

The Man Who Sued Himself

Written by Mark Clark

Loosely based on an untrue story

(This really appeared in a couple of newspapers)

Peter Maverick looked down upon the Sydney Basin from atop the roof of his house. To the north he could see all the way up the Central Coast and to the south, all the way to Wollongong. The city of Sydney sat like a glinting jewel in between. The late afternoon sun was behind him but the summer heat still rose from the concrete tiles upon which he stood. As he looked out he stood up straight to his full six foot two. He had a handsome face and it looked almost noble as he gazed out over the shadow of the mountain cast upon the plain below. Pensively, he slapped the boomerang he held in his right hand into the palm of his left. Then, with all his might, as if a man suddenly inspired, he hurled it.

It was a thing of beauty as it zoomed towards the distant horizon; it was a thing of beauty as it curved like a scimitar; it was a thing of beauty as it seemingly paused at the end of its arc and it was a thing of beauty as it began to return to his outstretched hand. But Peter failed to catch it as it reached him and at that moment, as it crashed violently into the side of his skull, it ceased to be a thing of beauty.

\*

Peter awoke in hospital with a massive hard-on.

'Jesus!' he exclaimed loudly.

The nurse came running. She was a pretty thing with bleached blonde hair and a tattoo of Guns and Roses on her forearm.

'Are you in pain?' she asked.

'No,' replied Peter, 'but I'm as horny as a teenage boy perving at Zoe Deschanel. Look.' And he pulled back the cover to reveal the offending member.

'Fuck,' the nurse replied, obviously impressed. 'I'll get the doctor.'

'Unless it's a female doctor, forget it. What about you?'

'What about me?' she replied.

'You know,' he said, nodding down.

The nurse looked around guiltily and then, with the efficiency afforded her by her training, she gave him a quick handy.

'Peter,' he said.

'Elizabeth,' she replied. 'But they call me Hammo.'

And they agreed to have dinner the next night.

The doctor came in and told Peter that he'd be alright after a good rest. Peter told him about the hard-on and the doctor just laughed. 'The body reacts to stress in many different ways, Mister Maverick. Possibly you've knocked your amygdala.'

'Shit. I didn't even know I had one of those,' mumbled Peter.

'Things will settle down in a few days,' laughed the doctor.

'I hope not,' thought Hammo.

Peter's closest mate, Shingles, turned up the following morning, to see how his best mate was doing. Shingles' nickname for Peter was 'Cadbury's' - as in Cadbury's Fruit and Nut chocolate - because Shingles thought Peter was a nutter - always doing crazy things.

Shingles' real name was James but Peter called him Shingles because he'd had a bad case of chicken pox as a kid. He'd picked at it and it had scarred his face pretty badly.

'What've you been up to this time, you mad bastard?'

Peter told him.

'You gotta stop doing stupid shit, mate.'

Peter agreed.

'No, I mean it,' Shingles persisted. 'Remember last month?'

Peter did.

'And last week?'

Peter did.

'Turning off your headlights for ten seconds at a time on an Australian country road at night or getting pissed and train surfing out to Richmond are not the acts of a sane man. Time to grow up, mate, or you won't get to grow up.'

'The road was straight.'

'It doesn't fucking matter, Cadbury's. I was in that fucking car.'

'Sorry.'

'Mind you, it was invigorating.'

They laughed.

'Look,' said Shingles, 'I love ya, mate, but look at the facts: you're nearly thirty, you don't have a woman, you don't have a regular job, unless you count part-time Domino's Pizza delivery, you only have a house 'cos you inherited one which, I might add, you have insured for about four times its value, you mad prick. What the hell is that about?'

'I live in a high fire area. I might need to replace it one day.'

'What are you gunna build? A castle?'

'No. I just believe in being careful.'

'Bullshit! You're the most reckless person I know.'

'And you're wrong.'

'About what?'

'I do have a girlfriend. Well, at least I have a date.'

'Who?'

'Hammo.'

'Who?'

'Me nurse. I'm tellin' ya, Shingles, since that knock on the noggin' I'm randier than a rock in a volcano.'

