

Take me back to Winton

Malcolm Smith

Take me back to Winton, where there's just one shop in town
Where the iron roofs creak in the blistering heat and they sell ice by the pound
The street's as broad as the Champs Elysees, for the road trains to pass through
But for now there's just a wandering dog and a four-wheel-drive and you

The girl in the shop asks how you're doing, like she really wants to know
And where are you from and do you like Oz, and where are you planning to go
They've got everything here from rods and lures to toothpaste and bottles of bleach
But you won't find a beach towel or spray-on fake tan, 'cos you're a bloody long
way from a beach

Old Bill sits at the counter of the North Gregory Hotel
He's been there forty years as far as anyone can tell
Banjo Patterson first performed his Waltzing Matilda here
The Swagman Statue's across the street and they serve a good cold beer

Young Wayne pulls in in his father's ute, two dogs on the tray behind
The racing's on the telly but he doesn't pay it any mind
He takes a Cascade Light, 'cos there's random tests about
Old Bill says, put your money away son, this one'll be my shout

Thanks Bill, says Wayne, and takes a swig: that floodway's up again
It was point five over this morning and they're announcing another ten
Says Bill, now don't you worry son, I've seen big floods before
And it's water makes the pasture grow, so the stock'll fatten more

That's if they don't get washed away, says Wayne with a crooked smile
But I guess you'd know a thing or two, you've been around a while
For sure, I've seen both floods and droughts, and I know which I'd prefer
Though I don't suppose our tourist here is likely to concur

But stock's our life and stockman's work, while tourism may fade
Well, Wayne just stared 'cos that's the longest speech Bill ever made
Wayne bit his lip 'cos he had plans to work in the tourist trade
He knew that in his father's eyes he'd never make the grade

So take me back to Winton where not all is as it seems
Where beneath the tranquil surface there are many fears and dreams
But Waltzing Matilda still has power to unite Australians' lives
And still today, through floods and droughts, the spirit of the land survives