

UNLUCKY



A Short Story

by

Peter C Byrnes

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“Oh man....that was unlucky!” My mate exclaimed.

We were at the local Stadium watching the “free-way match” as it is called between our team and the team that we loved to hate.

A roar of exasperation, frustration and despair had erupted from the record crowd crammed into the Stadium like sardines. The sound had been deafening. A goal now would surely bring down the roof with the volume that would be generated by the partisan crowd.

“That's the third time Alfonso Vertigo has hit the timber. So, so close! How unlucky can you be!” The mate yelled frustratingly. “How bloody unlucky!”

He was almost crying.

It was One Nil with the second half fast drawing to a close.

If we didn't score soon, this would be the first time that we had lost to our hated rivals in.....it must be years!

The crowd rose as one, the tumult increased as a mid-field raid advanced down the paddock. A beautifully weighted pass found Alfonso Vertigo again.

He was the aging, marque player that our team had imported this year in an effort to boost flagging patronage and enthusiasm at the weekly game. He skilfully trapped and kicked the ball

almost in the one fluid motion. Beautiful to watch. Magic. Extreme skill.....but again the ball found the timber and bounced harmlessly over the goal mouth.

“Bloody hell.....the fourth time.....how bloody unlucky can one bloke get!”

“Mate....mate!” I scolded. “That's not unlucky. That's plain carelessness. If any one of those attempts had gone in you would still be shouting about the brilliant goal, the masterful display, the sheer skill of the man.....you wouldn't be shouting at the top of your lungs how bloody lucky that goal was.....as against how bloody unlucky that near missed attempt was.....now would you?”

A bloke in front half turned.

Wide, thick shoulders.

A bull neck.

A five o'clock buzz cut on jawline and scalp.

Olive complexion.

I couldn't tell whether he had a single eye-brow slashed across his brow-line or a broad nose that belonged to one of those small Pacific islands.

“Why don't you shut the fuck up smart-arse. Hear me?” Venom in his voice.

“I can understand why you would call me smart-arse.....’ I replied condescendingly. ‘.....I consider that I am a bit of a philosopher and a spectator on the human condition. I understand that you would find fill....oss...off.....er hard to pronounce, harder to spell and more than likely not knowing its meaning, you substitute the lazy man's vocabulary to suit!” I replied sarcastically.

The next morning I was reading the Sunday paper laying in bed.

The Sports pages first.

The front page was about the riot at the local football game that left over a dozen in hospital.

I looked down the length of my bed at one of my legs stuck up in the air.

Plaster cast from the toes to above the knee.

My head swathed in bandages.

I slowly, painfully turned my head to view my mate in the bed beside me.

Both his legs stuck up in the air. Plaster from toes to crutch. His arm at a queer angle with plaster from his fist up over his shoulder blade. He swivelled his head slowly towards me. His left eye puffed and closed. Black, blue and yellow.

“Bloody hell mate.....we were just bloody unlucky. Wrong place; wrong time!”

Fair dinkum.....the look in his one good eye.....if he'd had a gun I reckon he might have shot me!

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