'Oh,' replied Shingles. 'Well, good for you. Just stop doin' stupid stuff, Cadbury's. You're my friend. And for fuck's sake, stop over-insuring your house. It's a waste of money and you don't have much of it. Now have a good sleep.'

\*

Hammo and Peter had a nice night at the movies and Peter scored another handy.

'I'm tellin' ya, Hammo,' he said, 'that knock on the head has made me as randy as a sheep shearer who's lost his gum boots. Wanna come back to my place?'

Hammo, who had been a raver since Year Seven and had surprised a few of the Year Nine boys by offering more than kisses when playing spin the bottle, needed no encouragement.

It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship based on the mutual adoration of orgasm.

Later that night, as Peter lay, looking at the ceiling, sexually sated, with Hammo nestled under his armpit, he said, 'Can you keep a secret?'

\*

The next morning, Peter sat in his local café, 'The Foaming Appendage' where he was joined by Shingles. 'Feeling better?' he asked.

But Peter had a strange look in his eye.

'Cadbury's. You okay?'

Instead of answering, Peter stood up and shouted, 'I'm suing you for every cent you've got, you negligent bastard!'

All the patrons looked over with surprise. Among them was Jonathon Riley from 'The Rustic Times', the local newspaper.

'Who are you talking to, mate?' Peter replied to himself.

'You! You dumb prick!' Peter shouted back. 'You should never have let me get up on that roof. I'm taking you to the Supreme Court!'

And he handed himself a writ.

'That's bullshit,' replied Peter, unsteadily. He read the writ.

'What's bullshit is the mental impairment you've caused me, you reckless shit,' Peter replied. 'I keep forgetting things and I've got a permanent hard-on! I'll see you in court!'

And he walked out in a huff.

At first there was silence in the café, followed by semi-laughter as each person looked to Shingles for an explanation.

He shrugged.

Jonathon Riley, who had a nose for a story, came over to Shingles. 'He alright?' he asked.

'Yeah. G'day, John. I'm not sure. He had a bad blow on the head yesterday. Could be that.'

Two days later in the gossip column of 'The Rustic Times' was a brief report on the incident. And over near Central Station in Sydney at News Limited, the column didn't go unnoticed. Jeremy St. Sinew noted the date for the court case. It was probably nothing – just some storm in a teacup from a bog in the west. Still, he'd check it out. You never knew where your next big award was coming from.

\*

Two nights later, Shingles met Peter and Hammo for dinner at the North Richmond Club. The place was packed.

'So, are you gonna tell me?' asked Shingles, as Peter put down the beers.

'Tell you what?'

'You know what.'

'No I don't. What?' Peter sat.

'You tellin' me you don't remember what happened in the café the other day?'

'No.'

'Bullshit.'

'I think it's that blow on the head,' Hammo chimed in. 'He's a bit forgetful. And randy.' The table jolted a couple of times as she finished him off under the table.

'What's that lady doing over there, Dad?' asked a small boy at the next table.

'Never mind,' replied his Dad.

'Settle down,' whispered Shingles. 'There's kids around.'

'Sorry, mate. It's that blow on the head. I'm randier than Scotsman's sporran.'

'A what?'

'And I forget things. That's why I'm taking you to court.'

'Huh?' said Shingles.

'He's doing it again,' said Hammo.

'What? He's done it since the café?' asked Shingles with some alarm.

Peter stood up and said very loudly. 'Look! I'm not going to argue about it!'

He replied to himself, 'This is ridiculous. It was my own fault.'

'Exactly,' he replied. 'Not only am I going to sue you but I'm going to be the prosecuting attorney myself.'

'Alright,' replied Peter more vehemently, 'then I'll defend myself. I'm as smart as you are any day of the week.'

'Bullshit!' he snarled and left.

The large hall, which had been noisy moments before, was now silent, but not for long.

Jonathon Riley's cousin was at the club and he told Jonathon who got a few witnesses and wrote a story about it for 'The Rustic Times'. When that came out a few days later it not only captured local interest but Jeremy St. Sinew jumped straight in his car for the Hawkesbury to find out where Peter lived.

