

RULES OF THE ROAD

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Boz's Rules of the Road: Matt Manson

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In this paragraph I'm supposed to write that I've asserted my moral rights according to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, blah, blah, blah. Although I'm not entirely sure what that means, let's agree I have. I think it's to do with copyright. I've spent quite a bit of time writing *Rules of the Road*, so what I'm saying is that this is my work and although I'm immensely flattered if people like it, I don't want anybody to rip it off. I'm told my publisher's lawyers are very rich. They didn't get that way by being nice to people.

All characters in this novel are fictitious. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental. Also, there is a town in Crete called Matala, though the Matala I have written about exists only in my mind. As does the rest of 'Europe.'

www.rulesoftheroad.co.uk

What's her name?
Her name is Gloria
G . L . O . R . I . A .
GLORIA
Gonna shout it every night
Van Morrison

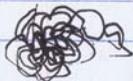
I am on a lonely road and I am travelling
Looking for the key to set me free
Joni Mitchell

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
John Keats (1795-1821)

The Rules of the Road.

1. You only get a lift where there are cars.
2. Each spot has its own karma.
3.  Hides at a bottom ~~off~~ of a hill that way you look smaller.*
4. Stand under a lamp post when hiding in the dark.
5.  Respect Men with Rubber Stamps.
6. Be patient, Be flexible, Be friendly.
(Be Mean)
7. Go with your instincts.
8.  Remember the ~~best~~ Road doesn't lead from A to B But A to Z.
9. A lift in the wrong direction is better than no lift at all.
10.  Pray, because you are very close to God.

*Turn towards the oncoming traffic - its for your face the driver wants to see, not your ass.
unless you a chick.



RULES OF THE ROAD

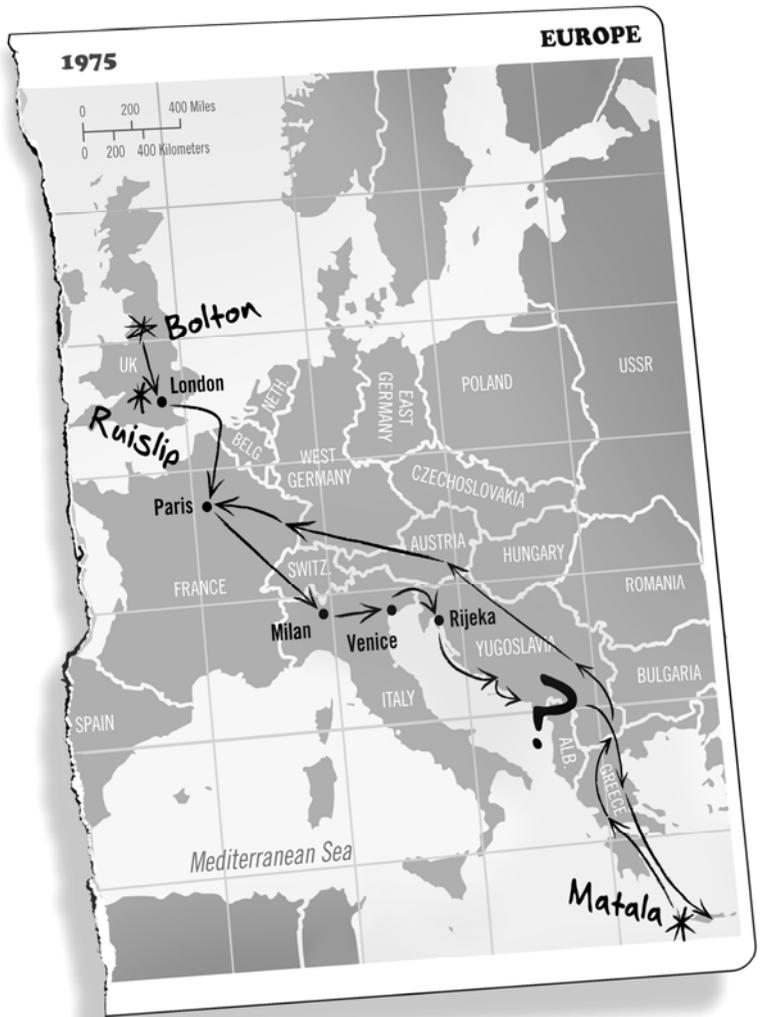
Boz's Rules of the Road

1. You only get a lift where there are cars.
2. Each spot has its own karma.
3. Hitch at the bottom of a hill, that way you look smaller.*
4. Stand under a lamp post when hitching in the dark.
5. Respect men with rubber stamps.
6. Be patient, be flexible, be friendly. (Be clean.)
7. Go with your instincts.
8. Remember, the journey isn't from A to B but from A to Z.
9. A lift in the wrong direction is better than no lift at all.
10. Pray, sometimes you are very close to God.

