

# a COLLECTION OF **bytestories**

A WEBSITE SERVING AS AN ARCHIVE OF MY  
DIFFERENT ADVENTURES ON PLANET EARTH...



BY SEAN BEDLAM

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## **Occupy Melbourne: Week One**

I went along to Melbourne City Square the first day of Occupy with a plan to interview people for my Youtube channel. Friends had been irritating me in the weeks leading up to it by saying Occupy didn't seem to have a point. I thought there were no shortage of points and that I would go ask people, make videos and at very least show my friends that not everything has to have a slick advertising campaign.

And that's how I got into making slick advertising campaigns for protest movements. My first visit to Occupy convinced me to stay onsite for at least a week. I got involved. On the sixth day a row of us were sitting in a puddle in the rain, our backs to a line of cops, ready to be arrested if need be. We were.

The kitchen in the Square was amazing and I made it my job to set up live online video so people around the world could see this incredible and bustling spectacle of donated ingredients being turned into meals by volunteers. For a week the people of Melbourne streamed through and unloaded huge amounts of cash onto the kitchen. The level of support was sky high.

I never got the live video up, but the night before Eviction (we didn't know this) Jello Biafra, punk rock champ and activist vet appeared. I get asked to video an interview. I sit in a tiny, hot tent, literally at the feet of one of my heroes and tape half an hour of pure gold.

That night I hastily edit a short version of the interview and upload it. It was full of solid advice for protesters. We set up a screen in the Square to show this amazing artifact and some nutjobs hijacked the equipment to show a truly garbage conspiracy video. Christ.

The following morning we woke to rain and a fence that had been erected while we were asleep, exhausted.

That day I was arrested and I've been arrested many times since and will be again. Fun.

**In Melbourne, Victoria, Australia**

## Tram Bouncers

I'm on a tram and off to a gig in St Kilda. It's full of people going home, people who just want to be left alone. That's the rules. Respect for others' space is the only way commuting works even slightly. The only other rule of the city is "Get out of the way." It's all quite peaceful.

Of course three young dudes get on at a stop and their Alpha starts harassing people. He's a tall arsehole leaning over into people's faces trying to chat them up, which is in Tram World pretty much assault. If you're talking at people who can't get away you should be beaten with a huge leather Bible until you run into the arms of Jesus. Now you have to live with your family avoiding you because you became a weird Christian. Well done idiot.

What made this event a proper series of assaults was that the guy was not just spraying lots of words. Gobs of saliva hit people's faces as he went from person to person seeking love he may never find because saliva is for inside the cake hole, not for sharing. At the other end of the tram I'm weighing up my manly man possible intervention options when two things happen: a guy stands up to address the spitter and a young man right in front of me has this moment I see happening right on his face before he smoothly stands and appears at the other end of the tram at the elbow of the saliva champ. The tram is stopping at this very moment and our well timed heroes each grab an arm and walk the guy out the door, release him and get back on board to unanimous adulation.

The super cool cat reappeared nearby and sat down like nothing happened, causing me to reevaluate my manhood, but then again, maybe I didn't get involved because I was seeing my picture in the next day's newspaper with the headline, "Racist Mob Ejects Black Man From Tram".

**In Australia**

## Stupid Magazines

I don't know why I chucked a rock through the newsagency window but I guess I can think of a few possibilities. It was late, so no one was around and by some miracle a rock was right there in the street. Why was a rock just lying around in the paved street of a suburban shopping strip? A strip so ordinary that the milk bar with three steps was called the Three Steps Milk Bar? God put that rock there, surely.

I didn't have time to admire my ability to make holes in things because a loud alarm convinced my body to sprint away into the night. The whole event lasted ten seconds tops.

The weird thing about that newsagency was that the lady co-owner maintained an awful 1960's beehive hairdo right up until 1980. Here she was selling magazines that constantly update a women's ideas about how to behave, what to wear, but she wasn't buying and updating the bullshit she was selling

Those same magazines had given my mum an eating disorder. The eating disorder consisted of crazed dieting advice in those fucked pages and those diets had a big effect on our household. Mum stopped buying food because on some chemical level she became blind to it, so us boys became both malnourished and undernourished. Thanks Cosmo. Thanks Cleo. Thanks New Idea. Thanks Womans Day.

I would sneak around at school fishing other kids' uneaten lunches out of the bin, with all sorts of marks and sores all over my body from being starved. Yes, good guess, that's possibly the saddest thing I've ever written.

I wonder why women don't smash newsagency windows in protest at those magazines. I felt bad about breaking that window but that was because I didn't know why I was doing it. I wouldn't do it again, however, because my protest against women's magazines is too convoluted. It wouldn't fit on the cover of a stupid magazine.

### In Australia

## **The Scrapheap**

As the eldest of three boys in a single parent family, the pressure to pretend everything was okay was unbelievable. It wasn't okay, our mother was mysteriously overseas and us boys were very far away from understanding why. Closer to home we had a stressed out father trying to do everything by himself. Really by himself. Because of course people weren't cool with a man raising three boys.

I think people believe a man just can't be conscientious enough to raise kids by himself, but he was a very focused father, it was the stuff he wasn't conscious of that did the damage. I would walk around with a fake smile because a stressed out dad is a scary dad. I became quite the fucking weirdo and I carried a lot of disconnected, fucked-up behaviour into adulthood and eventually converted that into a fairly solid mental breakdown.

