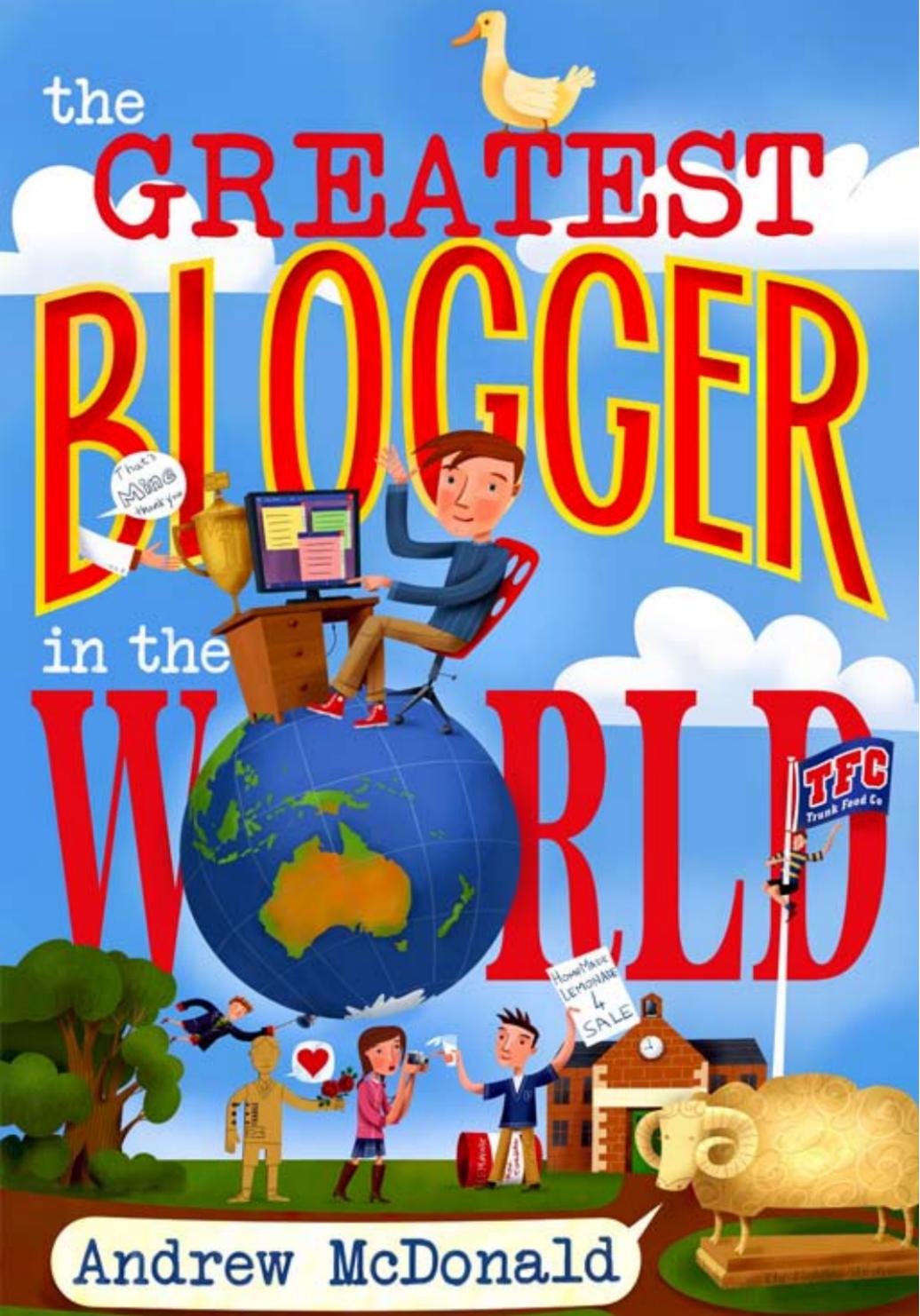


the

GREATEST BLOGGER

in the

WORLD



Andrew McDonald

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For Nan

The Greatest Blogger in the World
published in 2009 by
Hardie Grant Egmont
85 High Street
Prahran, Victoria 3181, Australia
www.hardiegrantegmont.com.au

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Typesetting and internal design by David Rosemeyer

Printed in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group

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The
BARCODE
BLOG



Writing a blog is hard and wet work. I was sitting outside my house in the pouring rain watching Barcode, hoping he would do something amazing. Barcode is the family pet duck. Dad is allergic to cats and Mum hates dogs so we had to settle for a duck.