And a couple of my own:

11. Don't try out your jokes on immigration officers.
12. Don't get arrested for looking like a freak.

*Turn towards the oncoming traffic – it's your face drivers want to see, not your arse. Unless you're a chick.



INTRODUCTION

I'd been packing some unwanted books to take to the Oxfam shop when my attention was grabbed by an old paperback with a yolk yellow cover called 'I, Jan Cremer'. As far as I can recollect it was the autobiography of a Dutch painter. Other than that, thirty years on, I can recall very little about the book. I flicked through the pages and a lost photograph fell out. The photograph shows a smiling young man standing on the gravel drive of 27 Laurel Close, Ruislip. The colours are faded to brown and red.

I seem to remember the picture was taken with Dad's Kodak Instamatic. The young man is about twenty years old, he's dressed in a fudge brown crew neck sweater and black cord trousers with a denim flare sewn into the side and is carrying a brown holdall with fake leather handles. Not a rucksack - that was for youth hostellers or Canadians. He's wearing gleaming white plimsolls. New footwear seemed like a good idea at the time but those plimsolls were to prove a mistake.

Look at that face. So young, and keen. The smile is nervous. A panama hat is sitting on clean, wavy blonde shoulder-length hair. A panama hat! The sort of hat worn by old geezers at the bowling club down our local park. Mum had brought it back from a recent holiday in Majorca. I threw it in the bin as soon as I got to London.

Dad was tearful and gave me a hug; we didn't normally even touch each other. He looked older and vague, as if he'd lost something. This was one of the few occasions when he gave me advice. For a moment he seemed to have trouble speaking, he gave me a long searching look and then he said, 'Felix, when you go travelling you'll have some good times and some bad times. The bad times are all part of the experience.' Thanks, Dad. What did he know? He'd never been further than Dunkirk in the war when he'd popped over the Channel for an ice cream.

Mum said, 'Do be careful Felix. In Italy the Mafia fill train carriages with gas and rob everybody.'

I couldn't even begin to argue with that. I'll keep away from the Mafia. I promise.'

'Make sure you write. At least send us a postcard.'

I was planning to visit the great galleries of Europe, I was going to sample the finest beers, chill with the most far out freaks¹ and smoke the best shit. I wanted to be the coolest dude in Ruislip. But that hat! I knew the truth; on the coolometer I rated perhaps only four out of ten. But that wasn't going to stop me. In Matala, I'd promised to meet that sweet, sweet girl Gloria. And if everything went according to plan the coolometer would ping right off the scale.

'Don't go and do anything stupid and get arrested,' was Dad's parting shot.

I'd got a long summer ahead of me. I'd got rides to hitch, I'd got freight trains to jump. I wanted to get on with it.

¹ Freak is a compliment, not an insult.

ONE

I stood under the portico waiting for Boz. I'd arranged to meet him on the steps of the National Gallery. I looked across Trafalgar Square under low clouds. It was as if all the colours had been sucked out of the world leaving just grey. No wonder London needs red buses to brighten the landscape.

I'd got some news to tell Boz. I wasn't sure how I was going to break it to him. Okay, it wasn't that bad, but it was important that Boz didn't use this as an opportunity to insist that we change our plans.

As this was the beginning of our cultural journey I thought we'd set the tone and get our eye in by taking in a couple of rooms. I went into the gift shop and looked at the postcards. The early Renaissance would be a good start - Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rubens. We'd come across those guys in all the major European galleries.

It was just after one o' clock when Boz arrived; he was two hours late.

'Sorry Felix, I had some last-minute business to attend to. Bixby sends peace and love.'

'Bixby? What were you doing with Bixby?'

'Stocking up on some essential supplies.'

'Boz, I wasn't able to get the Eurorail tickets.'

'What! Why not? What are we going to do?'

'How old are you?'

'Twenty-three.'

'And I'm twenty.'

'So?'

‘You’ve got to be under twenty-one to be eligible for Eurorail. You’re too old.’

