was – a *Century*, or *more!* –
Her “*To-Wit*”s and “*To-Whom*”s commanded reverence and awe.

The Ancient Bird said not a word, but slowly looked around:
The Fauna stood like statues – No-one dared to make a sound;
But not until her eyes met those of every creature there
Did she proceed; she had *indeed* a Scrutinizing Stare.

To tell them she was set to speak, Jo cleared her froggy throat;
(Small wonder at her time of life, it had a *croaky* note!)
Then, like an operatic singer just about to sing,
Jo raised one dramatic finger, and flung wide her soft brown wing:-

“*To Whom it may concern,*” she said – (It sounded like a joke,
But *no-one* laughed at the legalistic way Jo Mopoke spoke) -
“*To Wit:- All Native Animals, including proper Dingoes,
But excluding Feral Creatures that were brought here by the Gringoes: -*

“*My Friends*”, she said in a gentler tone, “*All Natives, great and small:-
I have called this Special Meeting, for I must speak with you all.
I’m OLD. In my life I have travelled all the Wide Brown Land,
And I’ve watched its DESECRATION. Now, It’s Time we made a STAND.*

“*Whilst meditating lone and long, I’ve come to one conclusion:
To Tar All Humans with the Same Brush would cause much too much Pollution!*”
[Her droll, dry humour *eased* the crowd; they tittered with relief:-
It helped to clear the atmosphere, so misty with such grief.]

Jo had studied Faunal nature: she knew how to WOO the crowd;
She didn't yell, so they listened well, since her voice *wasn't* loud.
She said, "*The Humans caused these problems: that is true, no doubt,
But there's many caring people who would love to help us out.*"

*"We know that there are Humans who seem eager to destroy
Every mole-hill, every mountain; killing seems to give them joy!
The people who are decent haven't fought them hard enough;
When the going gets tough, the tough get going. It's High Time WE Got Tough!*"

*"We've looked on, aghast, in silence, at their wastage and pollution;
It's tempting to try violence, but that's really no solution.
Remember: AWESOME POWER LIES IN PROPER EDUCATION! –
We Fauna must spread our message through the youngsters of this nation.*"

*"So we need to know Your Story, to the present from your youth.
Even if it's sad or gory, we still need to know the Truth;
We must collate your evidence, and form a Data-Base
So we can confront the Humans with the most confronting case."*

She paused, to let her words sink in. The animals looked grave.
They thought of precious little pieces of their homelands left to save.
Then Euclid, the Echidna, handed all the creatures quills,
(Except for the Birds, who wrote the words quite neatly with their bills.)

They sucked their quills and clucked their bills, and wrote with furrowed brows;
Recalling all their loved ones lost, the who's, why's, where's, and how's;
Some wrote in clay, some scratched on bark, in sand or on a leaf,
But *every* story told of sorrow, loss, pain, fear, and grief.

They began at their Beginning, and they wrote of things they'd seen
When they were young; of forests gone, that once were rich grey-green;
Of magic virgin bushland that had big safe hollow logs,
Full of fat contented Termites – and of ponds with lots of Frogs.

They wrote of carefree places where they used to feel secure,
But as the spaces grew too small, their faces grew far fewer;
They told of mighty Fish of Legend, like the Giant Murray Cod;
Of Orchids rare, that vanished where the Sheep and Cattle trod.

A Tortoise wrote, "*My Billabong's been ruined by a Sow!*"
A Stumpy Lizard swore "*My Wife was eaten by a Cow!*"
A Bandy-Bandy Snake said sadly, "*I'm quite sure that's true!
I've seen Cows eating Lizards, and one ate my Babies too!*"

Lucy Lowan said, "*My Mound was raided by a Fox;
A Zoo-Man stole my last few Eggs, and hatched them in a box!*"
The Owls all spoke of trucks at night, that hit them with a '*Splat!*'
But most of all, they *all* recalled that Dread "*“Domestic”*" CAT!

Some wrote for only minutes, some for upwards of an hour;
They all agreed the dossier indeed would give them power;
Where Humans often “gild the lily” – *err - Exaggerate -*
Each creature told its story clearly, honestly, and straight.

Just as they finished their stories, a pair of European Rabbits –
(The natives all despised them for their gross invasive habits) –
Came hopping along, and saw the throng, and sniggered, smirked and sneered:
“So – You’ll save Wide Brown Land from us Ferals? Har, Har, Har !” they jeered.

They squatted down on the conference ground, and made the group a “present”
That looked *something* like some big black pearls, but very much less pleasant.
“We outspeed you, we outbreed you, we’ll usurp this Wide Brown Land!”
(They sounded very sure of that – They plainly had it *planned*.)

All the creatures looked to Plato, but their Marshal hadn’t moved;
Some said, in fact, “*Why don’t you act?*” (He plainly disapproved) –
He shook his head, and gruffly said, “*Yous Rabbits ain’t worth Tuppence -*
Your old mate Man got a Rabbit-Germ plan to give you your Come-Uppance!”

Man-Viruses! The *one* Foe that makes *Bunny-Kins* afraid;
So, quite *de-sneered*, they disappeared, looking quite dismayed.
Still, Rabbits never *murder* things – *unlike* that mad *Tom Cat* –
Some doubted that Marshal Plato had a plan to handle *that*.

Yet those Rabbits *had* upset things, with their nasty sneery jeers;
Their departure raised some laughter, and a few sardonic cheers;
Still, everyone was grateful that there’d been no need for *violence*;
To Plato, Eva whispered “‘*On Ya!*” – Then again called “*Silence!*”

Then Jo the Mopoke spoke once more, and told them her age-old joke:
“*I s’pose you’d like to know why I’m called Ancient Jo Mopoke;*
Well, an Egg-Thief with a Moustache once climbed up to rob my nest,
But when I Poked him up his Mo., he gave up on his quest!”

That cheered the creatures quite a lot; their grief was past its worst;
But the business they’d done so far wasn’t *all*, but merely *first*.
Lute Lyre-Bird fine-tuned his tail, Liz Lorikeet her *tweet*,
And all the creatures groomed, and felt a trifle more up-beat.

“*I’m glad to see a Smile or three,*” Jo Mopoke then went on;
“*We must help Narelle raise Norbert, now poor Normie Numbat’s gone . . .*
She needs Safe Houses – Who can help her? . . . Any Volunteers? . . .”
A thousand offers drowned her voice – *Narelle* near-drowned in *tears!*

Tears *not* of grief, but of relief, hope, gratitude and joy,
Less for herself than for the health of her precious little boy;
They worked out rosters, and some secret routes, so she was sure,
Should she take fright, by day or night, that Norbert stayed secure.

A gasp of horror from the crowd ! A *Fox* came into view!
- Whatever could slow Lizards and blind yellow *Not-Moles* do?
All the creatures turned to flee, but a voice cried "*Stand Your Ground!*
I'm Plato Ultimato! - I'll go Reynard Fox a Round!"

Though terrified, they dared to turn their heads back – *What to see ?*
Marshal Plato Platypus, ducking behind the Tree!
They thought he had *deserted*, but he swiftly *reappeared* -
And he had *changed!* *Something seemed strange . . .*
His Legs looked . . . sort of . . . Weird!

The creatures stared, astounded – This Duck-Billed Paradox
In a magic, mystic twink of time, *had rolled up both his socks* -
And there - all unsuspected - bared of thick concealing fur,
On either heel, as sure as steel, was a slick, death-dealing *SPUR!*

The Fox had halted, snarling, when Plato called his bluff;
Now Plato taunted: "*Darlingkkk! – ZO! – You Vont To Play Zings Rrrraaarrrfff?*"
He crawled up like a Crocodile, not letting Reynard see
Those lethal secret weapons he'd unsheathed behind the tree.

The Fox was not so certain now, though he had a certain *hunch*
That *Plato Ultimato* was a *less-than-certain lunch*.
A Feral Fox is not so brave when slap turns into punch,
But he had his feral *face* to save,
so he *had* to face the –

!!!! CRUNCH !!!!

Plato Ultimato launched himself, at *Taipan* speed! -
Front feet fixed Foxy face with fingernailclaws - Sharp indeed!
Quick Stabkick with Stiletto Heels - Fox Reynard yelped in pain -
Sprang into the Billabong, and was *never seen again!*

The natives gaped as Reynard disappeared, the danced with glee;
As was David to Goliath, Plato barely reached his knee!
They shouted, "*You're our Hero! You're our Saviour! You're a Saint!*"
But Plato swore: "*Bull!* - *Battler, sure – Them other things, I ain't!*"

[This wasn't just false modesty, for only Plato knew
That those spurs weren't *just* stilettos, they were *hypodermics* too!
Pleasant *Plato Platypus* you'd love to have to lunch,
But *Plato Ultimato* packs a *potent poison Punch!*]

After this extreme excitement, it took time to settle down;
Eva wore a worried look, and Queenie Quoll a frown;
They had much unfinished business – Major problems left to solve –
But Plato’s selfless courage stiffened *everyone’s* resolve.

They knew *they* had to change things, if they *were* to get things changed,
So when Eva called for order, they regrouped, and re-arranged;
They made a Safety Circle, Littlies at the front of course,
And talked of ways to form a fearless Feral-Fighting Force.

Dennis Dingo bragged, “*If that Tom Cat comes here, I’ll bust him!*”
(But a Dingo’s half-Domestic-Dog, - the Fauna didn’t trust him.)
Kate Cockatoo screeched, “*Bomb him with our eggs if they go rotten!*”
But Queenie’s voice cried, “*That’s no choice! - Have you so soon forgotten? –*

*“Remember what Jo Mopoke told us! - ‘Educate the young!’
If you haven’t got your brain in gear, then don’t engage your tongue!”*
Kate and Dennis felt rejected, for Queenie’s words had stung;
All the Fauna looked dejected, with their heads and tails hung.

But a skinny Bandicootish bloke, with outsize ears and nose,
Bounced into the centre, and truck an oratorical pose:
*“I’m Brucie Bilby! I suggest a Feral-Fighting Song!
If you rehearse these verses, then we all can sing along.”*

This sounded like a great idea! - The animals agreed;
A feisty Feral-Fighting Song could make them strong indeed!
There’s nothing like a martial march to get the troops united!
The creatures grew more confident – much braver - quite excited.

Jonet Jerboa had a lot of photocopied sheets,
All wrapped ’round *Candy Bilbies*, which are *Very Special Treats*.
They passed them ’round. – The *Turkey-gobbly* sounds, amongst the *tweets*,
Was six Possums, sussing stirring songlines, sucking sticky sweets!

[A facsimile of the original Songsheet is provided.]

Battle Hymn of the Faunal Feral-Fighting Union [F.F.F.U.]

Our eyes have seen the gory crimes of Feral Cat and Fox,
And *InHuman* Beings, *fricasseeing* Wallabies in Woks,
Now we stand with Plato Platypus! We've all pulled up our socks!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

To join our Faunal Feral-Fighting Union isn't hard:
You don't need to pay a Union Fee nor tote a Union Card:
Just help us Guard the Native Fauna that we need to Guard!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

Chorus :

Glory Glory Hallelujah!
You don't want to lose us Native Creatures, do ya?
SAVE US if we really matter to ya!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

We can't fight those Carp or Cane-Toads with a bullet from a gun:
There's many dreadful Ferals that have Natives on the run:
But - *A Cat left free to roam is Public Enemy Number One !*
Keep Cats Where They Belong!

If you say your Cat's killed nothing Native since its infant youth
*Just don't smile! – You're On Trial, for *Denial of the Truth!**
If it roams free, that *reverses* all the Onus of the Proof -
And We Say You Are WRONG!

You can't change a raging Tiger to a manner meek and mild:
We must just get rid of Ferals to save Natives in the Wild.
So - Children! - Hear our Cries for Help!
And Parents! - Heed your Child!
Please Join Us In This Song!
Come On and Sing Along!
NOW!

Chorus

Repeat Chorus again, slowly, triumphantly, with *POWER!*

As the creatures read *Them's Fightin' Words*, their chests began to swell: - 11
As lumps of pride grew deep inside – Lumps in their throats as well!
They clenched their fists for emphasis, *murmur-singing* the words;
They longed to *shout'n'sing* it out – Especially the Birds!

But little Plato Platypus did not know *what* to say . . . ! . . .
He'd rejected Hero Worship, but he'd got it anyway!
Now his legend was *immortal*, whether he said *Yea* or *Nay*,
So he just sighed, webbed hands spread wide, "*Okay, Okay, Okay!*"

. . . (!?) . . . "*Okay, Okay, Okay, Okay! - What is it? Who wants me?*"
(The voice had come from someone high up Queenie's Big Gum Tree!)
They looked around the branches to find who it was that spoke:
It was *Okey, the Koala!* - Everyone yelled, *Hi there, Oke!*

Okey opened one squinchy eye, high in the Manna Gum;
Truth still hadn't dawned: He stretched, he yawned, and scratched his itchy *tum*.
It takes Titanic rousing to raise Okey from the Deep:
"*I thought somebody called my name,*" he murmured, half asleep.

Now, Okey can get grumpy, but he's almost never *snaky*:
They shook his tree, and called "*Coo-ee! - Hey Okey! - Wakey, Wakey!*"
Reality struck Okey, and he opened round brown eyes:
He saw the creatures all around, and grunted in surprise.

"*I had a dreadful dream,*" he yawned, "*I dreamt there was a Fox,
And Plato had to fight him, wearing sort-of super socks!*"
They said, "*That was no nightmare, Okey – That was really real!
Plato jabbed him right there, and you should've heard him squeal!*"

Okey was *delighted*. He said, "*Plato, You're the Oddest,
But Good Old You, You're Brave and True, and Wise, and Kind, and Modest!*"
Plato protested, "*Break it down!*" - His mind was in a whirl:
Their shy reluctant hero stood there blushing like a girl.

The Meeting settled down again – No need to call for order;
The Black- and White-Backed Magpies tried the tune on Beak-Recorder.
All the creatures knew the chorus, they were Ready! ~Set! ~ *Gung-Ho*:
“*Hey Magpies, play it for us, and -*” . . . A dry old voice croaked: “*Whoa!*”

It was Ancient Jo, the Mopoke. – They’d *forgotten* she was *there!*
(If some thought her a slow-poke, *no-one* said so. – Who would *dare?*)
She hadn’t moved from where she stood, she’d simply seem to turn to *wood*: -
Who *could* keep Jo Mopoke in mind, with camouflage so good?

“*You’d like to sing and go*”, she croaked – “*Believe me, so would I!*
I’m tuneful as a Crow”, she joked – “*But I will truly try.*
The Battle Hymn is excellent – A Very Good Idea! –
But to get satisfaction, it must lead to action. I hope I have made myself clear!”

There wasn’t any argument, for it was plainly true;
Said wee Mulgara Marg., “*You meant, there’s real things we can do!?*”
“*Exactly so,*” croaked Ancient Jo, “*so what I would suggest*
Is - Choose to use the things you know - The role that suits you best.

“*For instance, check young Euclid there – He’s chosen his own part;*
So, we’ve found our Ideal Secretary! – That’s the Ideal Start!
Young Queenie Quoll, in Convenor role, is perfect! - You’re all smart!
But to find your hidden talent, you must seek inside your heart!”

