

### Red Dog 3

Tally stopped living with Jack and Maureen, though he called on them from time to time, and led a footloose life, fraternising with the lonely miners around the district of Dampier, Western Australia, north of Perth. These men called him Red Dog, as they didn't know his name. They fed him, played with him, and were happy to have him to talk to, but he belonged to no one. Then he met John, driver of the bus for the workers of the Hamersley Iron Transport section, and a special relationship was formed.

#### Episode 3 – Red Dog and Nancy Grey.

One day someone turned up on the bus whom no-one had ever seen before. Nancy Grey was new in town, having come to work as a secretary at Hamersley Iron, and she had never heard about Red Dog.

When she got on the bus to go for her first morning at work, she found it full of miners, and with no empty seats, except for a seat behind the driver, which had a red dog in it. She looked at the rows of men grinning at her, and she gazed at the red dog, who looked away as if he had not noticed her.

None of the men offered her their seat, because they wanted to see what would happen when Nancy tried to move Red Dog.

'Down!' said Nancy, who wasn't going to take any nonsense from an animal. Red Dog looked up at her, and settled himself into his seat more firmly. 'Bad dog!' exclaimed Nancy, and Red Dog curled his lip and gave a low growl. Nancy was a little bit shocked, and drew back, but at the same time she was almost sure that this dog would never bite her. His expression wasn't quite fierce enough. The men in the bus began to laugh at her. 'You'll never get him out of there!' said one. 'That's his seat,' said another. 'No-one sits there when Red wants it.'

Nancy faced the men, and began to blush. It was embarrassing to be outfaced by a dog and a busload of miners. Determined not to give in, she sat down gingerly on the very edge of the seat, where Red Dog wouldn't be disturbed.

Red Dog was disturbed, however. This was his seat, and everyone knew it. What was more, the whole seat was his, and not just a half of it. Ever since he had met John, he had travelled around as much as he wanted on the company buses, no matter who the driver was, and he always had the seat behind the driver. It was emphatically his seat, and no-one else's. He showed Nancy his teeth and growled again.

'Well, aren't you a charmer?' she said, but she didn't budge.

Red Dog could see that threats weren't doing any good, so he decided to

push her off the seat. He turned around, stuck his muzzle under her thigh, and pushed. She was surprised by how strong he was, and she was almost tipped off. Behind her the men began to laugh again, and she grew even more determined.

'I'm not moving,' she told the dog quietly, 'so you'll just have to put up with me.'

Red Dog wasn't going to give in either, and he pushed Nancy until she only had one tiny bit of her backside on the seat. He felt that he had made his point, and let her perch there, uncomfortable as she was.

The next day Nancy got on the bus again, and there was Red Dog, sitting behind the driver's seat once more. 'Oh, no,' she thought, because once again the bus was full, and all the men were waiting to see what was going to happen. The people in the office had told her about the dog after she had got into work the previous morning, and now she knew that this was the dog who travelled around as the fancy took him. He lived mostly in the transport workshops, keeping an eye on what was going on, and he was a paid-up member of the Transport Workers' Union. When the action in the workshop got too slow, he got lifts all over the area. Sometimes he travelled on the water-truck, sometimes in the company pick-up trucks (known as utes), sometimes in the giant train-trucks.

As he got to know more and more people, he began to take lifts in their private cars as well. You had to watch out for Red Dog when you were driving, because he never forgot a vehicle that he had had a lift in, remembering both the paintwork and the sound of the engine, and he would wait by the side of the road until one of them came along. Quite suddenly he would run out in front of the car so that you had to screech to a halt and let him in, so you learned to watch out for him in the same way that you watched out for rock-wallabies and wallaroos. Red Dog always insisted on the front seat, especially on the company buses, even more especially when John was driving, and that was that.

Nancy sat down a little closer to Red Dog than she had yesterday, and he looked sideways at her, showing the whites of his eyes, as if he were about to bite her. Instead he got down, stuck his muzzle under her thigh and once more tried to push her off. Nancy was conscious of the sniggers of the men in the bus, and, mustering as much dignity as she could, she said, 'None of you's a gentleman, that's for sure.'

Red Dog seemed a little put out by this remark and he sat up and pretended that there was no-one else on his seat. If he couldn't move that obstinate woman, he would just have to treat her with the disdain that she deserved. He let her put a little bit more of her backside on to the seat.

The next morning Red Dog realised that he was looking forward to sitting next to Nancy, and when she sat next to him he forgot to try to push her off. He thought that he might just try being a bit aloof, but when she said 'Hi, Red!' and patted him on the head, he couldn't help smiling a little in the way that dogs do. He thumped his tail on the seat, once only, and then went back to looking out of the window, not wanting to give way too much to begin with.

Nancy didn't turn round, but she could tell that the miners were impressed, and weren't mocking her any more. She knew that she had scored a victory over them at the same time as she had won over Red Dog. From that moment onward, Red Dog and Nancy became friends. There were not many others who dared to try it, but Nancy sat next to him whenever she liked.

End of episode 3

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