‘I’m twenty-three and I’m too old. That’s ridiculous.’

‘Never trust anybody over twenty-five.’

‘We’ll have to go to St Ives as we originally planned.’

‘No, no, no. You don’t understand. It’s better NOT travelling by Eurorail. It’ll give us more flexibility. It means we can also go by bus and boat. And hitch. It’ll be much more fun. And it’ll probably work out cheaper.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yeah, positive.’

‘But St Ives would be easier.’

I had to stop these thoughts immediately.

‘No Boz.’

‘But...’

‘I’ve already booked the train to Venice.’

*

Boz and I had spent many evenings planning our summer. We agreed we were heading to Cornwall. Although Boz had never visited St Ives, I’d holidayed there the previous year. You turn a corner and there it is before you, golden beaches, turquoise sea and a cluster of fishermen’s cottages. ‘It’s the Big Sur of the West Country,’ I told Boz.

During the winter we would talk for hours about St Ives and what we would do. ‘There’s something miraculous about the light there. The crystal-clear Atlantic air has a luminosity that makes the atmosphere sparkle. It’s a little bit arty, a little bit existential. Even the fishermen are painters.’

We’d hang out in cafes reading Jean-Paul Sartre and Kafka. If I caught the creative vibe I thought I might even knock up some oil paintings myself. Maybe write some poetry or scribble a few short stories.

‘There’s some weird stuff going on. There’s this artist who has her town garden filled with monolithic sculptures. Her old man’s a painter as well - does brown cubist stuff. He’s a drinking buddy of Picasso, apparently. There’s the lighthouse that Virginia Woolf wrote about, you can see it across the bay. And D.H. Lawrence hung out a couple of miles along the coast. The walk through the ancient landscape along the coffin path to Zennor is like going on a spiritual journey. The old straight track was used by funeral processions to carry their dead to the parish church from the remote outlying farms. You can feel the primeval vibe, it’s so strong it’s tangible.’

I know Boz feared St Ives would be like other West Country seaside towns: a broken-down dump. He was also concerned that there would be too many soft southerners. ‘It’s cosmopolitan, there are people from the Midlands there as well,’ I said, ‘and they make Cornish pasties in three different sizes.’

Over the weeks I found my descriptions of St Ives becoming increasingly vivid.

‘There’ll be parties on the beaches. Wild dancing round driftwood fires. Free love, gorgeous bohemian chicks who’ll take you behind the rocks for a head job. And in every pub hippies rub shoulders with crusty old fishermen; there’s always some foot stomping Cornubian playing a fiddle.’

‘And that’s a good thing?’ Boz asked.

‘There’s a little hut on the cliff where you can watch for shoals of pilchards. At the right time of year you can swim with them. Have you ever swum with pilchards, Boz? You’ve got to swim with the pilchards. It’s a life-changing experience. You’re at one with nature. Buoyed up by thousands of these beautiful fishes, it’s like floating on mercury.’

‘Have you done this Felix?’

‘No, but I intend to. This summer.’ Boz appeared excited by this. ‘Boz, are you up for it?’

‘Sounds alright to me.’

I saved the best bit for last. ‘I haven’t checked this out yet, but I reckon we could probably sign on while we’re there.’

TWO

So that was it. We were going to stay in a little house behind the beach in St Ives. We would crash on the golden sand by day and drink, smoke and shag by night. We'd probably shag in the day as well. Our summer plans were sorted. Sorted, that is, until I spoke to Gloria.

Eurorail?' Gloria's blue eyes were wide with excitement. 'You're Eurorailing?'

'That's exactly what I'm doing,' I felt bad saying this, but a summer Eurorailing was suddenly a much better idea than going to St Ives.

'Felix, why didn't you tell me this before?'

'It didn't seem important.'

'It could be important. Where are you going?'

'Europe. By rail!' I laughed.

'But where, Felix? Europe. It's a big place.'

'All over.' I looked at her and guessed. 'South.'

Her face lit up. 'That's brilliant! My friend Blodwyn and I are going south. And we're going to make a detour. We're going to Crete. It'll cost more but it'll be worth it. There's this place on Crete called...'

I was enjoying this. 'Don't tell me, it's called...'

'Matala!' Gloria said.

'You've spoilt it, I wanted to guess. But what a coincidence. You won't believe this, but that's exactly what I was going to say. Matala.'

'The Matala with the caves?' Gloria asked.

