

Example text: Mystery story

The Mystery of Wolli Creek

Upper Wolli Creek wasn't much of a town. In fact, it wasn't a town at all, just a haphazard collection of timber shanties and, of course, a pub. Freezing cold in winter, and so hot in summer it would melt the tar on the road. Wolli Creek only had one thing going for it – opals. For hundreds of kilometres, people came to find their fortune. But as it turned out, they got more than they bargained for...

"That's my eleventh patient this week!" complained Doc Roberts. "Fever, delirium, night sweats. I wish I knew what was causing it."

"Probably, May's cooking. I swear that pork roast I had at the pub last week wasn't pork, probably road kill roo," replied Bluey Mason.

"I know what you mean," said Doc. "But I'm afraid you're barking up the wrong tree Bluey. I'd already thought of that but it came up clean as a whistle. I'm working on another theory though. Maybe you could help?"

Doc pulled Bluey in close and explained what he wanted him to do.

"Are you sure?" queried Bluey. "Well I never..."

Meanwhile, in the dining room of May's pub, the locals were holding a town meeting. They were becoming increasingly concerned by the mystery illness sweeping through their small community.

"We can't close the mines down," interrupted Jack, "how are we gonna make a living?"

"I agree Jack. But what other option do we have?" reasoned Martin, one of the locals. "You can't spend your money if you're flat out in a hospital bed, now can you?"

At this, the meeting descended into a chorus of mutterings and complaints. Everyone understood the problem, but no one had a solution. That was until Bluey and Doc came in.

"Phew! Bluey get out of here. You stink!"

Those close by shrank back in disgust. Bluey did indeed stink and the reason was obvious to all the miners there. He was covered in bat droppings.

"Sorry guys," said Bluey. "But it was the Doc's idea."

At that, dozens of pairs of eyes bored accusingly into Doc. "Whoa there! Hang on everyone. It's not as bad as you think." Doc paused while the crowd had time to calm down a bit. "As you know, Wolli Creek has a problem. There is a mystery disease that is striking the miners. Until now, nobody knew what was causing it."

"What do you mean, until now?" queried several in the crowd.

"It means I, with the help of Bluey here, have solved the mystery of Wolli Creek. The answer is – bats!" Doc waved his hands to quieten the crowd. "I know. It sounds ridiculous, but it's true. I have already phoned the health authorities in Darwin and they confirm my initial diagnosis. The bacteria in the bat droppings are highly infectious, but not contagious. Luckily, there is a cure and the patients in Darwin will be receiving the first doses immediately."

"So what does that mean for the mines?" asked Jack.

"Well, it means full protective gear for all miners and we are going to have to set up a decontamination centre here in town to deal with the opals before they can be sold or exported. But best of all, it means that the mines stay open."

Now Wolli Creek was famous for two things: opals and – bats.