

THE PALMER ODYSSEY

The Odyssey began innocently enough. The famous five had been commissioned but were on hold, ready to assist in the relief effort should the search yield jack. A good mate of mine, who lives downstairs, had been out of work for quite some time and seldom went out. I was surprised when he rocked up to my joint unannounced and said he wanted to hang out, maybe go to a few bars and knock back a few coldies. So we hit the town. I suspected that I would pay for this evening and I wasn't wrong. He was a calamity.

I managed to get him a couple of interviews but regrettably, he wasn't given a start. Trouble was on the horizon as his frustration turned into anger. Prospective employers were no longer hiring. He wouldn't have a bar of it. His face turned blood red. He was like a fire-engine careening out of control. The red lights were flashing. The horn was sounding. The blue lights appeared and he blew big time. Again he took control of the evening which he so often did. I berated myself. I knew I should have stayed home. The next day I expected some sort of apology from him. There was nothing. Not a word. And I'm the one left with the hangover and the job of cleaning up the carnage left in my mate's wake. He's got to pull his head in. I've had enough. He needs to learn the hard way.

The beatings were regular. It seemed cruel but I thought coming to blows would pull him up. The strangleholds, chokes, slap and touch ups occurred until he was limp. But the beatings served only to keep him coming back. This fella was trouble. I knew it

and he knew it but deep down there was a connection that kept us together in spite of our differences.

We were thick as thieves...hanging out with him spelt trouble one way or the other. He invariably came between me and the chicks. The cocky little bastard thought he was some sort of modern day William Wallace. "Aye he said... I am Willy Wallace Jnr, leader of the Purple Headed Warriors."

I couldn't shake him. The more I ignored him, the bolder he became. The feisty larrikin used compelling argument forcing my hand. I forgave him for all of his shortcomings and had to admit that he was fun to be around. Goddammit; I loved him and I hated him. But he was right, we needed each other.

However, his neediness was boring. Not to mention the overly sensitive hair trigger emotions. The slightest criticism, friendly jibe, or casual ribbing would be enough to shut him down. First up was the silent treatment. And if he felt aggrieved enough, Willy would disappear into a world of morose contemplation. This warrior loved warfare. No amount of beatings or clubbings could silence him. But just a word or a look or a miscued smile would scuttle the rogue. He'd make a hasty retreat back to his cave to lick his emotional wounds and regain composure. Once he'd gotten a grip of himself he'd come back knocking.

As time passed, the periods of introspection served both him and I well. He appeared less volatile and less sensitive. Our relationship became a lot less bumpy. Perhaps it was due to his greater reluctance at sticking his neck out. Going out on a limb became hazardous to our health and perhaps this is why he's a little slower out of the blocks.

By Adrian Payne

Once a warrior, always a warrior and he would never admit to slower reaction times
but whatever the case, a respect has evolved over time between the two of us.

Our relationship has stood the Teste of time thanks to the extended hand of friendship
that was always within reach.

aP