'Yes, with the caves.' I once remember looking at a picture of troglodytes living in white cones of rock. Was that Matala? Was that Crete?

‘They all live in the caves,’ Gloria sighed. ‘We’re going to live in a cave and be self-sufficient.’

‘Yes! Caves in white conical hillocks.’

‘And they wear little white conical hats,’ Gloria added.

We were both laughing. I loved Gloria’s scatty humour.

But then Gloria stopped giggling and a frown wrinkled her enchanting forehead. ‘Felix, I don’t think the caves are in white conical hillocks.’

‘No,’ I said, ‘and I don’t think they wear white conical hats either.’ I must have been thinking of somewhere else. ‘But they ought to!’

‘Yes they ought to!’ agreed Gloria. I leant over and hugged her. This was heaven. And then we laughed some more.

Ten minutes ago Eurorail had never even crossed my mind. But now Boz and I were going to travel round Europe and live in a cave - in a white conical hillock or not - with the hottest, sexiest babe in town. Yabba dabba doo.

I was sure Boz would understand and, who knows, maybe he’d get it on with Blodwyn?

*

I watched traffic lights shining through thin nylon curtains. I didn’t know what time it was. Boz was slumped with his arm hanging loosely over the side of his chair, his mouth slightly agape. I reckoned this was as good a time as any to update him on our holiday schedule.

‘Boz, we’ve got a change of plan.’

I waited but there was no reaction.

I said it a louder. ‘BOZ, WE’VE GOT A CHANGE OF PLAN.’

‘Uh.’ Boz stirred. A muscle in his cheek twitched. ‘No need to shout,’ he muttered.

‘I thought you were asleep.’

‘I heard you. We’ve got a change of plan.’

‘Yeah. Good news. It’s all coming together.’

‘What good news?’

‘We’re going to live in a cave.’

‘I didn’t think there were any caves in St Ives.’

‘We’re going somewhere much better than St Ives?’

‘Where? Morecambe?’

He could be such a prick. This was like talking to Benny from *Crossroads*.

‘No, not Morecambe. We’re going to stay with some chicks...’

‘Yeah?’ Boz sounded interested. His eyes flickered open - but then closed again.

‘...in Crete.’

‘That’s a long way from St Ives.’

‘We’re not going to St Ives.’

‘Oh.’ Silence. I was losing him. I picked up a dirty fork from the dinner plate on the floor by his chair. Maybe I could gently stab him. Too late. Boz’s jaw had slackened and he was breathing heavily as if he was asleep.

I drew closer and shouted in Boz’s ear. ‘Crete, it’s a big Greek island. We’re going to hang out in Crete. With a couple of chicks.’

‘Which chicks?’ Boz was still conscious. I put the fork down.

‘Gloria and Blodwyn.’

‘Blodwyn’s a bitch.’

‘She comes from Lancashire.’

‘She’s a liability,’ Boz mumbled.

‘You don’t know Blodwyn.’

‘I do. She stole a frozen duck from Fine Fare. I hate her.’

‘That’s a bit harsh. We all make mistakes.’

‘How do you forget to pay for a frozen duck?’

‘Blodwyn’s a free spirit. And they have moussaka in Greece. It’s a Greek pie.’

‘I know what moussaka is. It’s not a pie.’

‘It’s a kind of pie.’

‘What about the pilchards?’

I thought it best to ignore this. ‘It’s going to be an adventure. You and I, on the road. Go with the flow. We’re going to take hospitality

where we find it. Freaks and Greeks. No hurry. No worry. Are you up for it, Boz?’

Boz was silent. I reckon we’d gone as far as we could. Well, at least he hadn’t said ‘no’.

It had been a long night. I could hear birds twittering outside, and the *wrrrr* of a milkfloat. I was suddenly feeling hungry. ‘I’ve got to go, I need some ice cream,’ I said, struggling to stand up. I knocked a bottle off the table and onto the carpet. ‘Sorry about that. Red wine. It was almost empty.’

For a moment I couldn’t find the door handle.

I could hear Boz mutter. ‘I’ve got my own plan, Felix. There’s something I want to check out on our travels. You’re not the only guy who knows about art and culture and all that shit.’

I think he was talking in his sleep. I opened the door and stumbled out.