The animals were thoughtful, as they sought their special roles;
Euclid filed a Full Reportful of each creature’s chosen goals.
From the highest Wedge-Tailed Eagles, to the lowest blind *Not*-Moles,
The creatures searched their hidden hearts – and found their secret souls.

They formed some sub-committees, to consider how they could
Utilise their special gifts, to maximise their good;
They thoroughly thought through suggestions, nailing all the faults,
And they had reason to be very proud of their results:-

Results! At last, the Mail gets through! Young Frisbee Phalanger
Has an Aerial Advantage – There’s no-one can challenge *her*.
Of course each Bird helps spread the word, and so do all the Bats –
To Aussie Fauna, as to whereabouts of murderous *Cats!*

OZZIE, the Magic Kangaroo, had lent a willing hand;
“*Folks, I can be your transport too, as I bound the Wide Brown Land!*”
(This has *Extra-Special Meaning*: Clever *OZZIE Kangaroo*
Bounds the boundaries of our Nation as a TESSELLATION too!)

Denzil ‘Tassie’ Devil said: “*I tell you – On the level,*
It’s difficult with my face, plus the name they gave me – “Devil”!
“*Our kind of combat,*” said Warren the Wombat, “*needs troupers, not a troop!*”
So with Willoughby, the Wallaby, they formed a Reggae Group!

There were many tiny Birds and Mammals almost *no-one* knew,
And Reptiles and Amphibians with *hiding* talents too.
Some of the Lizards are camouflage wizards, who blush brown, or greenish, or blue,
In Recruiting role, Eva ("*You-Better-Believe-Her!*")
Pointed straight at each one: - "*WE NEED YOU !*"

Eva formed a Special Unit – whether feathered, scaled, or furred -
(*The Rookies call her Major Eva, Sir! - which seems absurd!*)
“This Unit’s to be known as - WHAT. . ? . . .” - A Brown Snake whispered “*Hissss!*
Let’s be ‘Secret Intelligence Services’ – The S.I.S., or SIS!”

Now the Nightjars and the Owls - the Fowls that only fly by night -
Provide for free, to refugees, a secret midnight flight;
The Bats use Sonar Systems for *Echo* - (*Echo!*) - Location,
And secret *Hi* - (*Hi!*) - Frequencies to broadcast ’round the nation..

Diurnal Birds aren’t *secret*, but their high mobility
And their mighty strength in numbers, means there’s *zero* they don’t see;
They formed a team to find out facts the Fauna need to know:
The *Birds’ Research Organisation* – The B.R.O., or *BRO*.

The Tortoises and Turtles thought for both themselves *and* Fishes;
(Of course, the Fish weren’t present, but they’d sent their fervent wishes.)
“*Those Carp and Toads in our abodes – Let’s oust ’em!*” – What to do?
They formed *Underwater Rescue Union* - U.R.U., or *URU* !

The Frogs’ and Tadpoles’ situation’s tenuous and bleak;
They once had hidden hideyholes in every swamp and creek.
They’ve petitioned the Almighty, humbly praying they can stay:
“*God’s Damp Amphibian Yogis*”: - *G.D.A.Y.*, or, *G’DAY!*

In addition to Convenor, Queenie has another role:
Mammal Welfare’s always been her scene, and, though she’s old,
Wombats, and Quolls, and We’re-*Not*-Moles, share *holes* now, and they come
To join the Mammals’ Underground Movement, the M.U.M., or *MUM!*

Lute Lyrebird’s a Very Special Natural Star Performer.
He has a lot of girlfriends, and he calls *all* of them *Norma!*
He can do the *Rainbow Fan-Dance*, his uniquely lovely gimmick,
And modestly admits to being *All-Time-Champion Mimic!*

But Lute Lyrebird retired unheard.– He needed time to groom,
Rehearse his repertoire, and preen each filamental plume,
Only seen by Up-There-Okey, who stage-whispered, “*You sound croaky!*”
- “*It’s OK Oke, - Just practising Jo Mopoke Karaoke!*”

Jo spoke again. "You've done well. You have proved well worth your salt! 14
But we must advertise advantages, to get the best result.
We need the Perfect Person for our Presidential part:-
Someone who only needs to wink to melt the hardest heart.

"Now, Euclid is a rare case – 'Cos he's common! – Good old 'Spike'!
But "Furry-Cuddly" Creatures are the ones most Humans like.
You know who's Furry-Cuddly Champ. - He's sitting up this Tree!"
Then Okey's eyes grew wide, and damp. He whispered - "You mean . . . ME?"

So Okey came to be their Icon – Popular First Choice!
No need to turn the 'mike' on – Okey has an awesome voice!
His exposure is extensive, looking cute and inoffensive:
His job's to be up his Gum Tree, just being wise, and pensive.

Then Jo said something none had thought of: "One perplexing thing: -
It's queer, but Humans never understand a word Birds sing!
We drop them Good-Luck Messages – That's what we know they bring,
But Humans just don't . . ." - Billy Bell-Bird interrupted: "Tinnnnnggggg!"

"I'm sorry to butt in, Ma'am," Billy said respectfully,
"But what I think's a Good Idea has just occurred to me.
Though this might seem the Solution of the Very Last Resort,
If Humans don't know our language, then they simply must be taught!"

"More help than interruption, Bill," Jo kindly said, "In fact,
You've saved my breath. That's where the problem has to be attacked!
But we need a Teacher-cum-Translator: – Have you thought on that?
Who can we get to do it? It's like, 'Who will Bell the Cat?'"

They all shuddered at the metaphor, but what Jo said was true.
The problem was the *Who-to-do-it*, not the *What-to-do*.
They knew just two who knew a few words in the Human Lingo;
But they didn't trust Kate Cockatoo, nor Dennis ('the Menace') Dingo.

Narelle the Numbat *would* have volunteered, but she just *couldn't*;
She had Norbert to take care of, so she knew she really *shouldn't*.
And she'd have to learn the lingo, which would take a lot of time;
Then she had a *brilliant* notion - Bingo! - "Brucie! – You write Rhyme!"

Brucie, overawed, gulped: “*Well . . . I write a bit of Verse . . .*
But there must be someone better, surely . . . ?” - “*NO!*” they cried, “*We’re worse!*”
But if *learning* what he’d have to seemed a *Herculean Task*,
To write it all in rhyme seemed an *Insuperable Ask*.

The creatures pleaded with their eyes, and *hoped*, and held their breath . . .
Now, Brucie had been *deeply moved* by Normie Numbat’s death.
Bilby’s lost his closest Cousin - *Bandicoots* have one whole *dozen* -
. . . ~ ~ ! *BLEEEEEEP ! ~*~***!!!!*

Brucie Bilby’s Brainbox Blew !
- Began Bzzzz-Blink-Blink Buzzin’!

Brucie had hit a *Hyperlink!* His eyes went *weird*, and *wet*:
Outsize antennaey ears, plus *stress*, had cracked the *Internet!*
His nose and eyes rose to the skies - He seemed in *shock*, or *trance* -
Then he grinned a brilliant Bilby Grin, and danced a Bilby Dance!

Amusement?- Consternation! - Had Brucie B. gone mad?
He assured them, “*Yes I haven’t,*” (though he hadn’t ’cos he *had!*)
He stared at Eva, Queenie, Plato, Euclid, Oke, Narelle –
His mouth set grim. He hummed their Hymn - Breathed deeply - Then said:
“*Well-l-l-l-l-l-l*”

“*All Right!*” he said, “*I’ll DO It! - I’ve just sussed a way I can!*
I pledge my trust, do this or bust: To teach each Child of Man.
We’ll tap into the World Wide Web, and publicise our fears –
Through their youth we’ll teach those Humans how it feels to live in tears!”

The creatures all seemed petrified, but not in mortal fright.
Every mouth gaped wider than the Great Australian Bight!
(Were they ossified with *outrage?* - Were they dumbstruck with *delight?*)
Brucie Bilby *didn’t know*.

- A voice croaked
“*YAYYYYYY !!! ALL RIGHT !!!!!*”

Then Ancient Jo the Mopoke spread her wings, and down she flew,
Shook Brucie’s hand, and said, “*That’s Grand! Are we pleased to meet you!*”
The creatures cheered and whistled, clapped his back, and made a fuss;
Oke spoke for Jo Mopoke and *All the Folk*: “*B.B. ’s the Bloke for Us !*”

So - Now the mood had *really* changed! - They'd found themselves a BARD!
They had Okey as their President, (and Okey's such a *Card!*)
With Plato for Security, the creatures felt secure,
And the World Wide Website strategy they felt would work for sure.

Though thin in limbs and numbers, they'd found staunchness in their hearts,
And all of them were overjoyed, for all could play their parts;
They mingled with each other, swapping stories with no lies,
And *match-making* where possible to brighten grief-dimmed eyes.

They took autographs and photographs, and *stereographs* as well,
With eyes and ears and *everything*, especially sense of smell!
Names of neighbours, notes and numbers – Now each face rings a bell!
And whenever they need assistance, all they have to do is yell!

Now their Website's up and running, and they're coming up to speed,
And they communicate by E-mail any time they need;
To contact Brucie, and Jonet Jerboa, and the Crew,
Go www.ozzigami.com.au (E-mail bruce@ozzigami.com.au)

They seemed to have done most of what had been on Jo's agenda.
Euclid's writing quill was blunt, and his writing wrist was tender.
Everyone felt confident they'd done a decent job;
They said, "Let's sing our Battle thing, and get home to the Mob."

Now everything seemed ready for their very first recital.
To feed the fire of hope inspired by Jo was seen as vital.
But: "*Just hang on a second*" Brucie called, and grabbed his bag,
"*I hope you like it!*" Brucie hoped, and opened out – (?) - a *FLAG!*

There were gasps of admiration as the Flag first hove in sight.
Expressions ranged from simple rapture through to pure delight.
Usual flags are simply coloured red and white and blue,
But the Flag that Brucie showed them was of quite a different hue:-

It's like looking through an open window at an Aussie scene:-
An Emu and a Kangaroo, with *Uluru* between.
Behind them is the twilight sky, with the Pointers and The Cross,
And the way they stand, they make the land Australia the "Boss"!

They raised the lovely Flag aloft, and flew it from the Tree,
Where *everyone*, including dear old Up-There-Oke, could see.
- *Everyone?* - Not Quite! - Why not? - Who else? - *Where could they be?*
Oh Yes! - Of course! - Blind Muffie *Not-Mole* gaily laughed, "*Not-Me!*"

They stood around the Flag-Tree. Up-There-Okey made a Speech: -
"*Friends, Australians, and Comrades All! I don't intend to preach!*
Ancient Jo the Mopoke teaches us that we must teach!

We just must get our message through, to everyone in reach."

It was time at last to sing the Song! Staunchly they stood, and proud!
They'd turned into a *Task Force*, from a weak and motley crowd!
Narelle was made Conductor; she said, "*Sweetly! - Not TOO loud!*
It's Hymns that hum in harmonies they hear above the cloud!"

The Birds who played the Reeds and Woodwinds waited on her call;
She used Norbert as her baton, but he didn't mind at all;
The Magpies played the introduction, Norbert *NOW*ed his nose,
And then they all took up the Song – *Remember* how it goes ?

Battle Hymn of the Faunal Feral-Fighting Union [F.F.F.U.]

Our eyes have seen the gory crimes of Feral Cat and Fox,
And *InHuman* Beings, *fricasseeing* Wallabies in Woks,
Now we stand with Plato Platypus! We've all pulled up our socks!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

To join our Faunal Feral-Fighting Union isn't hard:
You don't need to pay a Union Fee nor tote a Union Card:
Just help us Guard the Native Fauna that we need to Guard!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

Chorus :

Glory Glory Hallelujah!
You don't want to lose us Native Creatures, do ya?
SAVE US if we really matter to ya!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

We can't fight those Carp or Cane-Toads with a bullet from a gun:
There's many dreadful Ferals that have Natives on the run:
But - *A Cat left free to roam is Public Enemy Number One !*
Keep Cats Where They Belong!

If you say your Cat's killed nothing Native since its infant youth
*Just don't smile! – You're On Trial, for *Denial of the Truth!**
If it roams free, that *reverses* all the Onus of the Proof -
And We Say You Are WRONG!

You can't change a raging Tiger to a manner meek and mild:
We must just get rid of Ferals to save Natives in the Wild.
So - Children! - Hear our Cries for Help!
And Parents! - Heed your Child!
Please Join Us In This Song!
Come On and Sing Along!
NOW!

Chorus

Repeat Chorus again, slowly, triumphantly, with *POWER!*

They sang the hymn through quietly, and then they sang it loud;
They always sang it sweetly though, because it made them proud.
But just as they were finishing the second time around,
A long-tailed plain brown ground-bird ran and took the middle ground!

He didn't look remarkable, except his tail was long;
He hopped and skipped a few quick steps, and *cheerrrr-upped* bits of song;
The creatures all watched breathless as he started to perform :-
Lute, the Lyrical LyreBird, was ready to raise a storm!

He raised his rump and fanned his tail out wide to veil his face:-
To describe Lute's tail as exquisite still understates the case!
Founts of rainbow-shimmering spraymist, from a crystal mountain spring! -
Then, croaking in *falsetto* voice, the Bird began to sing: -

*"To Whom It May Concern," he croaked, "To Wit, the Lot of You!
I'm Ancient Jo the Mopoke, so Do What I Teach You To!
From When to be Witch, through What to Wear to Wee, to How'd'you Do?
Too Wise am I, too Quick-to-Dry, to Get too Wet to "W●●W!"*

*Too Wet to Woo! - Too Wet to Woo! - Too Wet, Too Wet to "W●●W!"
Don't ever get your feathers Too Wet - Too Wet, Too Wet to "W●●W!"*

He raised his head and said in her cracked old voice that all could hear:-
*"Hear me very clearly when I tell you things, My Dear!
From When to be Witch, through What to Wear to Wee, to How'd'you Do?
Too Wise am I, too Quick-to-Dry, to Get too Wet to "W●●W!"*

They watched Jo Mopoke nervously, but Jo was *cracking up!*
She said, *"I haven't laughed so much since Dennis was a Pup!"*
They joined hands in concentric circles, ring-in-ring-in-ring;
Then danced around the Magic Bird, and all began to sing:-

*"To Whom It May Concern," they croaked, "To Wit, the Lot of Us
You're Ancient Jo the Mopoke, so We'll Learn Just What We Must!
From When to be Which, through What to Wear to Wee, to How'd'you Do?
Too Wise are You, too Quick-Dry too, to Get too Wet to "W●●W!"*

*Too Wet to Woo - Too Wet to Woo - Too Wet, Too Wet to "W●●W!"
We'll never get our feathers Too Wet - Too Wet, Too Wet to "W●●W!"!*

Lute turned to the crowd and said, quite loudly, *"This is my own voice.
Thanks for this chance to sing and dance my Karaoke choice!
So many word-choices! - So many bird-voices! – And I can do every one!
So - Lend me your nose, ears, eyes, tongue, toes! – And we'll all have heaps of fun! !"*

The song I'll sing's a Protest Song, I reckon will raise a laugh,
On all the mis-named Fauna of the Wide Brown Land's behalf:
Some European folks call Lyrebirds "Native Pheasants", see,
So we return the compliment with "Foreign Peasantry!"

