

Zog

Jerry Albrecht is over in England on his two yearly visit to source new roses. He's a rose grower/wholesaler who runs a big nursery just off Tullamarine Freeway. He doesn't sell to the public, but he surely sells to those that do. Last time over, he sourced an almost royal blue rose from the Shropshire rose propagator and got the production and distribution rights for Victoria and New South Wales. This rose, Blu De Rois, sold madly; the world is of course chasing a blue rose and this is the nearest so far, though it has a dash of white mixed in with the blue. Anyway, he did well out of it and he's back looking for, but not really expecting to find as good.



He's staying at Browne's Hotel in London and having a most enjoyable time. Out in Shropshire, Preston Peck welcomes him and after a couple of slugs of Jerry's duty-free Scotch, he directs Jerry into the nursery and leaves him to it. Jerry is rather taken with an almost black rose; blacker than Blackboy, but with a much longer exhibition-type bud. It's been bred from a stable of reds and has a wonderful strong scent. He's goes over and winkles Preston out into the English drizzle.

"Thought you'd spot it," Preston says. "It's called Zog."

"Hmm.....after King Zog of Albania?"

"No, not at all. The Italian living Aussie who commissioned me to work it up five years back said it was a tribute to a dark visaged chap who directed a deal of money his way ten years back. He's retained the ownership of the rose of course, but on a shared commission basis is prepared to split the world rights. You could be selling this in Australia within three years. Same deal as with the blue rose. You did very well with that one, on a per capita basis. You are up there with France and America."

"Done," says Jerry. "It's a fine rose and it seems to have an interesting history behind it."

"Yes," says Preston, "I'm hoping to get a bit more provenance out of the one who commissioned it, but he's a tad reticent about it all."

This dark appeared rose certainly has a history. Perhaps we can advance towards uncovering the story behind the name.

Callum Smith is a very gifted young man with computers. He showed quite a leaning towards this in high school, but his family's financial circumstances weren't good enough to ship him off to higher education. Thus, at the end of year 12, he leaves school and quickly gets a job as a Loader driver at Wilkes and Perkins Hay Plant near Camperdown.

They are hay and pellet people and their end product goes two ways in containers. They alternate in providing pelletised fodder to the live sheep ships going out from Portland to the Arabic countries and in shipping containers of a more concentrated nature to feed-lotters in Japan – shipping this out of Geelong.

Callum is a nuggety chap; he's good on driving JBC Loaders six days a week at the Hay Plant. One day a week, he gets a game in Melbourne in the Collingwood Reserves. He's too short for a full-blooded ruckman and too big for a rover, but as a

fill-in ruck rover, he's quite superb. He spends much of his time on the bench and belts out for in-between bursts when the on-ballers start running out of steam. He is quite an invaluable player, although he's never on the ground for the first bounce and only sometimes for the last. The on-ballers gain in strength when the end is near. Thus Callum is leading a relatively well paid, or at least an adequately paid during the week job and the dosh the Magpies Club pays him, is the cream on the cake.

His life changes all in one day when the Hay Plant operations are gummed up; their computer is down and they can't seem to get it up. Callum is in the office dropping off unloading tallies. Their computer expert, a local and pretty inadequate technician, is on the job. While Callum is waiting his turn at the counter, this chap says, "Bugger, this is beyond me." Callum, who as we have said earlier is a computer natural, says diffidently, "That's easily fixed."

Tom Perkins, who looks after the dispatch side of the plant, gives Callum a piercing look. He's pretty shut off with the dispatch delay.

"Ah...Callum," he says, "you know about computers?"

Callum goes, "Um, well...(he actually did his high school training on a twin of this machine; an old Wang) it's a common fault with Wangs. What you have to do to fix it is...."

Perkins cuts in. "Well bloody fix it then," he spits out. In two shakes of a Muscovy duck's tail, Callum does. He drops his schedules in and gets back to his loader. Half an hour later, both Perkins and Wilkes come down to the store shed and stand to one side as Callum and another loader man unload a huge Kenworth triple trailer hay truck. Perkins flags Callum down.

He says, "You know Tony Wilkes, my business partner?"

"Well I do now," says Callum and takes off a work glove to shake hands. Actually, Wilkes is not so much around the plant; he's the hay buyer and pellet seller, so his work is more away from the plant than at it. Perkins gets to the point.

"This show is going like a train as you well know."

"So it should," Callum says. "You don't buy in rubbish. The grain and hay are absolutely top drawer."

"Exactly," says Perkins. "Everybody puts in a good of work,...."

'Not exactly,' thinks Callum, 'the night shift are bludging a bit.'

"And our only big problem is that hinky computer. We have a mind to take you off the loader pro team and give you a go as the computer man. The present incumbent is as cranky as hell and worse still in a hay plant, is a chain smoker."

Next day Callum reports for work in clean pressed jeans and jumper and is an instant success as the resident computer nerd. He does this efficiently and well for the next twelve months and gets a number of games in the Collingwood team proper. He becomes an appreciated and valued member of both Collingwood and the hay plant management and is thus more than a bit gobsmacked when the partners convey to him the news that they have sold out to Castlemaine Hay for big, big dollars.

