

Barry Rock's Rocket



A Poem by **Pat Drummond**
For **Barry Rock** and **'Bill McCarthy'**
whose name has been changed 'to protect the guilty'.
Dateline: Springsure, Queensland, Jan 28th, 1997
Words & Music: Pat Drummond

Now Barry ran the rail car on the Emerald - Springsure Line
He maintained the signal boxes, sleepers, tracks and signs
But the one job that he hated was to paint the mileage marks
every one tenth of a 'k' it used to fairly get him 'narked'
For the thing had such a tiny fuel tank every single time
he had to stop the 'Rocket' at a point mark on the line
he had to turn the engine off... to paint the number on
and then he'd have to crank it up to move the thing along

So he came up with an idea which seemed mighty at the time
So he'd only have to crank her once each section of the line
He'd crank her up, come round and wedge the throttle fully down
then, turning off the fuel tap, send her up line t'ward town
And 'The Rocket' used to zip away but with the fuel tap off
she pretty soon ran out of gas and coasted to a stop
And Bazz would walk behind her painting numbers on the line
So he only had to crank her once, not six or seven times.

But I suppose it had to happen and finally it did
He forgot to turn the fuel tap off... and the rocket disappeared
It went hurtling t'ward Springsure with throttle fully down
Getting faster ever faster as she roared toward the town
Till she reached the big bend at the base of The Virgin Rock
where half the fence was missing and... the line was full of stock
Now the cows were used to stopping trains; I guess they got a shock
When the Rocket kept on coming and the mongrel didn't stop

It struck a big beige Brahman and it threw him on his back
But the force of the collision flung The Rocket off the track
and the thing had such a head up that upon the steel or no
The bastard just kept going ploughing through the brigalow
throwing wombats, stumps and rocks until with one almighty crack
It chanced upon a pigsty hidden out there near the track
And pigs and feed went skyward as The Rocket came to rest
With wheels clear through the slatted floor and 'crackling' on it's breast

Now Bill McCarthy watched his wild pigs vanish from the fray
thirty fattened 'porkers' from his 'secret hideaway'
Which he sold with some connivance to a mate of his who bought
them for a butchery in Emerald labeled 'Farm fresh Queensland pork'
He was standing in a state of shock, his hands shoved in his pockets
when Bazza wandered up in hot pursuit of Barry's Rocket
Well... the old man let him have it; all his rage at squandered profit
He cursed, he swore! He lost his head, retrieved it... then went off it!

Till Barry said, "In all the years I've worked this Blanky line,
I must've passed this pigsty here a thousand bloody times
And I never even saw it til the bush got pushed apart
but I gotta hand it to you, Bill. She's a blanky work of art
With all them sheds, the slatted floors, the troughs and feeding bins
and all them other little pens to put the piglets in
but The Rocket's fairly wrecked it now with one God almighty clout
and we'll have to pull the main shed down to get the bastard out"

Well the Old Man did his block at that, he raved and cursed and swore
Called Bazza all the names he knew... and then made up some more!
And Bazza stood there listening while the Old Man said his bit
He scratched his head and then he said "Well, here's the way of it.....
You say you're gonna sue me, and you're suing Queensland rail
and you're gonna write and name me as the mongrel in the tale
And I'll be filling forms out; flamin paper by the ton
and Brisbane'll send someone up to view the damage done
But, think it through... cause when they do... they're gonna say... "Well Jeepers,
she's a palace of a pigpen Bill, but....where'd you get these sleepers?"

Now the Old Man stopped his raving and his eyes filled up with doubt
"We *could* get a truck in here and pull The Rocket out
and we *could* cut some Brigalow and fill this flamin hole!
I s'pose a missing pig or two won't put me on the dole.....
There's no sense letting Brisbane know, they'll only get uptight.
Let's, let it go."

Baz said. "You know.....I think you're prob'ly right."
So the story never surfaced till it finally saw the light
In The Queens Head pub when Bazza had a few on board one night

and he told me saying "Listen, Don't you put this in a song
They're funny blokes in Brisbane and they'd probably take it wrong
And I said "Bazza, Trust me! Is that something I would do?
Besides your safe.... that story couldn't possibly be true!
And the barman said "You reckon?
You should hear the squealing swine
Every time he blows the whistle at that pointmark on the line!"

...And I 'sort of' kept my promise...He's retired now I know 'n'
'sides ...I didn't put it in a song...I put it in a poem.