Pig-ignorant peasants call Lyrebirds Pheasants!
All Pheasants can do's get plucked!
I'll cast such swine no pearls of mine!
They're too dumb to instruct!

But You, our present company, are thoughtful, kind and wise,
Not at all the kind of swine we Fauna so despise;
So let me introduce to you some special friends of mine:
Know us by name, and we'll know that we're not that kind of swine!

[Each featured animal in turn steps forward and sings and dances]

I'm Muffie Marsupial *Not-Mole* – I've no eyes, not even small!
I usually let You-Man-Beings *not-see* me at all -
I can *not-swim* beneath your feet, where you have no idea -
No idea we No-Eyed are near, - You can't *not-be* down here!

No-Eyed are We - *You* can't *not-see*! - There's lots you do not know!
You've no idea we No-Eyed here are not not here below !

We have *not-wings* 'n' feathers 'n' things, and so we can *not-fly*!
You-Mans could *not-fly* the same way, if you dared to try!
We have *not-eyes*, so we can *not-see* – (*You-Mans can't, you stare!*) -
If we're not *Moles* - and we're *not* *Moles*! - we *are* *Not-Moles*, *SO THERE!*

She isn't a Mole! She isn't a Quoll! She isn't a Polar Bear!
She's Muffie Marsupial *Not-Mole*, and she *isn't a Mole*, *SO THERE!*

We hate folks to *Mis-Take* us:– LOOK! A Bandicoots no *Rat*!
Okey Koala's no *Bear* - Queenie Quoll's no Native "*Cat*"!
If *We* called You-Mans "*Bald Chimpanzees*", how would you like that?
Moles are *Placental* – *We're Marsupial* - *Not-Moles* – *You Got That?*

She isn't a Rat! - She isn't a Cat! - She isn't a Bat and Ball!
She's Muffie Marsupial *Not-Mole*, and she *isn't a Mole*, *at all!*

I'm Okey, the Australia-Shaped Koala - Can't you see?
My job is to look charming and disarming up this tree!
Please don't call me Koala *Bear*, and I won't call you You-Man-*Ape* -
But if you do, I'll *Drop-Bear* You, and there'll be No Escape!

He isn't an Ape! – He isn't a Grape! – He just sits on a Branch –
But just *Beware!* - Don't call him *Bear*, or you'll wear an *Avalanche!*

I'm Queenie Quoll, I live in a hole up high in this big Gum.
To this corner, Native Fauna all Wide-Brown-Land-wide have come.
No *Cats* are *native* to this land, so why call us *Native Cats*?
If You-Mans think that, we'll all think that You-Mans must be *Bats*!

She isn't a *Cat*, and that is flat! - We want no *Cats* round here!
A dear old soul is Queenie Quoll, and she isn't a *Cat* - *No Fear*!

I'm Denzil ('Tassie') Devil, and I tell you, *times are tough!*
On the level, I think calling me a Devil's pretty rough!
I've got no choice, I've got a voice and face and name from Hell -
But I'm a charming little Devil, when you get to know me well!

He does make a cackle that's demoniacal - He looks like *The Jackal from Hell* –
But he's quite on the level, a cute little Devil, and *Tasmaniacal* as well!

I'm Brucie Bilby, also known as *Bard Extra-Ordinaire*,
And also *Rabbit-Eared Bandicoot*, which I think most unfair!
A bandy coot I may be, but those Rabbits I just can't *Bear*!
They got grabbity-rabbity habits, plus their ears just don't compare!

Brucie's bandy and cute – And his Candy is beaut! – So *lend the Bard your Ear!*
How happy he will be, when we get those *Bilby-Eared Rabbit* coots out of here!

*ALL: When will you non-indigenes at last see what you've got?
You seem to want to think of us as lots of things we're not!
It's this ignorance of species that is driving us extinct!
See, your Education and our Preservation are intimately linked!*

*NUMBATS: A Rainbow-Dreaming Time there was – We lost it long ago –
But come again it must because – it MUST! –We need it so!
But magic dreams cannot be shared by those who've ceased to be –
Though dreams are air they're dreamt by flesh and blood like you and me.*

*ALL :- So we'd be very pleased if you could meet us and discuss
Who we are, and what we need, and how you can help us:
Thinking Humans of the Third Millenium, Unite!
It's time to cast kid-gloves aside! Punch Power Fists, and FIGHT!*

Stomp-Chant :
Courage! Staunchness! Union! Strength!
We will go to any length!
Save Our Species! Punch with Pride!
Stand with Us, or Stand Aside!

The performance was all over, and the creatures wiped their eyes.
Their tears a mix of pride and joy, and pleasure undisguised;
But when they turned to Ancient Jo, who'd gone back to the Tree,

They saw her eyes had closed, and that she'd seen all she would see.

It seemed that all the effort, all the stress and all the care,
Capped off by Lute's performance, had been more than Jo could bear.
They took her to the hollow which had always been her nest:-
They covered her with Paperbark, and laid her to her rest.

They held a simple service. They knew Jo would want no fuss.
Oke spoke: "*Jo Mopoke is at rest. She was the best of us.*"
Brucie, eyes brim-full, agreed: "*No, Oke, I don't agree:
She taught us to be better, so let's be as good as she!*"

Queenie Quoll, lip just controlled, said: "*Jo was my best friend:-
But what a life! What toil and strife! – What triumph in the end!*"
The creatures all grieved grievously, but B.B. said, "*Rejoice!
Queenie's right! Jo fought our fight, and won through – with her voice!*"

Narelle clutched tiny Norbert; she had been through Numbat Hell,
Haunted by poor Normie's loss, and that evil Cat as well.
She sobbed: "*I'm going to miss Jo more than words could ever tell!*"
- A VOICE came - *Quaky, trembly, shaky* – yet clear-as-a-bell - ". . . Narelle . . . ?!?"

There - in the deep recesses of the ancient Mopoke's nest,
Was the sacred secret Jo had kept secure from all the rest.
Narelle peered into the darkness, as a wild hope dared to form –
She spied five *Bandy-Bandy* bands, and shrieked with joy: "Ohhh, NORM!!!!"

It was *Normie!* - Thin and injured, weak and ill, but *still alive!*
Haltingly, he told them how he'd managed to survive.
Tom the Cat had seized him right around his long, thin head,
And he reckoned in a second that he would indeed be dead.

"*But something happened then,*" he said, "*that you will not believe!*
Jo Mopoke was awaking at the breaking of the eve.
Jo saw the horror happening to helpless little me:-
She floated like a butterfly – and hit Tom like a TREE!

"*He never saw her coming - Like a vengeful Witch she flew!*
She never made a single sound – until she Hooted, "W●●W!"
She raked his cheek – and did Tom FREAK! - She grabbed me with her foot –
She carried me up into her tree, and this is where I was put!"

"*I don't know how many days have passed. – The first few are just a haze,*
But Ancient Jo has gone and fetched me Termites all those days!
I was pretty badly injured, but I reckon I'll pull through –
And, Oh, Narelle, my Darling Girl, Am I Pleased To See YOU!"

Jo had known that of Safe Houses, hers was safest, first, and best,
Where Tom Cat wouldn't dare to venture, even if he'd guessed;
She had kept a poker face, and played her cards close to her chest:-

She *knew* Normie'd be discovered when they laid her to her rest.

Brucie Bilby put a brave face on the loss of Ancient Jo;
None was sadder, nor yet *gladder*: What a way she chose to go!
In Brucie's head, what Normie'd said had flicked a mental switch:
Norm had said that Jo had flown "like a vengeful Witch!"

A line that Lute the LyreBird croaked went 'round his Inner Ear:-
It was "*Hear me very clearly when I tell you things, My Dear!*
From when to be - Which? - Like, What? - Or, Witch!?" - The wording was unclear.
He scratched a perplexitious *itch*, and felt a trifle *queer*.

Was Jo Mopoke a true Witch, truly? - Would Lute the Lyre-Bird lie?
Magic doesn't happen - Surely? - Not-Moles cannot fly?!
-Well, Muffie has not-sky-wings, and she's quite prepared to try!
And Magic may be fare enough for our way through the sky.

Perhaps Jo glides on Silver Moonbeams, 'round a Golden Moon
Perhaps we'll never know the truth - Maybe we'll find out soon!
Once Mankind built great Pyramids - But then we lost the way!
Maybe with Love like Jo's above, we'll find it again some day.

Chorus: Battle Hymn Theme, swelling as if approaching from far distance:

This is just this story's ending, it's not where this story ends;
We're depending on your sending-on of messages it sends!
We can keep the rainbow blending by befriending endless friends -
We all can sing our song!

We are spreading the awareness of the need to be aware:
We can change despair by fairness if we think beyond the Square,
And *Brucie Bilby's been dubbed Faunal Bard Extraordinaire!*
His Troupes are Marching On!

Part Two: Scene 1 : The Fauna Head For Home

The evening sun is sinking, and a glorious Western Sky
Has every creature blinking back a tear from every eye;
- *Every Creature ? – No, Not Quite! – Can't you recall?- You must!*
Eyeless Muffie Not-Mole's Mob are grinning, "*Yes, Not-Us!*"

It's been a *Magic* Conference! They've done *stupendous* things!
It seems as if the creatures have discovered World Wide Wings!
Though Jo the Ancient Mopoke has been sadly laid to rest,
Nearly all the other news has gone from *Bad* to *Best!*

Okey Koala's President of Native Fauna, Inc.
Euclid Echidna, Secretary, is quick with *Quill'n' Ink*.
Plato Ultimato fixed that Fox *before-he-could-think*,
So Plato *Platypus* became a "Hero" in a twink!

They have done all the arranging: In one year they'll meet again.
If arrangements do need changing, they will use their World Wide *Brain!*
Every creature has its mission, and new hope fills every heart;
They're preparing to hit the dusty trail, and starting to depart.

As they crawl dig jump glide slip bump flap slide hop or swim away,
The animals rejoice in the achievements of the day;
They know that they're participating in a Special Thing,
And they can't help but wonder what another year will bring.

They've done very well at *match-making*: One cute female for each brute he-male,
(Though *Norma Lyrebirds* keep *hatch-baking*, and Lute calls them each by E-mail.) All the
blighted, *unrequited* lovers got quite-[ed.] today,
And Narelle'n'Normie's *re-united* love *blows them away!*

Brucie Bilby, "*Bard ExtraOrdinaire*", has joined their ranks;
He's designed that beaut new Flag there, and the Fauna all said, *Thanks!*
They talk of Enemies *within* Wide Brown Land – Not the Japs, nor *Yanks!*
But, "If Pens can vanquish Swords," quoth Brucie, "World Wide Webs whip Tanks!"

It not as if their problems have been solved at one *fowl swoop*,
The way that Jo the Mopoke had pulled off her Tom Cat scoop;
Not everyone could do what Ancient Jo Mopoke had done,
And most solutions take many moons, not seconds, nor just one sun.

So no-one is *over-confident* - In fact, they're *just as scared*,
But one thing in their favour now, at least they'll Be Prepared.
They have formed their Task Force Sub-Committees, that's all they can do,
But they all draw strength from plucky *Plato Ultimato's* coup.

Part Two Scene 2 : Plato Platypus, Thomas Cat, and Dennis Dingo

Now, amongst the ones most worried at the battles to be won,
Is the one who has most *cause* to worry out of *everyone*;
Acclaimed by all as Hero, yet within, he feels a *wuss*:-
This is *Plato Ultimato*, a.k.a. *Plato Platypus*.

“*I’m no hero*,” he had pleaded - but they hadn’t heard him plead;
“*Just a scared weird little battler!*” – (Truly! - Very weird, indeed!)
But the David-and-Goliath Bible story Plato knew,
And he *knew* his claims to be no true-blue hero were quite *true*.

Think:When David stalked Goliath, with a gibber in his sling,
David didn’t show it off, of course: he *hid* the thing.
They’d *lionized* young David, beating armoured might with rocks,
- So with *Plato Ultimato* – who had *lethal-secret* socks.

All the creatures *except* Reynard Fox had glimpsed what was *inside* those socks:-
Stiletto Spurs, like Fighting Cocks’, that spelt *The End* to Reynard Fox:
But *only* little Plato knew, (that’s *Plato Utimato* too)
That Victory was mainly due, *not* to Martial Arts he knew,
Nor to the little blood he drew, but to *Plato Ultimato GOO!*

See, of all the world’s Mammals with flippers or legs,
There’s only two – *Monotremes* – who can lay eggs:-
But of all of them, *Plato* – (this makes him *unique*) –
Injects *poison*, so potent it makes strong men - *FREAK!*

Now, when old Queenie Quoll called for one Volunteer,
To act as Security, Plato felt *queer*:
He hated the role of Defender of Siege,
But he just *had* to take it – out of *noblesse oblige!*

It was quite on the level when Warren the Wombat
Told Denzil the Devil they weren’t built for combat.
Plato’s own wife, Persephone, has *little* spurs,
But she can’t inject any venom with hers.

Plato’s seen straight away how defenceless and weak
So many small creatures were: - Most could just *squeak!*
- But nobody knew that he’d called out, “*ME! Plato!*”
With his heart in his bill like a pulsing potato!

Of being a Hero, he’d had no intention;
He’d’ve rather been *zero* - Not rated a mention;
He’d dithered like Nero before opening his bill:-
Then he’d called out, *in fear*, “*O.K. – I, Plato, will!*”

But Plato was certain, when confronting that Fox,
(As was David, that Goliath had *not seen* his rocks),
That Reynard had *not seen* the venomy spurs
So cunningly cached in his enemy's furs.

Now, killing an Elephant weighing five tons
Is easy for people, for People have *Guns*;
Plato did *not* think that that makes them *Heroes* –
The unfair advantage just renders them *zeroes*.

Plato had *three* secret weapons: - Those *spurs*,
Plus the *venom*, plus all the *surprise* that confers;
Plato's spurs penetrate denim, or socks,
So he *knew* he could punch through his enemy's *Jocks!*

So Plato down-played talk of Heroes, and Champions;
How he longed for his quiet life, home in the Grampians!
He would *try* to defend folks – He'd promised them that –
But *none* knew how he dreaded *Thomas* – *The CAT*.

This Tom Cat was *EVIL* – An absolute *Horror!*
An unclean feline *Fiend* straight from Sodom~Gomorra!
He *slept* through the day – *Humans* fed him his fill,
Then they'd let him outside on his Mission: To KILL!

The moment he loved best of all was when – “*Caught ya!*”
He wouldn't just *kill* creatures - First, “*Let's try Torture!*”
He preyed on the little, the rare and the weak;
Each bone was so brittle – He'd break one, they'd *shriek!*

He would break their bones separately, one after one,
The longer their agony, the greater his fun!
Then when they were paralysed, crippled, or dead,
He would not even eat them – just chew off their head!

Nobody knew what was Thomas's score:-
Counting frogs, birds and lizards, *twelve thousand* or more!
He *was* proud, when he came home yawning at dawning,
In the knowledge that more Faunal Families were mourning.

