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Took Mr. Alphonso to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art – he had seen mention of an exhibition in the newspaper called ‘Hung Like A Horse’, and had assumed, from the title and location, that this was a wholly equestrian art event. I wasn’t so sure myself, but we went anyway. When we got there, we discovered that it was the new collection by Jeff Koons, the Pop/Kitsch artist, and I feared the worst, and tried to dissuade Mr. A from entering. But he pointed to the reassuring portrait of ‘Quicklime’ at the entrance to the exhibit, a somewhat glossy and slick canvas in the style of Stubbs; I pointed out that the horse seemed to have five legs, but Mr. A said that when you grew up with animals, you got used to that sort of thing...we proceeded inside. We were greeted by rows of ceramic phalluses, shiny and lovingly crafted, of varying hues and curvatures, but all, I might say, on the large side. Mr. A looked confused, and asked if they were supposed to be horse appendages, in which case he had seen considerably larger in his time. I said that I thought they were human representations, possibly cast from life, and at this, he seemed amused, gave a grunt and said, “Impresionante!” Other parts of the exhibit featured the mostly nude form of Mr. Koon’s wife, La Cicciolina, romping in endless poses with phalli from her own personal collection. Mr. A laughed his way through most of this, explaining that in his career in Hollywood, he had seen just about everything; but he was very taken with an installation called ‘Porn Flakes’ – a realistic rendering of a breakfast nook, with a counter and two bar stools; on the counter, a bowl, a spoon, a carton of milk, and a packet of ‘Porn Flakes’; in the bowl, some of the cereal itself, tiny breakfast flake-sized sculptures of dildos, and I suppose the ones that looked like Cheerios were meant to be the female equivalent; and little tiny sculptures of Mrs.

Koons, inevitably in the altogether, showing fine detail. Mr. A inquired in the gift shop where he could get some of these, and was disappointed to learn that they were not edible, but made of plaster.

I have decided the best way to neutralize the impact of the Governor at soccer games is to sign him up and give him a role; I have made him assistant coach, government duties permitting; and can now officially order him to take superfluous drills in obscure corners of the field. At our most recent practice, I gave him three of our punier players, and told him to lead them off into the deep rough and work on their leg strength. All was peace and heavenly joy for thirty minutes. We then had a scrimmage – first team against the reserves, parents, and coaches – and I put Arnold as sweeper, and one of his security men in goal. I will long treasure the sight of the CIA operative, earpiece still in place, dark jacket removed and carefully hung on the goalpost, but gun still firmly in shoulder holster, making a commendable diving save at the feet of young Gabe Silver, our star left-winger. Arnie himself was less impressive; apparently a good player in his youth, his physique was now such that it threatened to topple him every time he kicked the ball or changed direction. I suppose it was sheer bulk and top-heaviness; soccer demands a lot of twisting and turning, and a ballet-like agility, not to mention the fitness to run for ninety minutes; being able to stroll through a barn door carrying three injured platoon-mates doesn't really cut it. Here were a couple of body-builders (Georgio, our pool man, and an old chum of Arnold's, was also along at practice), fit and highly tuned in their own way, falling all over themselves in pursuit of fast, flexible, motivated kids. I was reminded of our pet weasels, Spats, Rat Fink and Little Caesar, taking on the neighbour's pair of English bulldogs. I asked Arnold, just who was running the State up in Sacramento while he was goofing off playing soccer? He said, "Oh, Maria, of course (referring to his wife) - she really runs things— she wears the pants anyway, and she has a fantastic political brain, ya?" I then rather riskily, but with no intention of heeding the answer, asked him, now that he was on the coaching staff, how was I doing as coach, and did he have any suggestions? Well, he said, I was doing okay, but shouldn't we play three centre backs and two wing backs? And Wolfie preferred to be pushed a little further forward. I said I would try it very next game. To my shock, Arnold then asked me,

with a wink that implied that my opinion was crap anyway, how I thought he was doing as Governor, and did I have any suggestions? After a pause to recover my breath, (and wipe the smirk off my face, for I was rather excited to be asked), I said I thought he had to follow in the great tradition of backsliding politicians (“Read my lips”) and go back on his electoral promises – after all, everybody else did. I said he had to raise taxes, and the way the Brits always got away with it was to tax peoples’ addictions, i.e. tobacco and booze. And couldn’t he legalize marijuana? Just think of the tax revenue! He promised to think about it.