Castlemaine have just floated on the Stock Exchange and have the cash in hand for acquisitions. This firm already have a big plant in operation in Geelong. Callum talks hard to the new firm and they agree to employ him at Geelong three days a week on EDP work. With his generous severance money, he is able to get into La Trobe University to further his own work by way of the advanced computer studies course that they offer. It's quite a busy life, but he's used to working six day weeks and playing footy one day, so it's no less demanding than before.

He quickly rises to the surface of the computer studies pool – as we have said earlier, he is very much a natural at this science. Among the class is a rather striking

girl; tall, blonde, long-faced; quite beautiful or perhaps very handsome in a non-tizzy way. They strike up a friendship and do coffee every day. She's a Yugoslav and is on a scholarship funded up for the Kosovo Rehab Training Scheme through United Nations money. She is doing middling well in her course and soon starts leaning on Callum to pick his fertile brain. He for his part doesn't mind in the least; he's not all that girl experienced and she is prepared to be a bit generous to him for his technical help.

Once in a while, he notices her closeted with Zog; another Balkanite perhaps. Zog is the security man for the computer block. Actually, with modern miniature computers, security is not all that involved, but in the early stages of computers, they were huge and the massive old Kray computers, beloved of early computer modellers, are still well-housed and securitised. The students these days are into laptops mainly, but the Krays remain on line and in regular use – mainly it seems by the Federal Government – in particular, the Department of Defence, who seem to interface with the Pentagon and the Defence contractors in the USA.



Things run along well for Callum and he more or less expects to finish his University course and enter the business world. He's not too flash with money, but he's getting by. He takes a bit of a knock in finals football in an intense match with St Kilda, beggars up his ankle and is out of the game for a while; though not for good he thinks. He's a player paid as a casual and although the Club covers his medical expenses, his playing money – important to him – stops. To add to his problems, he gets involved, or his playing group does, in an end of season visit to Broadbeach where they get accused on a date rape charge. While he is not involved personally, he can't avoid having to spend up on a lawyer to keep himself from being tarred with the same brush.

Hokey suggests to Callum that he bus down to Lorne Saturday for an interesting weekend; she will meet him there as she's going down the day before. With the enthusiasm of a young man, Callum takes her the wrong way and is a bit stunned to get off the bus and Hokey is there to greet him and Zog is standing alongside her. They greet him affably and go on a coast walk. Zog and Hokey bring along some good cheese and biscuits and a good bottle of Cabernet. Back at the pub, they spruce up and share a very small private dining room; just the three of them. Zog doesn't muck around.

"Callum," he says, "we three are all poor people really." Callum looks at the French champagne in the cooler and at his sea food entirely smothered in oysters.

"Hmm," he says, "who's paying for all this.....Centrelink?"

Zog chuckles. "Well....not completely poor – but after the weekend.....?"

Zog says, "To get serious. I'm working at Latrobe only because the biggest, least surveyed and least supervised budget in Australia – the Department of Defence aka the DCBBF..."

"Which means?" Callum interjects. Hokey answers, "The Defence Contractor Big Benefit Fund." They all chuckle and have another shot of champers. They are treating a very serious subject in a light-hearted way.

"The budget," Zog continues, "goes out to many contractors and the very private bits; the slush fund goes to Basle and this being a slush fund and not accountable money, and funds of which we are not sure who gets what, needs to be

defined a bit. Here we need your help. It's too deep for Hokey, or at least at this stage it's too deep for her. We would like to short-circuit things a bit."

"To do what?" Callum asks.

Their main course lobs in – Waygu beef and French side salads.

"We think we can easily hijack one regular payment – usually \$300 million out of the legitimate money and the entire slush fund payment. It can be done and we plan a three way split, giving us about \$582 million divided by the three of us, ie., \$194 million each. It's possible to obfuscate the transfer to give us 10 days grace to scarper. This will tie in with a long weekend in Bali and go our own ways from there. This sort of money tucked away in a middle of the road offshore banking country would bring in a safe 6% and return us each about \$19 million annually, mostly of a tax free nature. Riches beyond dreams actually."



Hokey says, "Callum, with a match of clothes, and matching beard trimmed and matching haircuts and glasses, we can spirit you around the only security around the Krays; the CCTV. They only have portal security – not a thing inside. Once we have worked out what we have to feed into the recipient computers, collecting from the Kray computers to redirect the huge payments, we're laughing. We have three separate computers set up at a safehouse in Maryvale out in the near Melbourne sticks. We knocked them off from a block of factory units at Moorabbin at Easter. They function well and once we action the ploy, we'll destroy the hard drives and crush them to bits. We can show these to you next weekend.

We know that footy training is a no no for you at the moment. Also, once we have picked the brain of the Kray systems, we will place a much delayed cement charge in its intestine – a very big cement charge. Then we blow town."

They have now demolished their beef and the sweets come resplendently in. Its profiteroles surrounded by strawberries. It's accompanied by a bottle of very good Marsala.

"There's a few ifs and buts," Callum says. Zog passes over a pale blue folder.

All in there, I think," he says. "But we haven't, or rather Hokey hasn't the depth of experience to action it."