The woman who “*owned*” him denied *she* was cruel;
A mother herself, yet she thought Thomas “*Cool!*”
He would bring home a Bettong three *babies* called *Mother*:-
The woman would smile: “*Oh look! Tom's caught another!*”

Thomas Cat was strong and clever, big, and very fast;
Plato knew he'd *need* to use his Goo, or be outclassed!
Besides Tom's *fangs*, Plato would face hands set with *fingerknives*,
Wielded by a Maniac from Hell – who *also* had *Nine Lives!*

Poor little Plato knew he'd likely lose, and he was *scared*
For himself, as well as all who could quite obviously not have dared:-
For should he fail - and when the crunch came, he could only do his best -
Thomas Cat would have his claws free to catch *all the rest*.

Plato's true love was Persephone; the thought of her in pain
In the claws of Thomas "Domestic" Cat, was driving him insane.
Of all the other creatures, only one *could* face Tom's menace:-
(He'd bragged he would *bust* him, but no-one would trust him):-
A Half-Dog-Half-Dingo, named Dennis.

* * *

Dennis was a unique case – A special category
He'd reached the meeting rather late, which was just the usual story;
He was only *half-invited* - No-one knew if he'd fit in:
"I really don't care what you think!" said Dennis with a grin.

He was quite relaxed about it: He was tough, and very strong.
His mother was Blue Heeler Cross, who hadn't lived there long.
His father Ginge was a Wild Dingo, living round the fringe,
Who'd rather run than face a gun – but he'd *refused* to *cringe*.

Dennis lived in a half-world, where nothing seemed quite clear.
He had three half-brothers, and one full sister, which just made things more queer.
His mother did the best she could, but they all had one great fear:-
That *Arthur*, the bloke who "*cared for*" them, would go and binge on Beer.

Mostly, Arthur was not *un-kind*; he found five wee pups charming,
Although they grew at a rate of knots he found a bit alarming.
Three dog-pups all were claimed in weeks - the ones with fluffy fur;
Arthur kept Dennis - As for the bitch, well, *no-one* wanted her.

So Arthur *sort-of* kept her on, but by default, that's all;
"You should have knocked her on the head," they said, *"when she was small."*
She wasn't small by now, though, and looked nearly pure-bred Dingo;
And Arthur, after a few beers, often acted like a Gringo.

[Gringoes are feral Humans, pinkish-grey, with reddish necks.
The name came from the way White U.S. Yankees treat the Mex.
Jo Mopoke chose to use it for the sub-Australian blokes
Who smash bottles in the Bush, and really groove on racist jokes.]

When Arthur was cold sober, he would not treat "Bitchie" badly,
Though he looked back on the lost chance of humane disposal sadly.
But drunk, he treated "Bitch" as though her presence were her *fault*,
And if she had been a Human, he'd have been charged with Assault!

Arthur was rather proud of Dennis, grown to be a dog:
He thought Dennis very *handsome*, sitting god-like on his log.
It suited him to have a dog so noble by his side,
Partly because he needed him, and in part, to preen his pride.

Arthur *shot* Blue-Eze, the Mother. How the two big puppies missed her!
Though he liked the brother, Arthur didn't really want his sister;
He would sometimes treat Bitch meanly – That was mainly when he *drank*,
Which the pups' noses told them keenly, on account of how he *stank!*

So Dennis came to be young Arthur's "*Here-Boy*" Favourite,
While skinny little "*Bitchie-Bitch*" was copping all the *grit*;
He beat her black and blue one day for plucking some unplucked figs –
But he took *both* with him when he went a-hunting feral pigs!

It was Arthur's favourite pastime, and he knew just where to go:
Down by Bilby Billabong, some twenty miles or so.
He would put the two dogs in his ute., in a box inside the back,
And keep them in the dark, *so that they couldn't learn the track.*

When he arrived and let them out, they'd both go mad with joy:
Arthur would say "*Bitchie-Girl*" as well as "*Denny-Boy*"-
Then, gun and rope in hand, the Man would set off on the hunt.
The Dogs soon knew just what to do – and soon you'd hear a "*Grunt!*"

Then it was on, and on and on, until the Pig was caught;
The Dogs would pin it by the ears, it was their favourite sport!
If Man breathed "*Piggy*", they knew he had spied a little sucker,
A roar of "*Boar!*" meant he had seen a great big *other* bucker!

[*To pin a Boar is dangerous for Dogs –and if it's big
The winner in a One-on-One is probably the Pig -
Unless of course the Man can get a shot in with his gun –
Which alters very radically the odds from One-on-One!*]

He'd butcher big pigs there and then. He'd take the sides and hams,
And put them in his You-Beaut Ute, with Triple-Rippled Cams,
Into freezers in the back, for some geezers up the track;
He'd cure the best, feed the Dogs the rest – and had *Piglets* in his sack!

The Piglets he'd raise on Calf-food, thus minimising tax,
In three months' time, their hams were prime for '*Angels-On-Horse-Backs*'!
So - (not the grunners!) - but all the rest, - including the billabong's Frogs! -
Benefited from the hunters – and especially, those two Dogs!

One day as they were hunting, close at hand there came a *Rhhhoarhhrrrr* ! -
Like the felling of a Mountain Ash with the famous *Beare-Head Saw*!
Arthur had no time to *shoot* - He gasped in terror: "*Cor'!*"
A smelly, mucky, belly-ducking, hell-bent bucking Boar!

His head was scoopy, leatherclad; his eyes small, shrewd, deep-set;
(It would take *two people at each end to lift this pig, plus sweat!*)
His strength was legendary - Razor-edged his back-curved tusks:
He munched Mallee roots like mangoes, and crunched Ti-Tree trunks like rusks!

Bitchie saw the great Boar charging, head-down, headlong at the Man!
She reacted at true Dingo-speed, as only Wild Things can:
She raced in to the rescue – but he heaved her off his head -
His tusks made cuts in Bitchie’s guts that left her nearly dead!

The Pig was on to Arthur! In a trice it had him down!
Dennis, up the path a way, came racing, bound-on-bound!
Dennis was a large-middle-sized Dog, but the mighty tusker Pig
Was twice the size of *Man-plus-Dog* – That’s *very, very* big!

The Boar had injured Arthur, in the time that this had taken,
And the Dog came only just in time to save the Human’s bacon!
He was *Wild~Wolf~Man~Dingo~Dog~Gone~Dennis* all in one
Transformed to Hell-Hound by the force of *Menace-minus-Gun*.

As luck had it, it was easy! - In a flash, he’d grabbed its snout!
He held its greasy jaws closed, putting its tusks’ commissions out!
He forced its nostrils into the dust - It could neither breathe nor cough,
And snarled between *I-Can-Do-That* teeth, “*Move, I’ll bite it off!*”

The injured man had a sudden plan! He seized some twine and *bound* it,
Then drove to town, leaving Hog tied down, and a *blind-fold* wrapped around it.
He’d covered it with branches, so it wouldn’t die of sun,
While he, *then* Bitch, had stitches, which was not a lot of fun.

Bitchie nearly died of loss of blood that frightful day,
Especially as she was treated only after long delay;
Though limping sadly, Arthur badly craved that Boar alive –
So he went back again, with four more *He-Men*, on that twenty-mile drive.

With five Men it was easy – They press-ganged their new recruit
Bodily into the back of Arthur’s you-beaut Ute.
They sang songs in red-neck lingo - Good Ol’ Arthur gave ’em grog –
Arthur sang in praise of “*Dennis Dingo, Dread-No-Danger Dog!*”

Though little Bitch had been heroic, and she’d nearly lost her life,
Arthur said nowt of her stoic part in saving him from strife;
The fact she’d failed to stop the Boar was all the Man could see,
While big Dennis’s easy victory made him proud as he could be.

Arthur built a Pig-Arena, where he gaoled the great wild Boar;
He bragged, “*This Pig is meaner than any Boar you ever saw –
I’ll back my Pig, Hogzilla, against Yours – or Your Dog, what’s more!*”
(He only told his mates, for sure – In Wide Brown Land this *breaks the Law!*)

One dreadful day months later, as he scratched his stitches' itch,
Arthur got too drunk by half: - One eye began to twitch;
His voice got louder, rowdier, it rose in tone and pitch: -
Then he aimed a clout, and shouted out, "*Take that, you useless Bitch!*"

Bitchie cringed in terror: If he'd caught her, he'd have throttled her!
She dodged away, but Arthur threw a Stubby, and he *bottled* her!
Though bloodstained and so nearly brained, young Bitchie staggered on,
Smash-leaped through a window pane, and in a flash was gone!

Dennis was trembling with dismay, but Dogs don't call the shots . . .
With Gutter-Dogs *more* than their Owners, there's *Gots* and there's *Got-nots*.
Dog-Loyalty Code *demande*d that he stay with Arthur – "*Dad*" –
But he missed his little sister, and the bond that they had had.

Bitchie never did come back. How could she, when she knew
Exactly what the man who'd killed her mother had tried to do?
She went and joined her *Dingo* Dad, whom the locals knew as *Ginge*,
And vowed *his* Vow: *Nohowsoever, Never Shall I Cringe!*

Bitch was skinny, she was injured, and her life was very tough;
She'd raid garbage bins, and lick out tins, trying just to get enough;
She'd become a bit mean-tempered, so old Ginger named her *Martha*:
"Because," he joked, "I sometimes can't tell *Martha* from that *Arthur!*"

That straightened Martha out again, and soon she learnt to cope,
Living on scraps of tourists' food, and scraps of soap, and *hope!*
There was scanty wild game to catch – Tom Cat had seen to that!
Barring taller, she was smaller in all ways than Thomas Cat.

- Except for one! She had a much more clever Doggy *brain!*
And she could certainly *outrun* him – at least, she could on open plain;
They'd had cross words, but had not crossed swords; Tom Cat had never run,
He'd simply arched his back, and spat ! – So, what *could* she have done?

Arthur publicised his Pig, and also Dennis Dog:
He said "*No matter how big, I'll bet Dennis against any Hog!*"
Dennis didn't know about that, but he didn't think about it,
But if he had, he would have been mad not seriously to *doubt* it!

Except for going hunting, all that Dennis did was laze;
He was free to wander in the bush, and sometimes stayed for days;
He was always home at weekends – That was when they used to hunt –
For both Man and Dog were maddened by the Bloodlust of the Grunt.

When Dennis did go walkabout, he'd meet the local Fauna;
Occasionally he'd catch a Rat or Rabbit 'round the corner:
Few natives though. Mouth full, Perce Possum told him "*They're all gom'!*"
He spat his mouthful powerfully, and cursed: "*That Bloody TOM!*"

He kept asking after his sister, but no Natives would tell Dennis;
They'd say "*You're half Gringo-Man yourself, you're nothing but a menace!*"
Martha lived in the arid plunder-lands – She'd tell Ginge, in sad sweet song,
Of the lost remembered wonderlands of Bilby Billabong.

Neither Dennis nor poor Martha ever found the long way back,
Since they'd been kept benighted every time they'd trekked the track.
Dennis handled Town or Country – But no way was he a *Fringe-er*,
So he never found his sister Bitch, nor his *never-met* Father, Ginger.

* * *

So Dennis lives in half-worlds: half a Dingo, half a Dog,
Half a hero, half a Gringo, half a zero, half a Hog,
Half a fighter, half poor blighter who just has to self-defend:
Fearless of his Feral Foes, but afraid of his 'Best Friend'!

In ordinary ways he's just like ordinary Hounds:
He greets ordinary friends with extra-ordinary bounds!
They all hear of his adventure with his Master and the Hog:
They pat him, and they say "*You are a brave and clever Dog!*"

Dennis D. just laps that up! Though no *lap-dog* is he,
He *is* a Dog, and Dogs just *do!* That's just the way Dogs *be!*
Arthur's nieces love him to pieces, as the nicest nieces can,
And for a laugh, they call him "Arf" – They say, "*You are 'arf Man!*"

Half a Dog plus half a Dingo, plus half Gringo-of-a-Man!
Three into two don't go, it's true, but Dennis cannot *plan!*
His Dingo half says "*Flee!*" - and laughs! – But, "*Stay!*" his Man-side cries:
This troubles the Dog in the *middle* path, in half-worlds just half-wise.

Part N

Next Meeting
One Year Later.

Same set. Early Dawn. Frogs and night creatures are barking.
The spot is deserted. Light is rising rapidly, and the first birds begin to sing.

A year has passed since last they met – And what a year it's been!
Attitudes have altered in the seasons in between.
Not all the creatures will be back – No-one could promise that
For one and all knew some must fall to Evil Thomas Cat.

Frisbee Phalanger's Postal Team has mailed them all by hand,
And the Fauna start to gather from all 'round the Wide Brown Land
But what a *different* meeting from the sad and remnant group
Who came to mourn poor Normie's death! – They're Troupers, in one Troupe!

They are making their reunions: *Everybody* has a story,
Some have offspring - some have *bunions* - tales of woe, or joy, or glory;
But they feel a sense of urgency – There's still that *Thomas Cat*,
And everyone, but *everyone*, is well aware of *that*.

They form a Safety circle, with the Littlies at the front,
And at the back, should Tom attack, the bodies with some *grunt*:-
Eva Emu's on patrol, so's Kate the Cockatoo -
Jonet Jerboa's *somewhere* round – Anyone seen Potoroo?

Young Norbert Numbat's seldom been seen since he was a Pup,
And shouts of joy, "*Who's Our Big Boy*", greet three Numbats when they turn up.
Most of them have made it, and they keep their fingers crossed
That absent friends have lost their way, and are not truly - *LOST*.

They have all these Organisations: - *G'DAY, MUM, SIS, BRO, URU* -
But they feel the ghostly absence of the *DAD* they never knew.
Their forbears called him *TNT* – His photo's on the wall -
Thylacine *Not-Tiger*: He was Daddy of Them All.

How Plato wishes they'd not lost their fearless Dear Old DAD!
He's not been seen since Queenie Quoll's late father was a lad.
TNT would have had no fears of Thomas the Maniac Cat,
But men brought fire, guns, dogs, and wire, and that was that was that.

Thylacine, O Thylacine! Thy Noble Head, so Blue!
Gringoes keen, with spite and spleen, soon put an end to you!
Are we never more to see thy noble head again?
We miss you now forever! - Ave Atque, Dear Old Friend!

Then Brucie Bilby solemnly unrolls his dusty swag,
"*There now! – Flying once again!*" - Their lovely Faunal Flag!
They bow their heads in silence, missing Jo, whom they'd adored,
[But they must look backwards less at loss, and work forwards towards reward.]

Okey sits *beside* the flag; they share a common limb.
He says, "*It's good to see you all, in times not quite so grim!
I hope I find you well, and that you're all in fighting trim.
Let's sing, with heart and soul, our Faunal Feral-Fighting Hymn!*"

Narelle is ready to conduct, but this time with a *baton*;
Dennis Dingo's there on time, with his 'Best-Behaviour' hat on.
Narelle turns to the crowd, and makes a simple, solemn bow;
Turns back to the Band, and raises her hand, and brings it down on: *Now!*

Battle Hymn of the Faunal Feral-Fighting Union [F.F.F.U.]