I hoped Boz would remember our conversation when he woke. I was sorry after all I’d said that Boz wouldn’t be cavorting with fishes this summer. To make up for his disappointment I felt duty bound to arrange some other memorable experience. I owed him that. I needed to find out the sort of pies we might come across on our travels. I was surprised he didn’t like Blodwyn, especially as she came from Lancashire. I’d been hoping she could surprise him with a trick behind the rocks in Matala. I’d have to come up with something else.

I lurched along the road in the grey of the early morning. A street light clicked out as I walked past. I wondered what time the corner shop opened. It was too late to go to bed now.

*

Meanwhile, Plank told me some surprising and unwelcome news.

‘Yeah, I’m heading to this place in Greece,’ he said. ‘It’s the end of the road, the edge of Europe. Next stop Africa. Hippie Shangri-La.’

There's old caves there that the freaks live in. Most people walk about starkers. Free love. Makes Sodom and Gomorrah look like a chimp's tea party.'

I had an uneasy feeling about this.

'Sounds cool,' I said. 'Where is it?'

Plank continued. 'Do you know the real coincidence? That little chick, that angel with big tits Gloria, well, she told me she's heading that way as well. She said it with a glint in her eye. With any luck our visits will coincide and who knows we could well have ourselves a love in.'

I could feel my gut tighten.

'Anything wrong, Felix? You look a bit tense.'

I was rapidly going off Plank. We'd been introduced at a party a few months before and although I hardly knew him, whenever we met he would greet me like an old friend. At first he had seemed nice enough, but on further acquaintance his veneer of charm wore thin. I was particularly concerned by his dated, and now unacceptable, attitude to women.

'I'm not tense,' I snapped. 'So what's this place called?'

'I don't know... it's Sex-on-Sea as far as I'm concerned.'

'Yeah, but what's its real name?'

'It's on Crete, Malta or something.'

'Matala?' I suggested.

'Yeah, something like that. Matala. AKA Sex-on-Sea.' Plank gave a grotesque primeval howl; anthropologists would recognise this lascivious cry as being similar to the howl generated by a cave man as he clubbed some poor maiden unconscious prior to non-consensual sex.

'Like Bexhill-on-Sea then,' I added lamely, trying to ignore his horrible outburst, 'but without the De La Warr Pavilion.'

'I wouldn't know about that.'

'That's a coincidence, because that's where I'm going.'

'Far out! We're going to have a gas. You, me and little miss love bumps, we're all going to Matala.'

I didn't like Plank calling Gloria that.

Plank continued, 'I've got an idea, we could travel together. We'd have a great time.'

'That might be difficult. I'm going with Boz.'

'You're going with Boz? Boz doesn't travel. He's never been further south than Watford Gap. People don't understand his Lancashire accent.'

'He told me he once met someone from Brittany and they could understand each other perfectly. They were both speaking the same dialect.'

'So people from Bolton are Celts?'

'Yeah, maybe.'

'Forget Boz. Just you and me. We'll be like Jack Kerouac and Neil Cassady. On the road.'

'Two people hitching together is difficult, three people is impossible.'

'Ditch Boz. He doesn't want to go anyway.'

'He does. Boz and I have been planning this for ages. We're going to visit art galleries and museums.'

'You pretentious git. Anyway, that's not what Boz told me. He said he was going to Cornwall to swim with the mackerel.'

'Boz is my best mate. I couldn't dump him. Anyway it was pilchards.'

'It's up to you. But don't say I didn't warn you.'

'Warn me about what?'

'I can tell you now Boz will be excess baggage, you'll have to carry him. He's a dead weight.'

'He's got a smattering of the lingo.'

'You don't need languages for travelling! That's a fallacy about going abroad.'

'It helps.'

'The language of love is what I'm going to use. C'mon Felix, let's be honest. Basically, Boz is a bag of shite.' Plank sniggered. 'A bag of shite with arms and legs.'

‘Hey! He’s my mate. You can’t say things like that about my mate.’

Plank shrugged his shoulders. ‘Okay then. I’ll make my own way to Matala. I’ll see you there, Felix. Unless you get arrested on the way for looking like a freak.’

‘You sound just like my old man.’

He punched me on the shoulder in what was meant to be a friendly manner. ‘Last one there’s a loser.’

THREE

Let me tell you about the first time I met Gloria. It was when I was at University. We were in the students' union. She was sitting on a low-slung chip-greased sofa in the George Davis is Innocent Okay Bar. I couldn't stop looking at her. She had blonde shoulder length hair, slightly wavy. I sat opposite her. Those big eyes. Her pale luminous face and those big denim blue eyes, accentuated by smudges of mascara. Even when I looked away, I was aware of her in the corner of my eye. She was like a film star from a silent movie. I wanted to rescue her from the tracks of an on-coming train. At the top of her notebook, she had written in a rounded female hand and underlined the word 'Cunt'. She saw me looking at her doodled obscenity and smiled unapologetically.