Witherstock is certainly doing a wonderful job as housekeeper – the place is as bright and shiny as a new pin, and once you get used to her system of things, then it only takes thirty minutes or so to find anything. I dropped in on her back at the guesthouse to see how she’s settling in, and we had a good chat about Britain as it was in the sixties. Mavis had given her one of her candles in the ‘My Old Flame’ series, and she was burning it now. This one was called ‘Whitely’s Department Store’, an evocation of the old establishment in Westbourne Grove, and I must say, it hit the nail on the head. That cloying potpourri of the perfume and make-up departments, the dry, thick smell of haberdashery and clothing, and the faint whiff of friction from the centralized cash system, with its vacuum tubes and overhead cables. I deduce Witherstock is not a wholly happy bunny. She has a small, square, traditional suitcase with her initials engraved, which looks ancient, containing her few clothes; she then has a huge steamer trunk, also ancient, which is stuffed with memorabilia, mostly of her late fiancé. She seems to have turned him into an icon to be worshipped, as some worship Elvis. My eye happened to alight on a college scarf draped around a landscape painting, and I chanced to remark that it looked familiar – one of the Cambridge Colleges? Yes, replied Witherstock, King’s, where her beloved Cedric had received a First in Political Science. Would I like to touch it? Indeed, she would be thrilled if, on occasion, I wore it, to perpetuate his memory. I politely declined, saying that the honour was too great, not worthy, allergic to stripes, etc. She then fished around in the trunk for several minutes, and emerged with a cricket bat, and handed it to me. This, she said with whispered reverence, was the bat with which Cedric had scored a plucky fifty not out against the

all-powerful West Indian touring side in nineteen-sixty-whatever, playing for Cambridge at Fenner's. Would I like to hold it? I was starting to get a bit spooked by all of this, but I gingerly accepted the bat, and took a couple of practice swings, noting the light weight and excellent balance. I foolishly said that I thought it was a fine bat, and handed it back, but Witherstock pressed it into my hands and said that I should borrow it for a while, just to keep his memory alive, don't you know. I could see there was no refusing, and I needed to beat a retreat at this point, fearing a little for my sanity, so I religiously grasped the bat and backed out.

Speaking of 'My Old Flame', the range is selling tremendously, and is expanding all the time. The latest line, 'Locker Room' was originally inspired by a Mr., Sheldon, of Croyden, Surrey, who suggested 'Cricket Pavilion' – this concept has now been broadened to include almost every sport, and although the basic ingredients are the same – tons of human sweat, lineaments, muscle rubs various, and bad after shave – the proportions of leather, cotton and synthetics vary, and the boxing version, for instance, (called 'K.O!') is heavy on the disinfectant and fresh blood. A brand new product, 'Ladies Locker Room', is proving very successful with male purchasers, especially those, I suspect, that used to be arrested for sniffing bicycle seats.

After a daring dawn raid on Honourable Number One Son's computer, I have found the perpetrators of the crime of the century, the lantern looters, the statuary stealers. Opening a file entitled Eyesore World Tour, I found it all there – the doctored pictures, names and addresses of accomplices around the world – and in a drawer, a pile of postcards already printed up with exotic locations. Later that day, I summoned the partners in crime into my study – for it was a conspiracy between Honourable Sons numbers One and Three – for an explanation. This was supposed to be a dressing-down, but I was far too amused, and in awe of the skill and resourcefulness of the boys, to have any residual anger. I understood the forging of the pictures, and the process of getting the cards sent, but where was the object in question, and how did they shift the darned thing? The shifting, they said, was easy; they borrowed eight of Honourable Number One Son's pals, and manhandled the thing; they then took me out to the

garden shed, led me into the back – the section with all the stored garden furniture – and there, hidden behind some stacked tables and a couple of market umbrellas – was nothing. It wasn't there. The boys looked at one another in disbelief. This was surely no sham. They seemed genuinely amazed. This, they said, was the spot where they had hidden it, certain that it would not be discovered. They began to back slowly out of the shed, as if in fear of some supernatural force, some dark poltergeist energy that could shift a ton of concrete with its elemental little finger. I was trying to think of more rational possibilities, but when the rational no longer fits the facts, the supernatural becomes the only explanation...

Our newlyweds, Brandi and Keanu, who have been renting Mrs. Wasserman's old place across the street, have now agreed to buy it, have put down a deposit, and have bought gob-loads of furniture to stick in it. Keanu's business seems to be taking off – there is apparently a lack of regulation in the mould laws out here, and Keanu says it's like printing money. And so they have filled their house with the latest of everything – not for them stuffy old antiques – and they invited us to their housewarming party, which was a sight to behold! About seventy-five or a hundred young twenty-and-thirty-somethings, all decked out in the very newest in fashion, were parading around the property. Many, no doubt impressed with Madonna's new look, were sporting powdered wigs and corsets, amusingly juxtaposed with Hawaiian shirts, fetishist leather, Spandex, and Prada handbags; there were other quotes from the eighteenth century– a couple of Goths were wearing knee britches along with leather jackets and piercings, while some favoured the glued-on mole and lead makeup look. The furniture was delightfully witty, but was not really designed to be sat upon, and so people ranged themselves about on the floor, or propped precariously against flimsy lamp standards, bookcases. and the edges of things The very brand-newest craze, I must tell you, is the minuet, which was danced enthusiastically by all, and which the D.J saw fit to inject with a bit more of a dance sensibility, emphasizing the backbeat and hallucinogenic effects. I'm hoping the wig trend will spill over more and more into everyday life; in these sunny climes, an SPF 50 wig could come in handy.