

Simmons, and hearing him utter what we now recall happily as a famous and explicitly Australian phrase: "Ello! Emu tracks!"

On the trip back from Iron Range we saw a great red kangaroo, a lone dusty old range bull who ran with us a while at night, a feral horse that did the same in daylight with its tail over its back, dingo tracks, three huge green goannas, wallabies, thousands of parrots, some truly beautiful small birds in the rain forests, a species of fruit bat new to us, and several wild hogs. A grass fire was burning in the middle of nowhere near the Wenlock at midnight, and we came upon it suddenly as we popped over a small slope. We stopped for a few minutes and sat with the motor turned off, listening to the crackle of flames in the stillness and watching them lick across the otherwise silent dark range. It caused an eerie yet peaceful feeling in us.

Brumby

When we had splashed the Wenlock
and groaned up the dry sloping bank
of her channel, you were there,
head high, beside the Land Rover,
your feet planted in the dusty gray soil,
whites of your eyes rolled back,
nostrils aflame, tail up, broad barrel
heaving in the wild of Queensland's sun.

Brumby, you raced beside us for a mile
along the track, keeping just ahead,
red of your mane and tail, banners
in the breeze of you, holding in with
short, tense gallops, head now this way,
now that, nose level with your questing eyes,
taut waiting muscles gleaming the length
and breadth of you as the spurts of gray dust
rose from each rhythmic springing thud of
your hooves together in the Mitchell grass.

Sideways now, and back you swerved
head tossed both ways again, now suddenly
across the track before us, then doubling
back once more, head still high and staring
wildly, imponderably, just as suddenly
gaining from behind, then passing easily
a few yards off, the rippling muscles
losing inhibition.

And with great springing strides you
disappeared through the brush, Brumby,
acting out, I think, the escape of your sire,
dam, or some other ancestor,
from such as I.

Come back, Brumby,
we can gallop all these hills
together again.