



SIR LION

BACKGROUND

What do you do when your Neighbour threatens to make dog food out of your much loved family pet? This was the dilemma a friend mine had. Bailey, her excitable Long Haired German Shepherd had a particular liking to the next door Neighbour's flower garden. Bailey had essentially excavated the Neighbour's garden igniting the threats and hostilities between the two sides. Something had to be done. But what? The breakthrough solution came after a visit to the Zoo. There would be no more unpleasant Neighbourly relations. There would be no more Neighbour.

BEGIN

Bailey was lonely and needed a role model. We organised through the Zoo's Day Care program the release of an adult male Lion, Sir Lion into my friend's home. The program is designed to integrate animals bred in captivity into a new life, a life with opportunity and freedom. Once families have qualified as suitable carers, Apex predatory animals are billeted out to their new homes and in doing so, free up valuable Zoo resources. Living in certain outer suburban zones was enough to qualify as suitable.

Sir Lion and Bailey quickly formed a bond. It was like they were long lost brothers with Sir Lion assuming the role as his brother's keeper. And it wasn't long before Bailey ventured next door digging his way into more trouble with the Neighbour. Naturally, it wasn't long before the Neighbour fired up and again threatened Bailey

with extinction. But this time it was different. Instead of a bark, Neighbour heard what he thought was more of a roar but dismissed it as something else. Instead of retreating, Neighbour stuck his head over the fence and yelled, “Your roar is worse than your bite, isn’t it you silly canine Kraut!!”

The smug Neighbour must have been deaf, dumb and blind because it wasn’t Bailey he’d just insulted. It was Sir Lion, “*Panthera Leo*” the largest member of the feline family. The two were eye to eye over the fence. With a patronising pat to Sir Lion’s head, Neighbour promised him a one way trip to the knackery. And in one savage bite, Sir Lion amputated Neighbour’s arm. Up to the shoulder.

Time stood still for the Neighbour. His agonising screams and cries of terror were ignored. He was in shock. The surreal moment passed and in its place was the horrific reality of what had just happened. Whatever had taken his arm meant business and it wasn’t done yet. This was only the beginning of what was to be a very bad day.

Adrenaline kicked in allowing Neighbour to regain his composure and focus on survival. If he could make it to his beloved car, he might just get through this day. He was losing blood fast and needed a hospital badly. Making a mad dash for the car, he prayed he’d be able to drive with one arm. But Neighbour was unprepared for what he saw next.

Bailey had managed to claw his way inside the Neighbour’s vintage car and had ripped apart the upholstery among other things. Enraged at the wholesale violation of his property and person, Neighbour picked up the first thing he saw. With murderous

intent he hurled the hammer at Bailey hoping to smash the dog's skull but missed, smashing the windscreen instead. But something just wasn't quite right with this picture. Neighbour wondered how the mut could be in two places at once. Only moments ago, they were face to face over the fence. And now, Bailey was over the fence and inside his car, which was inside his garage. Neighbour had no idea what to make of it. The one bite limb amputation suggested there was a more sinister force at work. But if it wasn't the German shepherd, what in the bloody hell was it?

The answer came bounding up the driveway. Sir Lion came to lend support to Bailey. The armless Neighbour knew what this meant and frantically searched his pockets for the car keys. But there was nothing. Only fresh air. Neighbour was already suffering from "ghost limb" syndrome where victims of lost limbs believe it's still attached. His arm was lying in the pit of Sir Lion's stomach and that was a fact. It was time to get a wriggle on as Sir Lion was closing fast.

Neighbour saw his keys dangling from the steering column. His heart was pounding. Ebbing closer and closer was the prospect of a grisly end. Scrambling into the car, shutting the door and turning the ignition was always going to be a tall order for a one armed man, bleeding profusely with a fully grown male lion bearing down on him. And a tall order it proved to be.

No sooner had he clambered into his vehicle, Sir Lion was upon him and had torn off his right leg. And then his left foot. The massive shock put Neighbour into a cardiac arrest. The terror of such an unspeakable mauling had shot all of his nerves and his system began to shut itself down. Neighbour was slipping into unconsciousness but

just when it appeared his body had euthanised itself, another surge of adrenaline brought him back to life and to the macabre scene.

Neighbour's screams of terror returned unabated. Shaking uncontrollably in a pool of blood, his agonising wailing and desperate cries for help went unanswered, again. This gruesome act was his to suffer alone. The stench inside his beloved vehicle was vile. The humiliation more pungent. There he was behind the wheel of his car minus an arm, a leg and a foot. Sick with grief and remorse, he began ranting to himself and muttering diatribe. This once overbearing bully had now regressed to a blubbering infant calling for mummy. The safety and comfort of mummy would not be with him today.

Not like his first day at prep school when he forgot his lunch. The lonely uncertainty of his first day at school was short lived because Mummy arrived later that morning with his lunch. Neighbour remembered the tender embrace, his temple to the bosom of his mother. That moment was the pure warmth of happiness and it was perfect. So far, so very far from this ghastly predicament, but still he called out for mummy. His call was answered, but not by mummy. It was lunchtime but alas, not his.

Neighbour was on his last leg as he crawled from the car in a last desperate bid for life. After a brief siesta, Sir Lion awoke to the call of nature. The final act was about to take shape. Sir Lion padded over to where his victim lay and dumped his waste in front of the gog eyed Neighbour. There it was. The meaning of his life was now clear and he didn't like it. His grand plan for greatness and the pursuit of dreams was over. There would be no more tomorrows, no more new beginnings. His time was up and

his purpose served in a world where evolution is the exception and extinction the norm.

A couple of young local lads came across the gory scene and one of them joked, “Hey fella, cool pet, must have cost an arm and a leg!!” Neighbour didn’t hear the jibe. He’d already left the planet but the young lad was right on the money. Neighbour had paid a very high price for his actions.

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