Barcode was also the star of my blog. The day we first got Barcode I started up a blog about him. Every day I would log onto the internet and write a new blog post about what he'd been up to. The blog started off well.

THE BARCODE BLOG #1

Today Barcode decided to go swimming in all the good swimming places he could find in our house. I had to rescue him from the kitchen sink, the washing machine, the toilet and a chocolate milkshake that Dad had forgotten to drink.

- Charlie Ridge

 **Comments** **0**

At first Barcode was fascinating and I couldn't blog about him enough. Every time he quacked, blinked or stood up tall I would blog about it. But as time went by, I struggled for cool stuff to post and the blog lost its spark.

THE BARCODE BLOG #37

Today Barcode slept all day. Then he went to bed for the night.

- Charlie Ridge

 **Comments** **0**

So there I was sitting by the side of the road in the rain, hoping Barcode would do something amazing that would make for an amazing blog post.

My teacher Mr Legg had emailed me that day about a competition on the internet to find the Greatest Blogger in the World. I don't know how Mr Legg knew I was a blogger but I was happy he'd sent the email. The winner of the competition would be given the website address www.thegreatestbloggerintheworld.com to make into their very own blog.

This was something I could win. The only problem was Barcode. It turned out he was a lame duck to blog about.

To try to spice up the Barcode Blog for the competition, I'd been on the internet googling 'cool stuff for ducks' and had found a website called www.howsmartisyourduck.com. The website had many different IQ tests for ducks. One of them was to sit your duck on a kerb and see



if he or she crosses the road to get the food on the other side.

I looked over the road at the can of worms I had put there. The worms were starting to wiggle their way out onto the wet footpath. I looked back at Barcode. We'd been getting drenched for ten minutes and he hadn't moved. He just kept standing where he was and looking at me as if waiting for instructions.

I knew Dad would call me in for dinner any second now. Dad was always in charge of dinner. Mum had gone to the football with the guys from her work. I needed to go inside soon anyway to fix up my book report before school the next day. I'd decided the book report I'd done was too good and needed to be changed. Maybe I could put in some spelling mistakes and spill juice on it before I handed it in to Mr Legg.

It's important that I don't seem too smart at school. For this reason I never talk about my

Barcode Blog around people from school. If I did, everyone would see me for the nerd I am and I'd be done for. Anyone who likes writing or blogging or being in the library is called a teacher's pet and I really don't want that.

Barcode had now nestled in next to my leg and was asleep in the rain. I grabbed him and went inside. He had failed the road test because he was so lazy. Or maybe he really was dumb. I had nothing to blog about. My Barcode Blog was not going to win any awards.

I put Barcode in the backyard and went straight to the computer to look at the blogging competition again. I suddenly realised that I could be the Greatest Blogger in the World if I had a different blog. I could do my blogging and win the competition, and no-one at school would ever know a thing. So I started a different blog with a brand-new star attraction.

• • •



THE CHARLIE RIDGE BLOG

Hello From Charlie

Sunday 10th August

My name is Charlie Ridge. This is my new blog and official announcement that I have entered the competition to win the title of Greatest Blogger in the World. I think you will find that I am a great blogger with many great stories to tell. Satay tuned.

🗨️ Comments 1

I will 'Satay Tuned' Charlie. I'm sure your blog will be as deliciously misspelt as you've promised. Ha.

Dr Maryloaf – Soon-to-be the Greatest Blogger in the World

So obviously I had meant to type *stay tuned*. No need for some idiot to comment on a simple typo. Although it was proof that winning that web address was going to be hard work. I googled this Dr Maryloaf guy. He too had his heart set on being the Greatest Blogger in the World. He's

a vet from Montreal, Canada. On his blog he claims to be 'the greatest blogger in the world for the care of your animals and other fauna'. He writes about dogs who vomit too much and arctic wolves who go into comas. He obviously doesn't know how lame blogging about animals is. But I wasn't going to tell him that. He was my blogging enemy and I had a competition to win.

I deleted the Barcode Blog.



Corn Flookes and

RED CORDIAL



Barcode woke me up first thing in the morning by biting at my face. He hadn't been fed yet and was obviously hungry. I moved him off my face and took him downstairs and filled up his bowl with duck pellets. I wondered what Dr Maryloaf would make of a duck that tries to eat your face.

In the kitchen Dad was huddled over the bench cooking up a storm. A big, black storm of misery. This was his happy daily routine.

'Good morning, Charlie. I made you breakfast.'

'Ehh, don't tell me it's the usual?'