No, now I think about it, this wasn't the first time I'd seen Gloria. I was at a party a few weeks before sitting crossed legged in a smoky room full of stoned strangers. Some dude had pointed her out and told me something interesting about her. I remember thinking, how remarkable. The thing is, I was so out of my head that the next day I couldn't for the life of me recall what it was. Like the contents of a once vivid dream, the details had vanished into white space. It was so annoying.

*

Boz and I were listening to *Revolver*.

'So tell me, how exactly are we going to get to Crete?' asked Boz.

As yet, I wasn't clear about our itinerary. I was aware of a little problem: there was a big blob of communist countries in Eastern Europe that we would have to circumnavigate.

'Easy, Eurorail. And ferry. We may have to hitch as well.'

'Yeah, but what's the route?'

'Look, I've got a map.'

The previous Christmas my Grandmother had given me a pocket diary. With its leatherette cover and gilt-edged pages it was an attractive present, but what use did I have for a diary? It also contained several pages of information I could never envisage consulting: Imperial to Metric conversion tables; a world temperature guide; international shoe size comparisons; and a chart indicating time zones. More handy, however, was a map of Europe spread over two pages.

When examining the map I was shocked to realise how little I knew about Europe. I'd enjoyed geography at school but we only studied far away continents like South America and Australia. Sure, I knew where the three Guyanas were and could recite the names of the six states of Australia. But what use was that?

'It's a small map,' Boz said. 'We need a bigger map to plan properly.'

'We've got to keep things flexible. Neil Cassady didn't have a map as he gunned the Hudson getting his kicks along Route 66. We need to make space for the unexpected. We might stumble across a bar which it is imperative to check out. And things might develop, and lead to another bar. And maybe a club. And then back somewhere else. And then we might wake up by a beach with a beautiful girl. You can't put that sort of stuff into a schedule. We've got to build in a flexibility factor. Maps are for straights.'

'I understand all that. But what's the route?'

'Okay, I think this is what we need to do: Paris, Venice, down the Adriatic, round to Athens and then jump a ferry to Crete. It's a bit of a roundabout route but the communist countries get in the way. To enter those we'd need visas, and visas cost money. Basically, we just keep

heading south and east until we hit the sea. Man, I'm excited just thinking about it.'

Boz gave me a questioning look. 'Isn't Yugoslavia communist?' he asked.

'Yeah, but I don't think they're aligned with the Soviets. They're liberal, they have nudist beaches.'

'What about this country here?' Boz pointed to a little black spot abbreviated to 'Alb'. 'I've read about Albania,' he said, 'they've got an extreme dictator; there are labour camps in every town and they've outlawed religion. The president, Enver Hoxha, is so totalitarian even Stalin thought he was too hardcore.'

'I've never heard of him. Albania's a tiny country; I don't think we need to worry about Albania.'

I didn't want to plan too much. Apart from meeting Gloria in Matala I wanted this trip to be spontaneous. 'We don't want to get hung up on the details. Let's see how it goes. And of course on the way we'll come across some interesting pies.'

'So where are we going to stay?'

'We'll camp. We'll buy tents and we'll camp. The remoter the place, the easier it is to find somewhere.'

'That's certainly not my experience of the Yorkshire Dales.'

'You'll see, we'll be fine.'

'But what about the languages? I can only speak a smattering of French and German.'

'Questions, questions, questions! Take it easy. We'll cope just fine. Body language is what we're going to use. That's how we'll communicate. Everybody speaks body language, it's international.'

'Okay. So we know how we're going to get there and we know where we're going to sleep. There is still one not so unimportant thing we need to talk about. Namely, we've got no money.'

I was getting bored by Boz's almost obsessive attention to detail. Where I saw a groove, Boz would always see hassles.

'You are such a downer,' I said.

'I think you mean realist.'

‘Well, as it happens, I have already thought about this.’

A couple of days before I had thumbed through a volume in W.H.Smith called *Work Your Way Round the World*. It had some useful suggestions.

‘We could work our passage. There’s lots of jobs you can do abroad: au pair, underwater modelling, chalet assistant.’

