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News From The Road

Like Dr. Who's Tardis, Texas is bigger once you're inside it...and it takes three times longer to leave than to arrive...thirty years ago you knew where you were because everybody wore cowboy hats. Have they all grown ashamed? Monet's Garden at the D.B.G... vital ingredient missing... waterlilies.... what vanity is this? The nun at the airport with the gold ankle chain... Little Sisters of St. Xaviera? Doesn't go with the shaved head and bound breasts...

News From Home

More dramas over the house painting – Mr. Alphonso called again to express his displeasure at our house colour....I didn't know that the painters had started on the final coat, so I repaired next door to Mr.A's house to see it from his perspective. I must say I was truly shocked – what had promised to be a subtle, earthy tone from the 2 inch square sample (“Dream of Tuscany”), now appeared to be that screaming pink I associate with the cover of a Barbara Cartland bodice-ripper. Mr. Alphonso volunteered a metaphor involving a cow's reproductive organs, which I found somewhat shocking coming from an 80-year-old...I hurried back home, to have a timely word with Akbar, our painter. Now I must say that I partly blame Akbar for getting us into this pickle - he has been less than forthcoming with the professional advice. “You're the boss” is his

favourite phrase, except of course for “Traffic very bad this morning”. So when he asked me if that was the final choice for house colour, and I said, Well, what do you think, he naturally replied, “you’re the boss”. And I swear that every time he says it, his three boys give a little smirk and nudge each other, just to further make me feel insecure. ...every decision seems to be an initiative test, which I am bound to fail, thus affirming the professional greatness of the Akbar family. We went back to the paint shop and selected another colour (“Burnt Scone” – originally rejected on name alone) and we now seem to be back on course, if a day behind, and Akbar seems to be whistling more than usual, whizzing along with the pencil roller. Mr. Hashimoto, our gardener, and Georgio, our pool man, have both been complaining about the flakes of burnt house paint being blown about everywhere, making their poor tortured lives a little more onerous...I had better tell you about Georgio...he’s from the Czech Republic, lived in America for thirty years, still having trouble with articles, definite and indefinite, and always refers to himself as Georgio (maybe Georgiu?). A typical sentence: “Paint land in pool, very bad, ay-yay, Georgio fix, paint come again, no time for this, big trouble for Georgio”, etc. All very Tarzan, and in fact he is still a bit of a Johnny Weissmuller, being, so he claims, a former Mr. Czechoslovakia, and hanging out at Gold’s Gym with Sly and Arnie. It’s Georgio’s wife, Martina, however, who really wears the trousers – she owns the apartment building where they live, and seems to have an Indian sign over him, leaving him a rather sad and de-machoed figure, trapped in the endless cycle of clogged filters and chlorine; or perhaps it’s a case of the paranoid man who originally built the fortress of bulging muscles to hide behind, re-emerging as the body shrinks and mortality beckons. It’s good to catch Georgio occasionally in his frail moments, though, as he’s liable to come out with an unexpectedly lucid piece of folk wisdom – his family were farmers, and he has a fund of agricultural gems that can lighten up a grey day. For instance...I was asking him what I would need to do to build up my lats, or pecs, or obliques, or whatever. He said, “Much work, much work, every day, long time. My father say, for Christmas, fatten up goose but not scarecrow”. He laughed rather heartily at this, as he walked away shaking his head. I too walked away shaking my head, somewhat confused and deflated. More anon.