"Don't worry about it now, Callum," Hokey says. "Zog has to be back in Melbourne by midnight to do his security thing, so we can study it together."

And they do – under a snug eiderdown.

"This is fucking brilliant," he says. "Who are you working with?"

"Only you, Callum," she says. "We got the folder from a chap who duded the United Nations Relief effort in Kosovo. He's living now in marvellous comfort in a beaut Dacha on the Black Sea. You know the very best pot in the world is grown around Odessa."

She jumps out of bed and hauls out a plastic bag of grass from her tote bag.

They tie up the loose ends in Maryvale the following weekend. The safehouse is in the middle of a small vineyard; very pleasant, and a bottle or three of Maryvale Dry Red helps smooth over the moot points of the deal. On Wednesday, Callum, made up to look a dead ringer for Zog, puts the deal in place. The Defence Department technocrats have been in the computer room for several hours dispatching payments. That their work has gone no further than the re-jigged and matching Kray is beyond their purview. 'Done and dusted,' they probably said, when pressing the dispatch button on the main computer, never dreaming their instructions are going no further than the other Kray sitting alongside their one.

Zog's connections at the Timber Bank at Port Moresby have facilitated the wire transfer arrangements. Old Hiram, the head man there, is as smart as a whip, but is also reliable. His modus operandi is to put the transfers in a sort of modern electronic butter churn device and then spray the money through offshore banks here and there and as they go, they brake the money to a halt, break it up into bank drafts and get back on the churn. They now go into legitimate banks and the money finishes up in three Swiss accounts. One third each; Callum's is in the Zingli Bank in Basle, Zog's in an Athens bank, Hokey's in a bank in Vienna. The slush money they return to the Timber Bank. They pay Hiram a whopping 10% hiding fee on the lot and let the slush money sit. It's a bit higher than usual - \$347 million less 10% of the whole - still a very big chunk of money.

They return to La Trobe at Zog's scheduled hour and Zog attends to priming up the explosive devices which can be activated by a simple skype phone call; they haven't yet settled a call date and time. The details attended to, they return to Maryvale, driving through a dreadful wind and heat storm – smoke and an escalating red glow coming in their direction. At the vineyard as they get out Zog says,

“Leave the heeler chained, this won't take long. It's perhaps best to head back.”

As they go into the house, Zog pulls a boxy pistol, a Hecklar & Koch, out of his jacket and claps it to Callum's head.

“The bad news old son,” he says, “is that we are Al-Qaeda operatives and we now require you to run your share of the dosh into a Syrian bank.”

Callum pushes Zog hard, jumps into the wine cellar and puts the long bar in the door. He sits down at the first computer on the long bench, taps away and he soon has the surplus dosh going his way to the Zingli Bank. That done, disregarding the battering on the cellar doors, he looks around for weapons. He's quite safe actually, so long as Zog doesn't source a chain saw. But other events force things. A car with a bull horn carrier comes along their front street in the dusk.

“Get out, get out,” it yells, “there's only one road off this hill (true enough) and the fireball will cut it soon.”

The front door slams. He can hear his blue heeler barking madly over the roar of the motor and they're gone. Callum realises he may not survive the fireball, drops the bar and goes to look. The fire front is coming up the slope towards them. Callum grabs, what he thinks is his jacket, feels for the mobile phone – for what it's worth. It isn't there, nor is his army knife. *‘Christ,’ he thinks, ‘Zog's taken off with my jacket and all my cash and papers.’* To balance this, there's quite a bit of unknown stuff in Zog's jacket; a twin to Callum's, bought to confound the CCTV at La Trobe.

Callum dunks the jacket in the wine vat, puts it over his face, grabs a length of irrigation pipe from the wall and hares across the paddock to the irrigation dam.

When he's forced to, he gets his head under the water, breathes through the pipe.

He coughs and sputters his way through the smoke, but keeps his head down. He's right out in the middle of a fair size dam hanging onto the inlet float for the big



irrigation pump. About midnight, he thinks it's safe to come out of the dam. There's nothing left of the winery and attached house. At dawn, he sets off down the road and comes across his old Holden ute and seven others – the occupants, including his blue heeler toasted to a blackened crisp. He walks down the hill; a man on a trail bike stops him.

“No entry,” he says. “No entry to this area.”

“Oh, that’s okay, Einstein,” he says. “I’m coming out, not in.”

“Bollocks,” says the man, “there’s no survivors up here, I’ve been looking.”

“Tough,” says Callum and knocks him off his bike.

He’s pretty safe, he looks like a chimney sweep and no one is going to ID him. He jumps on the bike, gets onto a path he knows and gets back to civilisation. Amongst the stuff in Zog’s bomber jacket is a good wad of cash along with Zog’s passport and air ticket. He quickly assesses his options.

These days, Callum lives very comfortably in an upstairs/downstairs unit that he owns the freehold of in Lecco on Lake Como. People talk about having a summer month by the Lake; Callum spends most of the year by it, but he also goes to his Caribbean villa when the cold gets too much.

He’s got a few Zog roses in his rear terrace glasshouse and looking forward to planting these out, come summer.