'Yep, it's a bowl of Trunk Food Company Corn Flookes.'

Yep, the usual. This was my unhappy daily routine. Dad pushed the bowl of yellow slush along the bench and under my nose.

'How long has the milk been in there?'

'A few minutes now. I got it ready for you nice and early.'

It never seemed to matter to Dad that he was feeding me mush, as long as it was waiting for me when I arrived in the kitchen.

'Well, there's no milk left,' I said. 'The sun from the window evaporated it all.'

'Don't be silly. The sun isn't hot enough to evaporate milk at this time of day.'

'The glass magnified the sunbeams.'

Dad gave me one of those looks that said, 'Please don't let cereal destroy this family.' I took my bowl to the table. As I gurgled down the slush, Joshua came and sat opposite me. Joshua is my



little brother. He doesn't like to be called Joshua because he says it makes him sound like a baby. He is forever telling me that his name is Josh, but I don't want him getting any ideas about where he fits in around here.

'What do you want, Joshua?' I asked him.

'My name is Josh.'

'What do you want, Joshua?'

'I want to show you my tuxedo.'

'Are you ready for kinder, Josh?' Dad called from the other side of the room.

'Yes.'

Joshua was wearing his good black tuxedo. And his good bow tie. He looked like he was a waiter at a fancy restaurant, except that he had no shoes on and his hair had Corn Flookes through it.

'Why are you wearing your tuxedo, Joshua?' I asked.

'My school uniform is dirty.'

'I forgot to do the washing, didn't I?' Dad muttered to himself. 'I was so busy cleaning the

windows yesterday that I completely forgot about the washing.'

My Stay-At-Home Dad

Monday 11th August

Dad is a Stay-At-Home Dad. At least that's what Mr Legg calls him. But Dad is rarely at home. He's always dropping Joshua and me off at kinder and school, or picking us up from Grandma's house. And when he's not doing that he's out shopping or in the kitchen cooking. He's a busy man but he doesn't have a job. Mum does. She's the breadwinner of the family. At least that's what Mr Legg calls her. Which is funny because I don't think Mum even knows where to buy bread.

 **Comments** **0**

'Let's go, boys,' Dad said, whipping Joshua from his seat and grabbing my school bag. 'I've got new blinds to install in the kitchen after I walk you guys to school and kinder, so let's get a move on.'



‘But I’m allergic to kinder today!’ Joshua protested as Dad carried him outside.

I tipped the rest of my cereal down the sink and followed them out the front door. It would have been a nice father and son and son morning stroll if Joshua wasn’t there. Actually, that would have just been a father and son stroll.

But Joshua tagged along behind us, complaining all the way.

‘Dad, my feet are going to fall off! Dad, my eyes are going to pop out! Dad, my arms are falling out of their sockets.’

I’ll bet Dad regrets teaching Joshua to speak English. It would have been better to teach him German because no matter how much he complained, no-one would have any idea what he was saying. Except maybe Germans.

‘Dad, why can’t I go to school with Charlie?’ said Joshua as we approached the school gate of the Schlock School of Excellence – the one and only school in the town of Schlock. ‘I’m not

allergic to school. Only kinder.’

‘Because you’re too young and you can’t wear tuxedos to school,’ Dad replied, but he was too late.

Joshua had bolted through the school gate and was gone. Dad hates coming into the school grounds. He says there are too many mothers at school and that our mother is enough for him. But he couldn’t leave without Joshua.

We ran over to the flagpole where everyone was standing around chatting and waiting for the school bell to ring. As Dad passed through, he was stopped by the group of mothers.

‘Are you looking for someone?’ asked Cathy Oldbeck’s mother.

‘Yes, I’m looking for Charlie’s brother.’

‘Who’s Charlie?’ asked Brent Looter’s mother.

‘Um...have you seen a young boy wearing a tuxedo?’

‘Oh yes, we saw him run by just a second ago,’ Cathy Oldbeck’s mother smiled and pointed.



‘He’s just over there.’

Dad and I ran over to the drinking taps where Joshua was enjoying the school water. Dad picked him up and was halfway out of the schoolyard when the group of mothers stopped him again.

‘What a cute little guy he is,’ they said and they poked and prodded Joshua.

Dad was cornered. These mothers were attracted to cute little kids like a shark is attracted to blood. I knew he would hate talking to them but it would be good for him. He could use a few more friends. Even if these friends were blood-thirsty sharks.

‘I’m going to find Phattius Beats,’ I said quickly, before Dad could protest.