To his surprise, when he got to Peter's place, it was besieged by other reporters who had also seen the humorous potential for the story and within half an hour or so Peter had emerged from the

house, put on a repeat performance, re-entered his home and a bevy of reporters and camera crews had quickly dispersed.

\*

The evening news featured Peter in full flight and this was watched by millions, among them Oliver Scone, a weasel-like man who was an old school rival of Peter's and who now worked for ACNE Insurance.

He ferreted through the computer files and the next day he said to his boss, 'See that guy on the news last night who's suing himself?'

'Yeah. What a dickhead,' replied Barry Lovehandles, his overweight sweaty boss.

'Well that dickhead is insured with us. I went to school with 'im. He's as reckless as they come.'

'So?'

'He's over-insured to the shithouse. Look.' He showed Barry the figures.

'He's not suing us. He's suing himself. So long as he pays the premium.'

'He's up to something.'

'You're paranoid,' replied Barry. And he left.

'I'm going to the court case!' he shouted over his shoulder but there was no reply.

\*

Back in the Hawkesbury, Shingles said to Hammo, 'Cadbury's got no family. It's up to you and me to look after 'im. If he goes ahead with this court case not only will he be a laughing stock but he'll cost himself a fortune in court costs.'

'You know him better than me,' she replied, 'I just give him a hand now and then.' She smiled.

'Ha. Ha,' said Shingles. 'No seriously, I'm worried about him. That boomerang really got 'im good.'

'Well, I support him no matter what. He might even win.'

'Yeah, but if he wins he loses, doesn't he?'

'Oh. I never thought of that,' she mused.

\*

It was two weeks until Peter's day in court and he made the most of it. He argued with himself on 'The Morning Blow' and he argued with himself on 'A Current Despair'. He even did a guest spot on 'The Reject' where he almost got himself to settle out of court but he disagreed on some minor point and things fell apart at the last minute. No one could work out if he was a genius or a bloody idiot. Most people thought that he was a bloody idiot, a notion compounded by his other activity throughout the two weeks.

He rode a pump up scooter without any breaks down the side of a mountain; saw a Jackie Chan movie and jumped from one balcony to another and almost died; went skydiving with Shingles' dog without telling Shingles, or the dog, he was going to do it; dived off the high tower at the Parramatta Pool and landed on his back; didn't tell Domino's but entered their car in one of those jump the ramp contests. They were going to sack him but he made the jump and their business skyrocketed and finally, he did a streak at the SCG during a twenty-twenty cricket match and someone high up the ladder paid his court costs.

It was as good as a circus.

'This boomerang in the head has really affected him,' suggested one Channel Nine reporter to Shingles.

'Only this suing business,' he replied, enjoying the notoriety. 'He's always done shit like this.'

And they had to retape it.

'What's he up to?' muttered Oliver Scone to himself as he watched the interview. 'Is he trying to hurt himself?'

\*

The day of the case arrived and the court room was full. The place was a bubbling crucible of humanity. Reporters, including Jonathon Riley and Jeremy St James were there; Oliver Scone was there; cameras whirred and microphones waved about; two hundred members of the public who couldn't get in, watched on a huge screen outside. Those inside were cramped and waved paper fans to keep away the January heat.

Peter entered to rapturous applause until the judge, an apparently humourless, wizened old man of perhaps sixty, smashed his gavel so hard for silence that he broke the end off it and the courtroom erupted even louder than before.

When eventually the crowd quieted, the judge began. He adjusted his glasses and looked to the table positioned directly before him and found only the solitary figure of Peter. He adjusted his glasses again. Apparently he was the only person in Sydney who did not take any interest in current affairs

'Who is representing the defendant?' he asked.

'I am, your honour,' replied Peter

'And where is your client?' he pursued.

'Here, your honour.'

'Where?'

'It's me, your honour.'

'You are representing yourself?'

'Yes, your honour.'

'Why didn't you say so?'

'I did, your honour.'

The judge adjusted his glasses again. He paused and read the paper he had in his hand.

'Shouldn't he know all this already?' Hammo asked Shingles.