Our eyes have seen the gory crimes of Feral Cat and Fox,
And *InHuman* Beings, *fricasseeing* Wallabies in Woks,
Now we stand with Plato Platypus! We've all pulled up our socks!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

To join our Faunal Feral-Fighting Union isn't hard:
You don't need to pay a Union Fee nor tote a Union Card:
Just help us Guard the Native Fauna that we need to Guard!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

Chorus :

Glory Glory Hallelujah!
You don't want to lose us Native Creatures, do ya?
SAVE US if we really matter to ya!
Our Union Makes Us Strong!

We can't fight those Carp or Cane-Toads with a bullet from a gun:
There's many dreadful Ferals that have Natives on the run:
But - *A Cat left free to roam is Public Enemy Number One !*
Keep Cats Where They Belong!

If you say your Cat's killed nothing Native since its infant youth
Just don't smile! – You're On Trial, for Denial of the Truth!
If it roams free, that *reverses* all the Onus of the Proof -
And We Say You Are WRONG!

You can't change a raging Tiger to a manner meek and mild:
We must just get rid of Ferals to save Natives in the Wild.
So - Children! - Hear our Cries for Help!
And Parents! - Heed your Child!
Please Join Us In This Song!
Come On and Sing Along!
NOW!

Chorus

Repeat Chorus again, slowly, triumphantly, with *POWER!*

They sing the Hymn so forcefully that everyone is proud:
The way they sing, the whole Bush rings with song, both sweet *and* loud.
But as they finish, serious business fills their urgent thoughts:-
They pass the formals, say the normals, and get down to Reports.

Without going into details, things have really *not* improved;
In actual changes on the ground, nothing has really moved.
And though they're sure their education policy is working,
That isn't very *solacey* whilst Thomas Cat's still lurking!]

When all Reports are finished, all the Fauna feel quite glum;
They've been hoping for rather better news, for all the way they've come.
But Brucie Bilby, *Bard Extraordinaire*, and Long-Eared Freak,
Bounces into the centre and cries, "*Comrades! I would speak!*"

[The Fauna have rather *hoped* he would. The last time he addressed them,
All he said had sounded good – In fact he quite impressed them.
He had *weird* thoughts, but they *could* work; he seemed pleased to manifest them,
And his quirky Website rorts *excited*, some might say *obsessed* them!]

"*My Friends*", says Brucie simply, "*Thanks for lending me your ears -
No way as big as mine,*" he jokes, "*but sincerely: Calm your fears!
Let us not be disappointed! Look at all we have achieved!
We're on target with Jo's strategy! At last we are believed!*"

Then he echoes Plato's own thought: "*It's a shame we've got no DAD –
Old TNT could deal with Thomas Mad Cat if we had.*"
He dabs each eye. "*We can but try. Please - Pray for Marshal Plato.*"
[*All the Fauna have great faith in Marshal Plato, "Ultimato".*]

[They silently, sincerely pray for Plato, their Protector.
They think of Heroes – Androcles, and Hercules, and Hector.
But the Fates can deal a cruel hand: – and *no-one* knows the deal,
Plato's lethal secret weapon *might* prove his *Achilles Heel!*]

B.B. goes on: "*I've laboured long, and written lots of verse.
I've made a Pantomime of our last meeting. - Just rehearse!
We need a Dress Rehearsal soon, before you all disperse,
So move your Arts, and learn your parts, or cop a Bilby Burst!*"

"*We are working on a CD, and we're on the Internet! -
So you can personally go 'surfing' without ever getting wet!*"
- But when they see the manuscript, they recoil in dismay:
It is *many, many* pages! "This will take all day!" they say.

"*No worries,*" Brucie Bilby says, "*You've mostly got 'bit' parts -
So find your bit and practise it, so we won't have false starts.
Lute LyreBird will play the part of Ancient Mopoke Jo: -
Once more she'll sing!*" (they laugh) – "*Oh! - One more thing before I go . . .*"

*“Remember Mopoke Method! We are teaching all the Youth!
They’re our Hop@Link to reach the rest, and make them see the Truth!
It’s like when you plant a fruit tree – It takes years to bear much fruit,
But when it comes, it yums and yums, and then it’s really beaut!*

*“But fruit trees do need loving care, there’s pruning and there’s weeding,
Watering, training, cultivating, fertilizer-feeding;
But you’re so much more than Peasants – You are Educators too!
You must work to grow your Presence, so there’s Things That You Must Do:-*

*“If you’ll just turn to Appendix A, you’ll find some Special Forms,
Designed to wake some Dormice up who Dorm-House in big Dorms!
The Dormitories I’m thinking of are very, very “Cool!”
With Members’ Bars, Official Cars, and Rooms for Playing Pool.*

*“Not all of them are Dormice – Some are Pearls amongst the Slush!
Jo Mopoke’s first quote was “Don’t Tar Them All With Just One Brush!”
Some plants that grow like weeds are GOOD! - They’re “Medics”! – so, you need
To know a More-Nous from a Dormouse, (or, a ‘Medic’ from a ‘Weed’ !)*

*“You may tell your local Councillors, MPs, and AlderFolk,
All Older Folk, and ALL the Folk, this isn’t any joke:
You Young Folk have a Right to Know Of What You’ve Been Bereft
- Tell Them, You’ll Fight with All Your Might to Save the Little Left!*

*“You may tell them that you’ll moralise and quarrel and insist
That you’ll cavil and unravel secrets. Punch your power fist!
Tell them you won’t wear inaction, what you want is satisfaction,
Demand fenced Faunal Havens that become a big attraction!*

*“Now, a Boston Crab’s a way to grab opponents’ arms when wrestling
(Not as fatal as when Tom the Cat grabs a Golden Whistler nestling)-
But there’s ways of twisting strong men’s arms to cause exquisite agony,
And for little Thorny Devils to be Scary-Magic-Dragon-y.*

*You can be a Thorny Devil, (and I rather hope you do!) -
Now, although he looks so spiky, Thorny Devil’s spines aren’t true! -
- But! - Those who think they really know him really really don’t -
For T.D. can get much pricklier yet - if that should be his wont!*

*His wit is quick, his prose is slick, his quill is speed-ball-tipped,
He takes crooked Legal Eagles on, and gets their feathers clipped!
[Note! ‘Poison Pen’ letters just aren’t on – (T.D.’s just poison-dipped!)
And he can E-mail anyone, since he’s been E-Equipped!]*

*The poison-ink he dips in is his target’s own Home Brew:
He sends Media letters telling Folks what Eco-Villains do!
Pollution from our lakes (e.g.) tips his Medæa-Evil Quill -
But he signs his letters with his Proper Name: Thorn E. DeVille.*

We can *all* be *Thorny Devils* – Flex our muscles! Crack those joints!
The World Wide Web both levels us, and helps raise thorny points!
Everyone should have a form – Got Yours, Norma? – You too, Norm?
Right! - Photocopy lots, fill in the dots, and *POST*, to (Dormouse, via Dorm)

The Fauna take their forms, and then sit down to read them through,
Discussing with each other all the do's and don'ts to do.
They're excited by their projects . . . *Oh!* – and someone's spread the word
That shortly they'll be *entertained* by *Lute, the Lyre-Bird!*

In the deep and blackened hollow in the bottom of the Tree,
Two slitty eyes, narrow and sly, open warily:
No-one can see inside that hollow – Those eyes make sure of that! –
This is the *Enemy Within* – The Dreaded *Thomas Cat!*

*He's been waiting, Oh! So very long, for this scene to recur:-
A year has had to come and go – A whole new change of fur!
And this morning he's been waiting since before the early dawning
So no-one would call Resistance, via Distance Early Warning.*

*A black Cat in a black hole on the dark side of the Tree!
He smiles a Crocodile smile – He knows no-one will see!
He was sure no-one had seen him as into his crypt he crept:
He'd curled his claws and yawned – and dreamt of Norbert as he slept!*

*Now these Fauna are so busily inquisiting this Form
That all of them are off their guard, even the wary Norm!
The time has come to take position for this, his *Finest Hour*:
The Rout of all Resistance to Domestic Pussy Power!]*

* * *

*He slips out of the darkness, into the long dry grass;
His movements stealthy as a snake's, as smooth as molten glass . . .
He crouches down, without a sound; observes, with scheming eyes . . .
And no-one knows he's there at all, except a few small flies . . .*

What a *Smorgasbord of Torture!* – (Thomas gloats upon the scene):-
A *Lizard* that looks prickly? - *No!* . . . *Green Tree-Frog?* (“*Pretty Green!*”) . . ?
Perhaps that pesky *Bilby* . . ? – Or that *Numbat* he once missed?!
But then . . . *Oh!* What a *Loathsome Plot* – *How could Tom Cat resist?* -

*He spies the land out as he slinks into a mallee heap:
He gauges the distance:- One Bound – Five-Step Charge – then - Tiger Leap!
He sinks, he shrinks, his eyes are chinks: He wants to have no doubt
That he'll choose his “*Magic*” Moment – to Freak ALL the Fauna Out!]*

The Fauna have no notion of the presence of Tom Cat.
At last they feel they have the time for pleasantries, and chat.
Euclid Echidna's keeping busy, helping Fauna fill their Forms,
And Norma's helped enormously with helping Norm with Norm's.

There is a sense of Holiday – of jollity, and jokes;
Okey's croaking Karaoke – Ancient Jo Mopoke's!
He only does it softly – No way *he'd* sing to the crowd! -
They're awaiting *Lute, the LyreBird* – 'cos they know Lute does Jo proud!

There's a flurry in the bushes! – Fauna scurry to their places;
There's a hurried round of *Shooshes*, and a sea of eager faces:
Lute Lyrebird's performance is a wonder, seen by few -
And now, he steps out from the bushes he's been under, right on cue!

A plain bird, long of tail and limb, and chocolate in colour;
Like a European Pheasant – smaller, slimmer, darker, *duller* -
But it's not his outer plumage that folks come so far to see –
The strings in his lyre play coloured fire on finest filigree!

He mounts his mound, stalks 'round it, stands poised on one strong leg;
Inspects the ground . . . struts up and down . . . and adds a bright blue *plastic peg!*
“Year Up! Clear Up! Gear Up! Cheer Up! Testing, One, Two, Three!
Beer-Up! Hear Up! Peer Up! Rear Up! ! We're Up, Home and Free!”

He dips his head and *curtseys* deeply – It's much more than a *bow!*
The audience is awed, but Norbert Numbat breathes a *“WOW!”*
Lute's tail is *transforming!* A *Miracle* unfolds!-
Quivering veils of shimmering gossamer, laced with opalescent golds !

He listens for some faint insistent plaintive distant beat
Like a multitude advancing from afar, on dancing feet;
Lute seems to be day-dreaming, or to be somehow *distract;*
Then his body picks the counterpoint, and he begins to *sway* . . .

Tap
Tip
Top
Tup

Song
Sing
Sang
Sung

Tom Cat has watched in secret: He thinks Lute looks quite *absurd!*
He will top this bird's performance without uttering a word!
That Pom Cat, *Firefrorefiddle*, claimed fame for his role, *FIEND OF THE FELL* -
Now Tom Cat will *eclipse* him as *TOM TERROR, THE CAT FROM HELL!*

He takes a deep breath – sets himself - and becomes the *Cat of Steel!*
In a instant he will change to fright the fortitude they feel ! -
- *NOW!* - A *Leopard-Leap* - a *Cheetah-Charge* - a final *Tiger-Spring!*
Tom lands just where the Littlies are – Right in the central ring!

He stands a moment, tail lashing, spitting bits of hate:
Electric hair says “*Just Beware! Just don't try nothing, 'Mate!'*”
The creatures freeze in terror! – Tom Cat slinks up from behind,
And grabs tiny *Muffie Not-Mole!* - Quite defenceless, and *quite blind!*

His mouth is full of *Muffie*, but Tom needs no words at all:
His eyes say, “*Where's this Toughie who'll defend the weak and small?*”
It's the moment *Plato Platypus* fore-dreaded in his Will –
For now he *must* play *Hero* – But his heart is in his bill.

It's the Ultimate Confrontation! This is *Courage* versus *Might!*
Plato shows no hesitation, for he fights for what is *Right!*
He's quick-changed to *Plato Ultimato* back behind the Tree!
His tone is flat: “*Drop Muffie, Cat!*” - Those Cats'-Eyes flash: “*Make Me!*”

Plato Ultimato takes his Crocodile Stance!
If he can strike the first blow, then he might just stand a chance!
But Tom the Cat drops *Muffie* flat – He can't restrain a *laugh!*
“*I watched you fight that Fox last year – My mind's a photograph!*”

“*I know about you, “Plato Ultimato”, - and your Spurs –*
I know where you've been hiding them inside your hind-leg furs;
I don't know what they're spiked with – but I know enough to say
I know they're spiked with something – and you won't get me that way!

“*I've whipcord sinews - bayonet fangs - my fingerknives are steel:*
I've waited for a year to find how Platypus would feel!
And I've never eaten Not-Mole – How that whets my appetite!”
And to *Muffie*, “*Here's Our Menu –You will be in me tonight!*”

Poor *Muffie* would have *burrowed*, if she'd been on softer ground,
But the soil is hard and furrowed for a dozen yards around,
And impossible to dig in, for the big roots of the tree –
She wishes she could fly, or flee, or die, or just *Not-Be!*

But *Plato* is more terrified than he has ever been!
- His weapon secret nevermore, for Tom has surely seen!
Like David with his slingshot, but without his six smooth stones !
From all the Fauna - stiff with fright - comes weeping, wails and groans!

Now Tom Cat seizes Muffie once again between his jaws:
He is saying, *I can kill you, Platypus, with just my claws!*
And Plato stands defenceless as a naked little boy,
Facing sets of daggers –wielded by a murderer-for-joy!

(Where is that Dennis Dingo, now they desperately need him?
- Gone home to Arthur Gringo, in the hope that he would feed him?
- Or is it that with Thomas Cat, he’s simply not prepared
To risk an eye? – Hardly to *die!* – Is Dennis simply *scared?*)

[No. Dennis has *not* “deserted” – He has simply gotten bored,
- And after all, his promise to “*bust Tom*” has gone *ignored*.
He’s gone answering a Nature’s Call, as all in Nature must,
Then found a sleepy hollow, in soft sun-warmed sleepy dust.]

Poor Plato knows, against this foe, he doesn’t stand a chance,
He *has* no secret weapon, yet continues to advance:
Though inwardly he’s wincing, he will die to save poor Muff:
And he tries to sound convincing: - “*ZO – You Vont to Play Zings RAAARFFF!*”

As Plato roars that syllable, he leaps to the attack!
Tom Cat, Muffie still in mouth, quite lightly just jumps back!
As Plato passes - as do Spanish Bulls past Matadors -
Tom Cat slashes at his bill, with his cruel hooked razor-claws!

Now, Plato doesn’t bite at all – He sort of *gobblesucks*.
A Platypus’s bill is soft – Much softer than a Duck’s.
It’s hyper-sensitive, for finding life-forms in soft mud –
But it’s no *offensive weapon*, and his wounds are spurting blood!

Undaunted, Plato whirls about – But Tom holds Muffie fast!
By now there can be no doubt that poor Plato’s quite outclassed!
But Plato makes one desperate lunge that isn’t *at* Thomas Cat –
He grabs tough little *Muffie*, and *drags her free!* – Tom hadn’t thought of that!