I feel sorry for my parents. At too young an age they were railroaded into a marriage they weren't equipped to deal with. Mum took off and Dad cracked under the pressure of doing the impossible. And that unbearable tension broke his kids.

I'm glad all that happened though, because it made me fight for my mind and my sanity in a way normal suburban white boys usually can't experience. Without my broken home I wouldn't have become an activist who pushes things as far as they can go. I've lost count of how many times I've been arrested since Occupy and I would do it again for the cause.

Family breakdown showed me the underside of society, where people fall through cracks and onto scrapheaps. My revolutionary struggle is all about the little people like my father, who faced an impossible task all by himself. The world we humans created needs to change and become about community and until that happens I won't be pretending things are ok.

**In Australia**

## **Maggots, basically.**

I dread Christmas, but last year I was feeling better about it, less judgey and adolescent. I guess that season is one big flashback to a time of having no control over your life and then there's the weird stillness of the day, but let's not worry about that. This Christmas was truly special due to lots of maggots.

I don't know if you've ever closed up a house and walked away from it, leaving on the kitchen sink a kilo of beef mince. I reckon you haven't because you probably reckon it doesn't take over a week to defrost frozen meat. Anyway, when we opened the door to the holiday house we were borrowing it was like unsealing a coffin. Gosh it was fun.

I have never seen anyone look so preoccupied with something else as when- in reaction to the nightmare stench pouring out the door- one of our mates began busying himself with unpacking stuff outside, not so much as even looking at the house. I didn't have time to snicker about a big country boy clearly having a meltdown about what was in the house- I bolted inside to open every window.

Ever laughed while dry retching? Two of us attacked seething mountains of maggots and death liquid spilling onto the floor from the sink, while another began vacuuming roughly a million dead flies from every window sill. We ran across the road to buy Nilodor, which does something probably highly toxic to destroy bad smells and it mostly worked.

We stayed in that house two nights as our home base while we visited nearby family. I had a ball because I felt like I'd faced death, or at least smelled it. No amount of Christmas awkwardness was possible after that family-building experience.

We found it all so spiritual that we simply left the maggots and rotten meat in the bin outside for our mates to experience. The fuckers.

## **Dinner is served**

A single dad raising three boys is an angry household and our bedroom doors had been kicked in so many times by siblings confronting each other over missing comic books and other dramas that they had to be flipped around and re-screwed to the hinges.

Our door weakening behaviour was so chronic that all three doors had been flipped around and reversed a few times to find fresh wood for hinge screws to bite into. Those doors were as fucked as our sibling rivalry.

Our single dad needed to be at home of course, so his mates would come around to drink and hang out, which was cool, because they were all characters. One night I was sitting alone in my room when the door opened suddenly. One of dad's mates was holding a plate of food, so clearly dinner was being served. Room service! That was a nice moment.

Well it was a nice family moment if you ignore that my dad had instructed his mate to take full advantage of the fucked door situation. The door was blown off it's hinges thanks to a well executed flatfoot pushkick and that would have been a lot to take in even if I hadn't been sitting on the edge of the bed doing what teenage boys do about 16 times a day.

I don't remember what was for dinner.

**In Melbourne, Victoria, Australia**



## **Shoplifting**

My asshole friends and I used to shoplift Star Wars figures as a hobby. There was no point to it, there was no point to us, we were assholes. We were the kind of teenagers grown ups would look at, shake their heads and say, "If you had a brain you'd be dangerous."

As our secret collections of stolen collectables grew and so did our unearned sense of arrogance, the grown ups graduated to asking searing questions like, "Is there a point to you?" What the adults didn't realise was that for us the world looked like a meaningless wasteland. It was the 80's after all. So it was. I should point out we didn't particularly care about Star Wars either.

We lived in the suburbs, where you obsessed about sport and what was on TV or you were left out. Our little theft spree was our Loser Sport. I don't know what happened to those collectables but I do know one of the most popular sitcoms of the time revolved around a man who later turned out to be a huge sex predator, Bill Cosby. When I think back to those days I wonder what choice kids have in a world that seems to me now and seemed to me then to be built on lies. Thinking about stuff like that is why I'm still a loser. I did give up shoplifting though, so go me.

## **In Australia**

## **Hosed**

It was a school camp at dusk after a big day and as the group took in the evening air along a gravel road I crept ahead through the side grass and popped up! To scare the life out of people with the yelling and the growling. I pulled moves like this a few times during our stay. Cool moves like lurking in the darkness of the camp with a torch under my face. I was quite pleased with myself.

All this scaring must have tired me out because I went to bed early on the last night. I heard the sash window open and opened my eyes in time to see what comes out of a fire hose heading towards my face. I was so humiliated by this that I didn't make the connection between my team building stunts and the lone gunman soaking me with a water cannon. I spent the trip home fuming quietly about this intense injustice.

That's the thing about being a class clown: you want them laughing with you, not at you. Then there was the time my BMX was stolen while I was shoplifting Star Wars figures. Again, my sense of outrage was real. What a teenage asshole.

## **In Australia**

## About Author

### Sean Bedlam

I'm doing a stand up comedy show called Two Bearded Ladies in the 2015 Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

#### Why is the website called [bytestories.com](http://bytestories.com)?

This is a place for "byte-sized" stories and there is a 1500 character (about 250 words) limit for two main reasons. Firstly, we want you to know that "War and Peace" isn't required to leave your mark. Secondly, it takes about 2 minutes to read each story meaning you can head here whenever you want a quick (and entertaining) read.

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