'He's retiring next week,' replied a man in a suit behind them. 'He's just come from his farewell party. I don't think he's on top of things.' He man sat back in his seat and chuckled.

'Then where is the prosecuting barrister?' inquired the judge.

'Here, your honour.'

'But I . . . never mind,' muttered the judge.

The courtroom was a silent bomb about to explode.

'And I am the plaintiff,' added Peter, to save time.

'I assumed this was a family dispute,' stammered the judge.

'It is,' replied Peter. 'I'm suing myself.'

This statement and the look on the judge's face in response, caused the bomb to go off and it took a full ten seconds to quell the slowly dissipating noise of the explosion.

'Very well! Very well!' the judge yelled over the quieting crowd. He waved his arms about so vigorously he knocked off his glasses, to further hilarity from the gallery.

'The prosecuting barrister may begin,' he said.

Peter stood. 'Your honour, my client has been the victim of gross negligence perpetrated by none other than the man I now point to.' He pointed to himself.

The gallery wanted to laugh but the judge looked at them like a strict high school teacher and they managed to keep quiet. Some bowed their heads and their shoulders shook in betrayal of silent mirth.

'As a result of his negligence I suffer severe memory loss and have become ridiculously over-sexed. As a result, I can't remember the last time I didn't have a hard-on.'

The crowd lost it.

Buoyed by the frivolous moment Hammo shouted out, 'I can attest to that your honour!'

And the crowd went wild.

The judge, who had been handed a new gavel, smashed it heavily onto his bench until some sanity returned.

'If you interject one more word, young lady, I shall eject you from this courtroom! And that applies to anyone else!' He stared down the gallery. 'Continue.'

'Your honour,' said Peter, sauntering about the room like a seasoned QC, 'it is indisputable that my injuries occurred as a result of my own negligence. I have papers here signed by a psychiatrist to prove that I have suffered serious mental trauma as a result and I therefore ask the court to find me guilty of gross negligence in this instance.'

'I object!' Peter shouted.

'On what grounds?' Peter replied

'It was an accident!' yelled Peter.

'An avoidable one and one for which you were responsible,' Peter replied.

'Sustained,' said Peter.

'Wait! Wait!' yelled the judge. 'That's my job.' And then after a moment or two he muttered, 'Sustained' and the courtroom loved it.

But before the noise abated, Peter grabbed himself by the collar, 'I've had just about enough of you, you prick!' he screamed.

'Get your hands off me!' he yelled back. And Peter started smacking himself in the head.

'Fuck me,' said Shingles, 'It's fucken Fight Club.'

'Get your hands off 'im!' screamed Hammo and she jumped into action and pulled Peter away from himself. It was utter confusion as Hammo held back Peter's fists and the bailiff somehow got knocked over. It was chaos. Hammo started rubbing Peter's cock over the trousers to calm him down and was yelling out, 'It's the only thing that helps!' to justify her actions. Several members of the press were laughing so hard they were crying and one of the reporters from Channel Seven shat himself laughing and had to be excused. People had phones out and were filming everything. No one cared if it was illegal or not. This was too good to miss.

It was minutes before order was restored at which time the judge left to make a determination.

He returned several minutes later and, in an attempt to put the whole ridiculous case to rest, found for the prosecution. Peter had won, which delighted him. He jumped for joy and so too did the gallery until he realised that he had also lost and he immediately looked crestfallen and became silent.

So too did the courtroom.

'Your honour,' Peter said, 'I can't pay. I have very little money and only my family home.'

'That's okay,' Peter replied, 'I have a personal indemnity clause attached to my house insurance, which I have maintained for many years.'

'What?' said Oliver Scone.

'What?' said Jeremy St James and Jonathon Riley.

'What?' said the judge.

'That's right.' He produced a piece of paper and waved it about. 'This piece of paper will show that I invited myself to my house on the afternoon in question. I attended as a guest and as a guest I was injured through my own negligence. As you can all plainly see my sanity has been disrupted as a result, so I believe that I am entitled to the full amount for which my insurance company is liable under the contract.'