But now Tom Cat has his *jaws* free – Now he bites as well as slashes!
The fight is leaving Plato, bleeding from a dozen gashes!
His memorable moments seem to pass before his eyes:-
Tom’s *coup de grace* is coming fast – the wound from which Plato dies.

Noisy Kate, the Cockatoo, is watching, fit to bust:
Like Dennis Dingo, she must “*go*”, as “*go*” all creatures *must!*
But she *can’t* “*go*” *there!* - She mounts the air, to “*go*” behind the Tree –
From up so high, who does she spy? – Well, go on – *You tell Me!*

- There in his comfy dustbowl, wearing a blameless smile of bliss,
Dennis Gringo-Dingo dreams of Pig-hunts with his Sis . . .
Kate bombs him with a precious egg! – It hits him with a *Splat!*
“*Dennis!*” she screams, “*This is no dream! Tom-Tom-Cat-Cat-Cat-Cat!*”

But back at Base the situation's very grim indeed:
Plato's lost a lot of blood, and still his gashes bleed!
He has one chance to save Muffie! –With his body he shields hers –
And saves her life by hiding her in the fur between his Spurs!

Tom Cat is spitting fury! *He will yet have his Not-Mole!*
He'll finish Plato, "Ultimato", then eat Muffie whole!
He mauls the curled-up Plato - His fangs sink in Plato's neck! –
He knows he's won – His victim's done – He'll be dead in just a

!!! PECK !!!

(!?) - *A piece of Tom Cat's nose is missing! –*
Snipped out, as if clipped!
- Tom Cat's jaws release their hold, as if they've come unzipped!
Something WITCHY - wide and brown - glides above without a sound,
Snatches Muffie Not-Mole, and lifts her swiftly off the ground!

The big brown bird lays Muffie down where once she laid poor Norm:
She's steeled herself for this dire time, this wonder to perform;
A year of silence, shunning violence, meditating long,
Training herself, and maintaining her health, so she'll *Be Prepared* – and Strong!

Then with no hesitation, she performs a '*Boom@Loop*'-
She flashes by, slashing Tom's eye, in a full recurving stoop!
In just five heartbeats, *Jo Mopoke* – for it is surely *She!* –
Is sitting grave and motionless again up in her Tree!

"To Whom It May Concern," she croaks, *"To Wit, Tom Cat, to Thee:*
I have taken it upon myself, your Faunal Judge to be.
I have carried out my Sentence: 'Forever Only See
With One Eye.' - *Nevermore will you spy with the Magic of 3-D!"*

The Fauna are just gasping at the dramas they have seen,
But as they turn to look at Thomas, *only one of his eyes looks green!* –
The other is a – (Well, I better not describe the *mess!*) -
But all the creatures power-punch the sky, and holler "YES!"

All the creatures? . . . Muffie is all right, and she has heard . . .
Dennis is still absent . . . and Kate Cockatoo . . . ("That Bird!")
But there's one that lies forgotten – though I know that seems absurd! -
No-one's realized that Plato hasn't moved, nor said a word!

At this very very instant, Dennis Dingo may be found
Racing like a Greyhound back towards the Meeting Ground,
Guided by Kate Cockatoo, with shrieks and squawks and screams –
What happens next Tom never would guess, nor dream in his vilest dreams!

As Dennis Guard-Dog races to the rescue, he's so *fine!*
Eager, fearless, bright-eyed - *Peerless Comrade - Friend of Mine!*
He clears the Faunal Circle at a single mighty bound –
There's Tom, with Dennis's good mate Plato lying on the ground!

Dennis doesn't hesitate – He simply bores straight in!
The one-eyed Cat knows now for certain he could never win;
Thomas tries to scratch *his* eye, but only rakes his jaw,
And in return, Dennis Dingo breaks Thomas's leading paw!

Dennis dances in and *bites* Tom! – His teeth are strong and white:
He'll *kill* this Cat with half a chance to get in one more bite!
Dennis now knows to keep his eyes away from Tom's sharp claws,
While Tom tries to keep three good paws out of those Dingo jaws!

It takes Dennis quite some seconds to realise: *Tom has lost an eye!*
He didn't see Jo do it - Wonders *how* – (*not Who!*): - and, *Why?*
Dennis figures *Plato's* done it, and it comes into his head
That Plato - whom he *much admires* - might actually be *dead!*

That thought blinds Dennis to danger – He barks, one mighty *RRRAAARRRF!*
[The Roar that Swore, "*In days of yore I tore a Boar in half!*"]
It's plain to see he'll *not be stopped*, even it costs *three* eyes! –
Tom Cat still has three good *legs*. – He *flees!* - He nearly *flies!*

He flees at near-four-legged speed, up into the Big Gum Tree!
- Right where *Okey's* sitting! *How unlucky could Tom Cat be!*
Okey raises one hand: Oke has *Thumb-Hooks*, which outclass
Even Tom Cat's *finger-knives!* - Oke says: "*You Shall Not Pass!*"

So Tom is forced to take a dead branch - long, exposed, and slim: -
Now all the creatures that can fly, can let fly right at *him!*
The Possums nip his ankles, and the Parrots bite his ears,
And then the Cockatoos begin, bringing Tom's *good* eye to tears!

Have you ever had your nose-hairs plucked? - You know the way it smarts?
Corella squadrons treat Tom to the '*Pluck of Many Parts*'!
They even pluck his *facial fur!* - *Have you seen a Hairless Rat?*
Well, when the Corella squads are finished, he is *hairless* than *that!*

Then the biggest Cocky of them all, the Great Palm Cockatoo,
Makes Tom squeal a mighty squall: *He bites Tom's tail right through!*
When it hangs down limp, he screeches, "*This is for the strife and harm*
You've done me and my family, and my partner, Mrs. Palm!"

No need to use a catapult – birds mount a non-stop SPLAT assault
Till the Horror from Gomorrah's white as a Sodomite Cat o' Salt!
Dennis thinks, "*It's like when folks chucked Old Tomatoes at the Queen!*" "
.. ? '*Old Tomatoes?*'?! .. ! *Ultimato's hurt!* - *My doG!* - *How long's it been?*

But when Dennis turns to Plato, Jo's beside him, and looks grim:
Plato's barely breathing, and his eyes are growing dim;
The creatures start to gather round, and most begin to weep:
But Dennis holds his tears in check: He has to Guard the Keep!

Thomas is *less* than *half* the Cat! - They're paying him his due!
Bald, bird-pecked, broken-tailed, -legged and -hearted! - *One-eyed*, too!
Coated white with Cockatoo Poo . . . Missing several *claws* -
And with (Dennis-Dingo-masticated) *dislocated jaws!*

Dennis waits beneath the Tree, keeping a watchful eye
On Thomas Cat. - It's now the Fauna's turn to say, *Just Try!*
And Tom Cat's turn, as Muffie had, to wish that *he* could fly!
It's too high to jump: He must just lump it, afraid he's due to die.

Little Plato Platypus is sinking very fast.
His body's growing colder: - Every breath might be his last.
But he whispers low to Ancient Jo, "*Bring Dennis over here!*"
So he comes, with Eva Emu guarding Tom. (Who thinks: *No Fear!*)

*"Dennis Half-Dog-Gringo-Dingo! Arfa-Dog, My Lad!
I knew you had it in you! You have made us all so glad!
We never knew Old T.N.T. - The DAD We Never Had. -
Please - BE their Father - Dennis Alpha Dog - D.A.D. - DAD?!"*

Dennis is *dumb-founded!* - He had not meant things this way! -
But Plato's Dennis's hero too, so . . . *What can Dennis say?*
But there's something *touching* in the thought of being Faunal Father,
And Dennis licks a tear, and whispers, "*Plato - Quit your blather!*"

"Plate, I'll do my best," he vows, "*but I am but a Dog!*"
- "*Hold your head high, Dennis, you're Above All, Utter Dog!
You have proved yourself our Comrade, and a Friend both brave and true -
Should there ever be another Tom raid, you'll know what to do!*"

*"Thank you Jo - Thanks everyone - Thanks Katy Cockatoo!
Things would have been quite different if it hadn't been for you!
One thing: When I stop breathing, please don't leave me to the Flies -
Just slip me in the Billabong. So long! - I love you guys!"*

Plato sighs, and shuts his eyes. - They listen for his breath:-
It comes no more, till they are sure poor Plato's met his Death.
A Fly on Fly-By spies his blood, and lands close, upon the grass,
But Fi Fly-Catcher snatches it, and cries, "*Let No Flies Pass!*"

They slide him the water's edge, his cooling body limp;
All are weeping for their Hero - "*Plato thought he was a wimp!*"
The skid-mark where they have slid him is stained red with Plato's blood;
"Adieu, Dear Friend!", they bid him, and they slither him down the mud.

To see him off's so *little* trouble, that some weep even more:
Scarce a ripple or a bubble - Just some blood from one deep sore.
His claw-slashed nose - His eyes, now closed – Those images they'll keep –
But his pose and his face portray a State of Grace, as he glides into the Deep.

The meeting sadly reconvenes, all of its own accord;
'TwiXt Holiday and *Horror-Day*, the whole day has *see-sawed*.
But they've no time for grief right now! - *Tom Cat* is still alive! -
So now there is the question, *Do we let Tom Cat survive?*

He is plainly in their power – If he stays up there he'll die,
And he'll find no way past Dennis now, unless he *truly* learns to fly!
He'd never hunt so *well* again, now that he's lost one eye,
But he'd get well again himself – And then, again, he'd *try!*

There is no teaching any Cat that *Pussy Mustn't Kill*.
Cats simply are hard-wired to hunt, and hunt they always will.
Freedom for the Feline Fiend is Finish for the Fauna,
And they all want to finish *Tom*, now they've got him in a corner.

All? - Is that *unanimous?* - ["NO!"] – *Who was that that spoke?*
- No need to ask, we know that voice, it's Ancient Jo Mopoke!
(She fits so with the furniture, the Fauna keep forgetting her!
But the proposition to kill Thomas seems to be upsetting her!)

Now, the Fauna hold Jo in profoundest awe, and they respect her
For all she's done for them before. – She's been Unseen Protector!
And she's been a shrewd adviser – Wise as Solomon, if not wiser –
And she's been around about as long as the Pyramid of Gizeh!

“To Whom It May Concern” she croaked, “To Wit, Witnesses, and Defendant!
*First, Thomas Cat: You've murdered once again. Your life's dependent
Upon these, your victim's peers and friends, for it's up to them to choose
Whether you should lose your life – Not that it's much to lose!*

Now, my Friends! I must address you all, as a judge speaks to a Jury:
The case is clear – You were all here – You all feel fear, and fury,
But our moral dilemma is, if we cold-bloodedly kill Tom Cat,
Then we're cold-blooded killers too! Friends – Have you thought on that?

Her audience listens in silence. Many of them *had* thought that!
[‘The Road to Hell is paved with Violence!’ – Who was it that taught that?]
*Adjournment now for High-Tea might help everyone concerned.
Debate Your Acts. Relate to Facts. This Council stands Adjourned!”*

How relieved the Fauna are at this - for how they need a break!
From the traumas and the dramas, both their brains and bodies ache!
Yet they adjourn in the knowledge that the questions they must face
Are the weightiest for all life-forms, from Not-Moles to the Human Race!

“*High-Tea*” Jo Mopoke calls it – What a quaint Victorian term!
Lute LyreBird’s brought his favourite tit-bit, a giant Victorian *Worm*.
[Poor *Jeff*, the Giant Worm Himself, was specifically *tasked*,
But was *extricated involuntarily*, not *actually asked*.]

Queenie’s wrapped some Bogong Larvae in leaves of Lemon-Scented Gum;
She offers Oke the Larvliest: – “*No Thanks! – But those Leaves look Yum!*”
Euclid, plus Narelle and family, tunnel in a mound
Where they know that their common tucker, Termites, will be found.

Everybody takes some food; they groom, and take a drink:
There’s time for the facts to be reviewed, and time to have a think.
They’ve been up since Dawn; some stretch, some yawn. *All* take a deep, deep breath:
They’ll be *corporately responsible* in a matter of *Life – or Death!*

* * *

They reconvene in a solemn group, to talk the matter through;
It’s plain that in the main they really don’t know *what* to do.
They nearly *all* give Tom a *Thumbs-Down*; some say, *KILL the Creep!*
But *no-one* uses the ‘C’ word – ‘*Cull*’ - nor calls it, ‘*Put To Sleep*’!

“*The problem couldn’t be clearer*”, says little Jenny Wren.
“*We know that Thomas Cat would heal, and come right back again!*
But the problem that that poses is, Well, Now what do we do?
- And though Thomas Cat has lost one eye, his Kittens all have two!”

The thought of those growing Kittens stops *any* sense of gloating.
And the thought of *Plato . . !* – (*Would they ever find his body floating . . ?*)
“*Kill him! It’s high time he died!*” comes the Ancient Cry for Blood:-
“*Plato’s Blood has hardly dried! - We’re standing on His Mud!*”

They speak of ways of killing Tom – They all sound pretty *gruesome!*
Some want a pair of Red Goshawks, who are known as the Gruesome Twosome,
To stoop on Tom - Well I won’t go on, but you get the picture that
Things are looking *pretty grim* for Thomas “*Domestic*” Cat!

Most want the naked injured Cat left trapped on his dead limb.
Nobody has the slightest wish for *clemency* for him.
UV Level’s ‘Extremely High’ (“*We won’t have killed him, he’ll just have died . . !*”)
“*Let the Sunshine Fry him Crucially! - Let him be Crucially-Fried!*”

“*Crucially-Fry him! - Crucially-Fry him!*” – [It has a familiar ring,
But they are sure, the time before was a vastly different thing:
Tom Cat’s no gentle *Jesus – Pontius Pilate’s* weak, not *Jo!* -
She is ready to Pass Sentence – She claps her beak, to let them know.]

*“Fauna of the Jury! - I’ve been thinking on this matter - ”
(The Fauna all look up to Jo, and must also look up at her!)
“Tom Cat I know to be guilty, and of many many crimes.
I’ve watched at night, and he’s done’s murder many, many times.*

*“I have heard your firm opinion, one from which you’ll not be budged,
But I alone will judge him, lest you be yourselves so judged.
I would not condemn him even now - I’d spare him Death By Beak -
Except that I know, if we do let him go, he’ll be back inside a week!*

*“I personally despise him, for killing Plato, our martyred friend,
Yet thoughts of vengeance play no part in what I do intend.
If he must die, it’s by reason of the treasons he’d yet do,
And if it be done, I will do it alone, since I’m his Judge, not you!*

*“I’ve shied away from violence, and I would now if I could: -
It’s a difficult decision, but it’s for the greater good!
I had myself adjudged that Tom at least must lose an eye –
Savage indeed, but there was need, so less of you should die.*

*“In the frightful world of Humans, when a murderer is caught
Humanists resist Death Sentences, even as a last resort,
For they have an option we do not, of keeping him imprisoned,
In a place called Clink, until they think he’s wisened, or just wizened.*

*“Yet in that strange world of Humans, murder’s usually “one-off”;
‘There-but-for-the-Grace-of-God-go-I’ - and most murderers try to run off.
Tom Cat kills massively, publicly, and he’s incorrigibly recidivist:
This death-knock opportunity is one we dare not miss.*

*“We cannot keep him prisoner, and he has no right to live;
We can’t forgive him for Fauna who are not here to forgive;
We cannot put a bell on Tom – nor on bell-less Tom, a Ban –
The ones who should have done that are That Woman – or Her Man.”*

Jo delivers sentence gravely, as only Jo Mopoke can:
*“Tom Cat, You Must Die. You are as evil as any Man.
For Causing the Death of Plato through your Unprovoked Attack,
You’ll be Summarily Executed by One-Mopoked Pay-Back.”*

As he wonders at Ancient Jo Mopoke, and the powers that she wields,
Tom Cat knows that there’s no way out – He *has* no final shields.
Tom’s pleas for Tomorrows ring hollow indeed,
When they think with deep sorrow of those not there to plead.