‘Yeah, those are all jobs that we won’t be doing. Those are girls’ jobs.’

‘Steady. Germaine Greer would have you strung up by the nuts if she heard you say that.’

‘Look, we’re the disadvantaged gender here.’

‘Maybe those aren’t the best examples. We could do bar work, pick grapes. Europe’s cheap. The weather’s good, we won’t need much dosh.’

Of course there were other, more hardcore, ways of raising money that didn’t come within the scope of *Work Your Way Round the World*. I’d recently read in *OZ* magazine about the international trafficking of blood, spare organs and body parts. While I didn’t feel I had any inessential organs or superfluous body parts, I did think if the going got tough I could spare a few pints of blood. You could get a tenner a bottle in Turkey. That was a week’s money. I wondered how frequently I could donate. Every week? If so, our financial problems were sorted.

‘If the going gets tough we could sell our blood.’

Boz jerked upright in his chair. ‘Whoa! Heavy! Where did that come from? I don’t like the sound of that. I don’t like the sound of that at all.’

‘I didn’t realise you were so squeamish.’

‘I’m not.’

‘We’ll only give a little blood.’

‘The amount isn’t the issue - it’s what goes with it. Rusty needles, hepatitis, stuff like that.’

‘Some people sell their kidneys.’

'I'm not selling any organs just for a holiday. Look Felix, why don't we forget about all this and go to St Ives. It's so much simpler. We can sign on and keep our blood.'

It was clear that I needed to get Boz more emotionally engaged in this trip. I needed to get him involved in the planning process.

'Okay so what's your answer? There's got to be a way. We need to do a bit of lateral thinking.'

We were both silent for a while. I looked at Boz expectantly. It was his turn to come up with something; so far I'd done all the hard work.

'Roll another one. I can't think straight,' he said.

Eventually Boz cleared his throat and said: 'Can't you borrow some money? You must have some connections; your family are well off. In fact, you could borrow money for both of us.'

'I'll ignore that.'

Boz's unhelpful attitude was beginning to depress me. I studied Klaus Voorman's psychedelic drawing of the Beatles and then turned over the LP cover. *Taxman!* I had a flash of inspiration.

'I've got it. It's obvious.'

'What?'

'It's under our noses.'

'Yeah? I haven't seen it.'

'We're going to have to get a job.'

'Isn't that what we're discussing?'

'Yeah, but what I'm thinking about is a real job, a proper job, here, in Bristol.'

'Oh a real job. Proper, nine to five job, in Bristol?'

'Yeah, in the tax office or something. They've always got vacancies in the tax office.'

Boz seemed shocked. I could hear him involuntarily drawing in his breath. For a moment I thought he was hyperventilating.

'Felix, I'm astounded that you've come up with such an idea. I don't want to become a straight and have my soul sucked out of me.'

'Radical situations require radical solutions.'

‘But the tax office? Wear a shirt and tie. Push a pen. Work in silence. Only have a piss when you are allowed to. Is that what you’re proposing?’

‘Just for a while.’

FOUR

I'd had to take a year out from University. Initially I'd chosen to study sociology as it seemed a good way of delaying any serious decisions about my future. But after giving the course a try for a couple of terms it became clear that even sociology didn't fit my requirements. I found the discipline of study too restrictive for my free-thinking mind. I was looking for something a bit more spontaneous and was keen to experience the new progressive 'free learning approach' to education, whereby you learnt what you wanted when you wanted. I yearned to cut through all the educational bullshit of formal lectures at 9.00 am and three-thousand word essays churned out every month. I was interested in the sharing of knowledge, not just having it pumped down my throat. The university timetable was so old fashioned. It shouldn't have been like this in the age of the 'sit-in'. If we were able to storm the administration building, squirt glue in the locks and set up a disco in the vice-chancellor's committee room as a reaction to the perceived mal-treatment of, and discrimination against, Stan the porter's pet bull mastiff, who had been banned from the campus for running amok after being fed LSD by some misguided student; surely we could sort out the curriculum? I found myself thinking that I didn't want to be complicit in supporting such a reactionary establishment. So I took a year's sabbatical to give me time to reflect. It was a difficult decision as it meant renouncing my generous student grant, but sometimes you have to be true to your principles. I promised Mum and Dad that after twelve months I'd have my future plans sorted.

Let's face it. I had no idea what to do with my life, let alone my career. At school I had asked the careers adviser what I should do?