I took off. I found Phattius standing at a table under a wooden sign that had ‘Homemade Lemonade 4 Sale’ scrawled on it. The table was covered in plastic cups and big jugs of lemonade. A whole lot of preps were crowded around the table. Phattius had a fistful of money

in one hand and was giving out cups of lemonade with the other.

Phattius Beats

Monday 11th August

Phattius is my bestie and it’s been that way since forever. Phattius Beats is his full name, or at least it’s what he calls himself. His real name is Gene Bollingworth, which explains why he might want to change his name but not why he would change it to Phattius Beats. He says it’s his business title. Phattius is a true businessman.

 **Comments** **0**

Phattius often sold lemonade at school but today there were a few preps with cups of red liquid.

‘Thanks, Phattius,’ said a happy little prep called Gregory, leaving the stand with a cup of the red stuff.

‘Charlie!’ Phattius saw me and waved me over. I pushed to the front of the lemonade stand.



What was he up to? Mr Legg is always accusing Phattius of being crafty and I don't think it's in appreciation of his work in art class.

'How are you, my brother?' Phattius slapped me on the back.

'I'm good. What are you doing?' I asked.

'Making money, my brother. Making money.'

Phattius is always making money. He says it's the way of the businessman. Of course, selling lemonade at school is not allowed, but Phattius was doing more than that. He showed me a big container of red cordial under the table.

'Red cordial is where the big money's really at,' he said.

Red cordial was a big no-no at our school ever since Brent Looter drank a litre of the stuff, climbed the flagpole and wouldn't come down until the end-of-school bell. But Phattius knows what he's doing. He always has. And I always help him out by walking around the schoolyard to make sure there aren't any nearby threats to

his business. Threats like teachers or school monitors or Principal Kriss. Phattius calls me his Business Watchdog.

'Hey brother, you want to be Business Watchdog and do a lap of the area to make sure there're no teachers coming? I wouldn't want to be busted for selling lemonade *and* red cordial.'

'Sure thing, brother,' I said.

I decided not to tell Phattius about the blog competition. He was my trusted bestie but I'd never told him about my blogging or how I change my schoolwork to get lower marks. The week before I'd switched the names on our maths tests so that I didn't top the class. Phattius got a surprise 10 out of 10 and I went unnoticed – just as I liked it. I decided I'd tell him about my blog later on. Maybe when I won the competition. There would be no escaping the fame then.

Phattius slapped me on the back and I set off to secure the area. No sooner had I turned the



corner when I saw the Boots in the distance and coming our way. The Boots was someone to avoid if you were breaking school rules. I ran back to Phattius with the news and we started pulling down the stand.

‘Oh man, I hate the Boots,’ he said. ‘I guess that’s all the business we’re going to do today.’

We were just in time. As we carried everything away, the Boots turned the corner and watched us walking off.

After hiding away the lemonade stand, we made our way to class. We were just sitting down at the back of Mr Legg’s classroom when we saw the Boots appear in the doorway. She stared at Phattius. She knew. But how?

Mr Legg came striding through the doorway, past the Boots and to the front of the class.

‘Good morning, everyone.’ He smiled at us all before looking at the Boots, who was still staring at Phattius. ‘Eleanor Cameron, today is not Telephone Pole Day so please stop impersonating

one and sit down at your desk.’

The Boots blushed and quickly sat down. She didn’t want to ruin her reputation as teacher’s pet.

The Boots

Monday 11th August

Eleanor Cameron has been known as the Boots ever since she started showing up to school wearing big black boots that went higher than football socks. But for all her teacher’s pet qualities, there’s something special about the Boots. And unless she finds out that I could probably rival her for the position as teacher’s pet, I reckon I’ve got a shot at the only jewel in a classroom full of roughs.

Comments 1

Charlie, you seem to have a crush on a pair of shoes. I guess you really are a walk-over.

Dr Maryloaf – Soon-to-be the Greatest Blogger in the World





Andrew McDonald was born and registered in Melbourne in 1982. The eldest of five kids and self-proclaimed 'King of the Backyard', Andrew learnt humility when he began school with other children.

Andrew has a degree in Media Studies and has worked as an editor, a writer and a cook. His heroes include Hergé, Roald Dahl and Tina Fey. His work has previously been published in *Voiceworks* magazine, Cardigan Press's *Allnighter* anthology and on the back of his left hand.

Andrew is an animal lover who owns one fish called Lockjaw who has been missing since 1998 and is presumed dead.

The Greatest Blogger in the World is his first book.