[Where had Jo been? – And whence had she come? -
Where do her magical powers come from?
No-one has the slightest notion how she’s still *alive!* –
But they’ve no doubt she’ll see Tom out, and that she will survive.]

The one thing that could save Tom Cat, is if he could be *used*.
Whoever said “*Cats are more use dead!*” is amusedly excused;
But no-one has *any* notions that are noteworthy of noting,
Till Okey has one bright idea: “*We might use him in Promoting . . !*”

What a thought! - *Promoting - What?* (the Fauna want to know);
“*Well – The Faunal Revolution!*” Oke says vaguely - “*No, Oke, No!*
Spare No Succour! - Fry the Feline!” . . . But *Brucie Bilby* makes a beeline
In front of the Tree, and says “*Just Hear Me! Oke’s Way’s The Way To Go!*”

“*If we kill Tom Cat now – when each new kitten’s a ‘two-eyes’-er -*
Then Thomas will be gone, and those Cat-kittens will be no wiser –
But if we send him home like this, then it will advertise the fact
We’ve said No More! – It’s On! - It’s War! – Too long we’ve been attacked!”

This idea has its attractions, and it attracts a bit of *wit*,
But most of the creatures see all the bad features, and they don’t give a *bit*.
“*Brucie, look,*” they tell him kindly, “*It’s too damn’ danggerous!*
We daren’t let him live. No-one wants to forgive him – not even the Kangaroos!”

Jo Mopoke wastes no time commencing Summary Execution,
Though she knows in her heart it can never be part of a Permanent Solution.
No-one apart from Oke and Brucie are calling for a remand:-
There’s no point in her delaying obeying her self-imposed command.

Jo spreads her wings and leaves her perch, then smoothly sails away,
Wheels, dips a wingtip, and heads back fast, in a Level Flight display.
She fixes Thomas Cat’s good eye with her own hypnotic two –
And as she races by his ear, she *Hoots* in it -“*WOO-OOW*” !

Tom Cat is freaked, and shaken, but he doesn’t lose his grip;
Jo Mopoke doesn’t want him to, seems like the shrewdest tip.
She sails by, reaches for the sky, and then begins her stoop
In the dread Attack-Mode tactic Jo has styled her *Boom@Loop*.

Tom crouches down and cowers – For what else can he do?
Jo seems to have him in her power, with a Magic which is *True*.
As she flashes by in the blink of his eye, she draws a thin red line
Down the centre of his back – The track of just one talon, sharp and fine.

Tom draws his paws in smaller still – He’s just a shrunken hulk
Like a bulky bulk-food paper bag when you empty out the bulk.
She draws a second line *across* his neck, just at the nape,
She’s crissed a cross – Tom knows he’s lost, and that there’s no escape.

These are her marker crosshairs, and Tom knows the way Jo strikes:
She drops on victims from the air, driving deep eight deadly spikes;
Tom seems bewitched, near-comatose: he wheezes with each breath:
His eyes are closed; next strike of Jo’s will bring Tom’s timely Death.

The Fauna see the great Bird soar above the BlueGum trees,
Her sunbright trailing feather-edges rimpling in the breeze;
Light as a Kite she wheels and loops, till she's far above Mad Tom,
Then, wings closed in a screaming stoop, she falls like a feathered bomb!

Eyes closed, the miserable Cat is huddled, certain of his Fate:
The Birds are counting down (in Birdsecs) "... 11 ! ... 10 ! ... 9 ! ... 8 ! ..."
7 more ticks! "*Thomas the 6*" become a *neutered Nero!*
5 more seconds 4 a reprieve! 3 more seconds 2 the final 1 we call 'Ground' "WAIT!"

Jo Mopoke flares out of her stoop, pulling *Minus Seven G's*
(D'you see the downdraft from her wings on the tops of the Blue~Gum trees?!)
Above the crowd, she laughs out loud, and chortles in her joy! -:
Yoo-Hoo to you too! – Am I glad to see you! You're *right on time*, My Boy!

Who is it that Jo's calling? (She can see, but not the Throng.)
Someone growly, caterwauling, down at the Billabong!
Jo turns her stoop to [Boom@Loop-the](#) Loop Loops in the sky,
Then a graceful swoop to the Blackwater goop – (but she keeps her feathers dry.)

Who is it Jo is talking to? – It's too big for a Frog. . .
Everyone heads for the Billabong (Everyone but D.A.Dog!)
In the deadwood by the water's edge – Is that Feather, Fur or Fin?
! – It's a lacerated, Lazarusated, Platypus's grin!

"It's Plato! . . . It's a *miracle!*" the creatures cry – And laugh!
"It's *Plato Ultimato!* – You're *alive!*" ("*Too right!* – *Not 'arf!*")
"But – How? We watched you die!" (Some pinch themselves: *Is this a dream?*)
Plato says mysteriously, "Things aren't always as the seem!"

*"OK, Everybody, Well I s'pose, I'd better come clean now –
Jo has tricked me anyway, into breaking my own vow!"*
Everybody is agog as he grovels from his bog,
But he scrambles on a log, and asks, "*Where's Dennis Alpha Dog?*"

Dennis Dingo-Dog's the one who admires Plato most,
But Dennis-Alpha-Dog is *Guarding*: He won't leave his Post!
Major Eva goes Reliever: "*Dennis, I'll be Tom Cat's host: -
Plato Lazapus - I mean, Plazyrus - wants you! Go and see the Ghost!*"

Like a low-flying guided missile, Dennis races to attend
His mate Plato: Dennis Dingo's Plato's best Platonic friend!
Dennis doesn't stop to wonder how Plato's managed to survive:
He knows he loves him, and he needs him, and he's *there*, and he's *alive!*

When Dennis reaches Plato, all the Fauna let him through;
Plato isn't moving much, for he's pretty black-and-blue;
He has some pretty nasty scratches, (much less *fatal* than they *were!*)
And that deep bite in his neck – But Tom has *mainly* bitten *fur!*

Dennis licks his neck wound tentatively, offering his help:
"It only hurts when I laugh," jokes Plato, with a wincy giggly yelp.
"But How?" - "What happened?" - "Tell us!" - "Everybody wants to know,
Plato spreads his webbed hands wide, and says, *"Will you please tell 'em, Jo?"*

Jo laughs, and grins an impish, girlish, fiendish sort of grin:
She sounds like Hendrix jamming on an Electronic Tin!
The years seem only to enhance the sparkle in her eyes!
- Yet she's the *only one* of them that *doesn't* show surprise!

"To Whom it may Concern", croaks Jo, *"Come, Gather Ye, and Hear!*
Today's the culmination of a Very Special Year!
A year of patient preparation, much more pain than gain,
But the game is done - That part is won! - So now I will explain: -

"You may wonder where I came from - How I happen to be here.
You thought that I was dead, and that I had been for a year.
But after Lute's performance, I'd seen all I wished to see,
And I knew if I played Possum, you'd know what to do with me! -

"You would take me to Frogmouth Hollow, up in the Big Gum Tree,
Cover me with paperbark, and say Goodbye to me!
And while you said Goodbye to me, Li'l Norm could say Hello,
And there I'd be, home, dry and free. See? - Easy! - Way to go!

"There for a year of solitude, I kept myself apart,
Hunting when no-one could see, and practising Brown Art.
There's a time to be quite visible, and a time to be unseen:-
But which is witch is only squizzable to eyes both wise and keen!

"I always feared there'd come a time when things would come to this;
When I'd need my feathers powder-dry to punch my Power Fist.
If you recall, I told you all, in song, which 'Don't' Don't Do:
'Don't ever get your Feathers too Wet, too Wet, too Wet to wOOw!'"

[It occurs to thoughtful Fauna, that those funny, furry words
Might apply to feathers different from the kind you find on Birds:-
?- Then - ?- "Jo Mopoke Karaoke" they'd thought satirical, by Lute LyreBird
Had been choreographed by Jo, playing Lute as her Miracle, Lyrical Choir-Bird!]

[It's the "powder-dryness" image that's the notion Jo wants circulated,
So she pauses for a sip-stop, till her potion's properly percolated: -
'Keep your mental feathers powder-dry, or you're a feather-brain!'
Waits till lights of comprehension twinkle, then she starts again.]

"In the Matter of Plato Platypus - Protector, Hero, Friend!
He used to say, a Wuss he'd stay until the very end!
But the Platypus and Frogmouth Families go back simply Ages: -
We've shared the Book of Life for at least a Hundred Million Pages!"

*“For thirty thousand million nights we’ve watched each other Be:
Platypus in Billabong, and FrogMouth in a Tree.
So apart from Plato’s lovely wife, the sweet Persephone,
The one who knows the Platypus Family the best of all is Me!*

*“I know they’re the only mammals in the world with Bird’s-Bill Beaks,
Equipped with a sensitive sensory system, which they call ElectrUniques.
And Persephone doesn’t give birth to babies: She lays Birdy Eggs!
And I know too about the venom-spurs on Plato’s lethal legs!*

*“As Okey said to Plato’s face, he is the very oddest
But Plato’s overwhelming fault is that he’s over-modest.
He always understates his virtues! - He thinks he’s a Wuss
Because he fights with Spurs, and uses Goo de Platypus!*

*“Well, let me tell you, Plato, we must all use what we’ve got!
We all must strive to stay alive – Some manage, some do not;
Under threat of death, we fight to our last breath, whichever way we can –
Be we Mouse or Mopoke, Cat or Dog, or Platypus – or Man.*

*“Yet you weren’t fighting for yourself, but for the weak and small,
In the person of Muffie Not-Mole, the most helpless of us all!
You stood totally defenceless against armed aggressive might
With your weapons’ secrets all revealed, so you thought you’d lose the fight!”*

*Plato: “Fair go!Not quite all, as you well knew, Old Dear!
. . . See . . . I can drop my Metabolic Motor into Low-Low-Gear!
I stop trying to fight, I just roll up tight, taking care to shield my Bill,
And a Platypus rolled up like that’s not so easy for a Cat to kill!*

*“I don’t bleed so fast, nor need to breathe so often in that mode.
I lost a lot of blood at first – You saw the way it flowed!
So when I got Muffie away from Tom, I stuck her between my spurs,
Changed to Low Metabolic Mode, and saved my life as well as hers!”*

*“Then when Ancient Jo made Tom let me go, and she rescued little Muff,
I knew I had no more to do, and I’d had quite enough!
But I needed your help to the Billabong, which I couldn’t reach, being torpid,
But Fauna who though I was dead were being previous - or morbid!*

*“When I said ‘when I stop breathing’, I didn’t mean my death!
In Slow-Go Mode I go a half an hour on just one breath!
So I was just there watching - just keeping pretty cool! –
From my eucalyptic, antiseptic, private swimming pool!*

*“I don’t go much on ceremonies: I’d made myself a promise,
Not to have to face more ‘Hero’ talk for fighting Thomas!
How peaceful and serene it was, back in my Billabong!
(‘Cos after all, that’s all I ever wanted, all along!)”*

*Jo resumes: "I know his tricks, and I knew he'd shun our thanks,
And I knew we'd never find him in the mud along the banks.
I knew that he'd just disappear, in some hidden cul de sac -
So I knew I'd have to use a trick myself, to call him back!*

*"So I organised that 'trial', and I sentenced Tom to Death
For the murder of our Faunal Friend - who's here, still drawing breath!
I knew that Plato must call out, for he couldn't witness me
Executing Thomas on a charge that shouldn't be!"*

*"I knew that Plato would watch us, from somewhere very close,
And if I took Tom's life in error, we'd be haunted by Tom's Ghost!
And I knew too that poor Plato had no idea of my ruse -
So I had no doubt he'd shout, to stop me killing the Mis-Accused!*

[The Fauna are *astounded* – Jo had pulled out *just in time!*
They'd demanded Tom's execution for a *non-existent crime!*
Though Thomas Cat's done murder many many times before,
This is the one he *hasn't* done! . . . *And yet* – They'd been so *sure!*] -

[- So they have to *quash* Tom's sentence! - Tom *isn't* off and free,
But Plato's file is declared a mis-trial, on a technicality.
"Get your *'Daily Fauna'*!" - (Katy Cockatoo cries) - "*Squaarrk!* -
Murder Trial Disappointment! Victim fails to Kark!"]

The Faunal joy is near-complete! *Both Jo and Plato Live!*
But so too still does Thomas Cat, whom *no-one* will forgive!
For though many creatures kill to live, from the Blue Whale to the Krill,
Thomas Domestic Cat's the *only one* that *lives to kill.*

The Fauna have never understood why Gringoes are Cats' saviours,
When Cats for other living things are such impossible neighbours!
Impossible? – Why *Yes indeed!* – Just help those Kittens thrive,
And soon it's quite impossible for Fauna to survive!

Why won't those Humans *bell* their Cats? - Why do they let them roam,
In the dead of night, out of human sight, for miles and miles from home?
What's wrong with Human Councils? – Can they *not-see* at all
That Freedom for Domestic Cats is Death to All Things Small?

Their Cats slink out in all directions, every single night,
Some of them to meet their lovers, some of them to fight,
Some to re-perfume verandahs, as many a Tom-Cat will,
But every cat that's free ito scat has one main mission: KILL!

A Cat that's free to roam is going to do exactly that:
Hardly anywhere is safe from the "Domestic:" Cat.
From trees and drains to desert plains, and often in one's own yard!
- Could a Council Registration System be so very hard?

The Fauna start recongregating 'round the Big Gum Tree;
Thomas Cat's still vegetating, a pathetic sight to see:
Grossly goosed with Cocky poo, he's an object of disgust –
Not sunburnt though – That stuff, you know, is UV 30 Plus!