'And what amount is that, Mister Maverick?' asked the judge with a faraway look in his eye.

'Five million dollars,' he replied.

The courtroom erupted with amazement and the judge didn't even bother to try and quell it. It died a natural death after perhaps a minute, at which time he said in a rather small, hollow voice more fitting of an octogenarian, 'I award the full amount to Peter Maverick.'

For a moment there was complete silence as the judge got up in a doddering fashion, stepped down from his bench and disappeared into the back room. There would be an appeal, he was sure of it. Let some other poor bastards deal with that in the High Court. He was retiring.

Back in the courtroom the noise and murmur was intense. Shingles and Hammo were trying to congratulate Peter but the press had already besieged him. The bailiff got knocked over again and considered suing himself.

Outside, the melee continued. The cameras were still surrounding Peter when Oliver Scone slipped up behind him and whispered, 'You won't get away with this, Maverick. You were a dickhead at school and you're still a dickhead. I'll see you in court.' And he stormed off.

The illegal footage from the courtroom was already going viral and some of it was shown on the news along with the legal stuff they had filmed. Barry Lovehandles popped up towards the end of the story, flanked by Oliver Scone. When asked what the Insurance company's position was, he replied, 'The judge has made a grave mistake in this case and created an unfortunate precedent. We intend to appeal this decision in a full sitting of the High Court.' Oliver just stood in the background looking like Nazi S.S. middle-management.

\*

Peter, Hammo and Shingles were watching it on television.

'Who the hell is that guy?' Shingles asked through a mouth full of Chinese take-away.

'I knew him at school,' Peter replied. 'I pinched his girlfriend and he never forgave me.'

'Hey,' pouted Hammo and she slapped him.

'What?' said Peter. 'That was ages ago. There's no one but you now, poukums.'

Shingles choked on his Chinese. 'You fucken' say that again and I'll sue *you*.'

'It's good but, eh?' said Hammo. 'What are you gunna do with all the money?'

'Dunno yet,' replied Peter.

'Don't spend it, for Christ's sake,' said Shingles. 'Not until you win the appeal - *if* you win the appeal and if you don't, you gotta be able to pay it back, so don't spend it.'

'How long does an appeal take?' asked Hammo.

'Couple of years I'd reckon,' said Peter.

'So we still got no money,' mused Hammo. 'No matter. We still got each other.' And she squeezed his dick with great affection.

'I'm leavin',' said Shingles and Hammo was just getting down to work as he clicked the door shut.

As it turned out Hammo had no reason to worry about money. Peter's fame and recklessness guaranteed him sponsorships and spots on talkback shows and endorsements of everything from skateboards to skin care products. He kept doing stupid things like he always had, but now people took notice and he prospered.

Cut to: a montage of Oliver Scone, determined to defeat his high school nemesis – preparing, studying, working hard, burning the midnight oil, getting an iron clad defence ready for the High Court. The calendar on the wall peels back to reveal months, seasons, two years passing - until finally, alongside a very expensive QC he stands before seven bewigged judges to crush his foe, but before anyone can say anything Peter says, 'I give up. You can have the money. I'll have Hammo transfer it to you tonight.'

And though he had won the appeal, after two years of solid, unnecessary work - Oliver wept.

As for Peter and Hammo, they went hang gliding without harnesses and rock fishing without life jackets and Peter got his own show called: Dangerous Pursuits. Shingles kept drinking beer and eating Chinese takeaway.

The three of them were lying on the beach on the Italian Riviera about six months later and Shingles said, 'Hey Cadbury's, I know you're a big shot and everything now, but how can you afford all this?'

'You know how Sydney prices have shot up?'

'Yeah.'

'Well I invested that five million and made about one and a half million over the two year period I had it.'

'You clever bastard,' said Shingles.

'He told me he was gunna do it too, didn't ya, poukums? After our first night together.'

'That I did, my love. That I did.'

'Don't fucken call 'im poukums. So that was all bullshit about the brain damage.'

'Well, the bit about the memory loss was,' replied Peter.

'As for the hard-on,' whispered Hammo into Peter's ear.

'I'm off,' said Shingles.