Jo Mopoke takes her usual possie, up at Frogmouth Hollow:
She croaks: *"I bid you lend your ears! - Attend me now, and follow!
Tom Cat is Reprieved, but to the Aggrieved, his life's FORFEIT, for all his abuses;
Yet I do believe, Tom THREE-FEET, conceivably, still might have usable uses!"*

*If only we could Bell him somehow – Or make Them bell him? -
We could send him home with a message to them, of demands that we tell him.
But failing that, we must condemn him on another charge –
We must not let an unbelled Thomas Cat get back at large!"*

Billy Bell-Bird chimes in: *"TING! Ting-Ting-Ting! -Ting-Ting-TINNGGG!"*
He's known bells held *The Answer*, and he's heard a big bell ring!
He's just had one Stupendous Thought: Something of the First Import!
He flies to where Dennis-A.-Dog's sat: – *"Dennis! – DOGS can 'Bell the Cat'!"*

Dennis is suspicious: He thinks, *Do I Smell a Rat?*
"What do you mean, Pip-Squeak," Dennis asks *"by 'Bell the Cat'?"*
Billy says, *"Not a Ding-Dong Bell! - Your ringing BARK! - Your YODEL-YELL!
It's just a game of Tree-and-Tell! - Tree a Cat – Give Us a BELL!"*

(!)- It all seems just so *simple!* - Dennis seems to think so too:
He asks, *"Well, what will You do for Dogs, if Dogs do that for You?"*
The members of Birds' Research Organisation laugh out loud:-
They say, *"Do that for us, Dennis, old Mate, and we will do you proud!"*

*"We'll show you where fat blackberries grow, and big, sweet, juicy figs!
Not many Fauna live there, since some Sows, with baby Pigs
Have wrecked the local billabong, and made a dreadful mess! -
If you can't think why the figs grow so well there, well, have a guess!"*

Dennis Dingo licks his chops. – *"Yum! Piggy!"* is his thought.
His mind is makin' *bacon.*- *"Make me out a full report,
And take a copy to my Sis"* (whom no Piggy can resist!)
"And I'll DO It!" Dennis promises, punching his *Dog-Power* Fist.

They make him mud-map drawings of the places Rabbits breed,
So, forswearing Native Fauna, he'll eat *them* when he needs a feed.
They teach him *many* easy ways to keep himself well-fed -
[As for the mystery of his missing sister, he gets something better instead!]

"Brilliant Billy!" croaks Jo Mopoke. "Thank you, Dennis Alpha Dog!
In our social engineering gearing, you'll be our driving cog!
The worlds of Man and Fauna, you Dogs alone liaise,
And all true Dingo-Dogs after you will *DOG* Cats all their days!"

*“Now, Thomas Domestic Cat,” she croaks, “I sentence you to LIFE!
Housebound you shall see the world, and cause us no more strife;
For if you try to kill again, beware, for I shall see;
Should you defy my will again, a Dead Cat you shall be!”*

*“Go - Take this ULTIMATUM to Your Humans in “Their” World:-
Tell them of Plato’s spurs unsheathed, and our Faunal Flag unfurled,
As a portent of our Power, and a symbol of our Will:
The time is past for Pussyfooting: The time has come to KILL!*

*“Now, Dogs must all be Registered, and must be Kept At Home,
Or under Tight Control in Public - Not allowed to roam;
LEAVE “DOMESTIC” CATS EXEMPT NO LONGER! MAKE ALL CATS WEAR A BELL!
And – (This Demand is even stronger!) – KEEP THEM AT HOME AS WELL!*

*“YOUR CAT HAS NO RIGHT TO SET FOOT WHERE YOU’VE NONE TO SET YOUR FOOT!
Two-Foot may be charged with Trespass, but Four-Foot’s life is Forfeit!
Cat-Keepers give us NOTHING, but you cause great LOSS and PAIN:
So . . . Unbelled Cats we catch on our patch won’t be seen again.*

*“Let every wanted Cat receive humane EARBORNE TATTOOS,
Plus a Distinctly-Tinkly COLLAR BELL, such as Santa’s Reindeer use;
All unwanted Cats in Wide-Brown-Land are “MOST WANTED” Cats, indeed!
A Government Bounty on ‘clean-skin’ Cats’ EARS is what we really need!*

*“Thomas Domestic Cat: - Go home, and bear your sorry tale,
Back to your urban backyard, henceforth evermore your Gaol.
Tell your Humans they must BELL you! - Furthermore, if you roam free,
Dennis Dog will Tree-and-Tell you: Then, you’re Answerable to ME!”*

*Now, in case you think I’m joking, or that I’m really rather pleasant,
My Sentence of Death revoking, I am making you a parting present:
A quick way down to Ground Floor for you, from yonder slim dead branch!”
- Flicka Feathertail calls to Tom: “ Tom! - Time for ‘Av a Lanche!’”*

*They all look up at Flicka: Just Twelve Grammes, all action-packed!
Acrobates Pygmaeus has sussed her angle of attack:
She lands on his branch as she cries “‘Av a Lanche!’” - (This is her Starring Act!) -
Her Twelve Grammes More is the Final Straw that Breaks the Camel’s Back!*

*KRRRRAACKKKKK ! KROOSHHHH!!!
The Dead Branch snaps, and dumps Tom Cat smack into a blackberry bush!
Although the long canes break his fall, and he gets no more serious injuries at all,
It’s sure“Poetic Justice”, that: - the Purrfect Place to drop Tom Cat!!*

*And that is where we’ll leave Tom Cat! – I’m sure he’ll make it home . . .
- Will the people put a bell on him? Will they still let him roam?
If he goes back, betimes, to the scenes of his crimes, he won’t remain there long -
He’d best make shift! - Cats get short shrift ’round Bilby Billabong!*

Gordon the Goanna, (Special Missions, S.I.S.)
Says, *“Dennis –You have a Sister? I think you said so? Yes?
On our mailing list we missed her! Could this be the missing sister?”*
There, grinning despite her blisters, is little Martha, Dennis’s Sis!

No girl and boy could show more joy than these two dogs express!
With tongues and tails and teeth and nails, *Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes ! Yes!*
It is quite the best reunion since last year, Narelle and Norm . . .
The Fauna get icy shivers of pleasure - The delighted dogs get *warm!*

Martha’s skinny and harsh-coated, but her eyes are bright and wise;
The University of Life’s reflected in those eyes.
“I’m sorry to be late,” she says, apologetically,
“But I live on the Fringe with me old Dad Ginge, where the Mail don’t come, y’ see.”

Martha tells her story: *“Gordon asked me if I knew
Dennis Half-Dog-Dingo – so I told him, Yes I do!
He showed me where to find you, so I’ve come today - so far!
And Gordon showed me the road we used to take in Arthur’s car!”*

They all take a shine to Martha: She’s smart, sincere and sweet.
And she can see she’d rather be on *their* side of the street:
Instead of licking bean tins, she eats Rabbits, blackberries, figs,
And she trees Cats now she’s bigger, pigging out on Sucking-Pigs!

They swap their stories – Martha tells of Ginge, and all of that,
Dennis tells of Numbats, Fox, Jo, Plato - and Tom Cat!
When Dennis tells her he’s agreed to be the Faunal DAD
Martha says, *“Just call me ‘Ma’. – It’ll be the nicest name I’ve had!”*

Martha lives as a wild Dingo, down by Bilby Billabong;
Dennis still lives with his Gringo, but he often tags along.
He loves his loving nieces – Every Dog finds loving nice! –
But *he* knows that he’s no *“’Arf a Man”* – He’s *Alpha-Dog*, times Twice!

He’s Alpha-Dog in Public and he’s Alpha-Dog Alone,
He’s full-on Alpha-*Dingo* when he’s out of Gringo Zone!
He may be an Alpha-Guide-Dog, he may be an Alpha-Guard,
Or simply Alpha-*Good-Dog*, which can be at least as hard.

Dennis Dingo-Dog keeps his bargain. When he sees a Cat, he barks.
He does it everywhere he goes – Streets, wildernesses, parks.
His progeny, if Cats flee treewards, wait around like Sharks -
If that’s *No Deal*, they’re *Flint and Steel* - and *Look Out for the Sparks!*

Okey yawns and stretches. *“How long have I been asleep?
- I’ve had a lovely dream,”* he says, *“It was long and sweet and deep.
I dreamt that all the Human Joeys came to our Pantomime,
And they really dug our message, and they all loved Brucie’s Rhyme!*

*“I dreamt that Human Joeys had put their heads outside their pouch,
And the facts of the world as Man has made it hit them with an Ouch!
They knew that much of what Mankind’s done’s been seriously mistaken,
And they knew they’d have to work with Us, to save anybody’s bacon!*

*“They got into helping Fauna, with the energy they give
At present, to one aspect of the crazy way they live:
A primitive obsession with a wastime known as “Sport” -
One School made a Cat-Proof Fauna Haven, from a one-time Tennis Court!”*

“Hey! Okey’s in Cloud-Cuckoo Land!” – (they guffaw, fit to die!)
“What have you been putting in your Eucalyptus Pie?”
But then they say, more sadly, *“Okey, those are only dreams!”*
But their Bard says, very gladly, *“Okey! - Those are my very schemes!”*

The Fauna quit their joking, and they look at Brucie hard:
What have you been smoking, you funny furry Bard?
He says *“Well if you’ll just think again about Appendix A
That’s the very sort of dreams we want to help come true today!”*

*“Now, in us lives a Hunter, who just loves the mind to find
Things to which it seems that those around us have been blind;
But the other half’s a Grunter, the one that does the works,
And this dual Human junta works Ohh Kay - if neither shirks.*

*Think : You are hunting for the kinds of places Native Fauna need.
You may take this hunting notion very literally indeed!
Look around yourself – Astound yourself! It only takes a twink
To check your Neck-Top Data Base – All you need do is Think!*

*Now, if you can’t think of any, then it only goes to show
How very little you have left, and how much you don’t know!
But - Even if you’ve done poorly, there must be a best place, surely ? –
More beset with creepy-crawlies than the Wall-ies, and the Mall-ies ?!*

*But hunting itself takes grunting, for this game you will not win
Sitting on your Aunt’s verandah in the hope that it comes in,
And the grunting part of hunting may be (e.g.) searching files,
And sometimes hunters have to grunt though piles and piles and piles!*

*“We need some bits of Wide Brown Land in every local Shire
Fenced from Cats and Foxes, freed of weeds, and safe from fire;
So the most important thing to do, when you’ve gone your separate ways,
Is to be good little Thorny Devils, and send out lots of Appendix A’s!”*

*Where's Plato? Dennis wonders, following his nose to a hollow log.
There's Plato, with Persephone! - "Whoa! Down Boy, Dennis Dog!"
"Dennis", Persephone whispers, "you must promise to be gentle!" -
- And P & P show D. A. D. a sight that sends him mental!*

*- So precious! So rare! - A pigeon pair of Platypus Papooses!
It's a sight to bring to life Dog-Dennis's dormant Daddy juices!
"Plato," Dennis vows sincerely, "and Dear Persephone,
I will guard your darlings dearly! - You may really trust in me!"*

*"Meet Pythagoras & Phaedra! Our Twins, we've raised from Eggs!"
The Fauna Ooh and Aah, and say, "Show Diddums Toofy Pegs!"
- Which is really pretty goofy, for their teeth aren't 'undersize' -
Platypus have no teeth, just as Not-Moles have no eyes!*

*Then Euclid, Secretary of Native Fauna Inc., etcetera,
Goes into the grass, and comes back with his lass, "This is my sassy Electra!"
And with her come Echidna Piccaninnies - One - Two - Three ! -
"This one's Eunice - this one's Eustace - and this one's Euridice!"*

*Now that no Cat can harm them - (thanks to Guard Dog, D. A .D.)
The Fauna can show off what they had not dared let us see:
From under bark - From thickets dark - From pouches in Mum's skin,
Baby Fauna tumble forth, to kiss their kith and kin!*

*They meet MUM and DAD, and BRO and SIS, and G'DAY and URU
Not forgetting Ma-f-MARtha, Dennis Dingo's sister too
And all the adults give the youngsters hints on what to do
To make friends of folks like Ewen Mee - That means Me and You too!
;
They meet Okey the Koala, in his Presidential suite,
And Euclid, the Echidna, in the Secretary's seat,
And the Editor of Daily Fauna, Katy Cockatoo,
And Eva Emu - (Sir!) - And OZZIE Magic Kangaroo!*

*Here's Convenor Queenie Quoll; here's Billy Bellbird with his Belle;
Here's Normie Numbat, and young Norbert Numbat - and Narelle;
Here's Bruce Bilby, also known as Bard ExtraOrdinaire,
And here's Ancient Jo the Mopoke, Mysterious Mistress of the Air!*

*[Ancient Jo the Mopoke! Is she Nightjar? Is she Owl?
Is she Angel? Is she Vampire? Is she Faery? Is she Fowl?
Is she MAGIC?- Magic- Adjective, like "Jo's a Magic Witch"?
Or Magic - Noun? - Like, "With Jo's Magic, I can't tell which is which!"]?*

*When Lute LyreBird goes croaky, is it really him that sings?
In "Jo Mopoke Karaoke", who pulls the vocal strings?
Is it really Jo who's singing? -Or, is it Lute, in Mopoke voice?
Are those Jo's words, or Lute LyreBird's? Who's the Liar? - Take your choice!]*

*There are Bandicoots Mulgaras, Possums, Cuscuses and Bats,
Potoroos, Jerboas, Bettongs, Native Water-Rats;
There are Wallabies and Wombats, Tassie Devils, Spotted Quolls,
And some eye-less yellow fellows: "We're Marsupial Not-Moles!"*

But there is One whom ALL the Fauna want their young to meet:
They say, "Don't touch his injured Bill – Just kiss his Lotus Feet!"
The Fauna all will tell you, Bible David was a *wuss*
Compared to "*PLATO ULTIMATO*" –Plato Platypus!

They tell of Plato's valiant victory
Over Reynard Fox;
And how he'd fronted Thomas Cat,
though Tom had sussed his Secret Socks;
But, "The reason you're Our Hero",
say his children, and his wife,
"Is that you thought enough of US,
to save your own sweet life!"

Watching shyly with his family –
Of all Faunal Friends, the oddest –
(How *can* a modest bloke protest? –
"Okay, Okay, I'm Modest!"?!)
Plucky PLATO PLATYPUS,
"*PROTECTOR OF THE SMALL*": -
Not a Zero –
Not a Nero –
But
TRUE HERO
After All!

So End Our Rhymes
Of the Lives and the Times
Of the Fauna of Billabong Tree: -
And the Breezes woo Bluegums
In whispers and mimes,
And they murmur
"ETERNITY!"

APPENDIX A

To Whom It May Concern

(There *must* be *Somebody* Concerned!),

We would like this Questionnaire to be filled in and then returned.

Please Supply Us with the Answers to the Questions here below:

(And please find out, ASAP, the ones that you don't know) : -

1. A list of all the Local Native Fauna we have left.
2. Once-local Natives now Extinct, of which we're quite Bereft
3. Which Natives can we Go and See? [Plus mudmaps where to go]
(Place * alongside *Commonplace*, and ? where you don't know.)
4. How has this [Council/Government/Whatever] *protected* them, in any sense?
(e.g., Native Re-afforestation/ Faunal Re-introduction/ Installation of Cat-Proof Fence . . .)
5. Which is your *finest* showplace effort, the one which will *most* impress us?
6. Will a Member of your [Council/Government] be prepared to come and address us?
7. What is your [Council/Government] doing, to deal with *free-range* Cats?
8. What Native Fauna *Live* Traps have you? (*Not* spring traps for Rats)
9. What monitoring programmes are in place, to check on Fauna?
10. What area has been set aside, for a Native Fauna Corner?
11. Do you agree that species extinction is an abomination?
12. Will you concatenate with us in Cat Eradication?

If this catches you cat-napping, don't just lie there flip-flop-flapping
Get off your Arts and Crafts Stalls, do some thorough think-tank-tapping!
We won't countenance inaction! We're demanding satisfaction!
We want a proper Fauna Park that becomes a big attraction!

Yours Faithfully,

