

## News From Home 5

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Awoken at 1:30AM by the telephone. It's Georgio, saying that Martina has kicked him out, and he doesn't have anywhere to stay, and he's always considered me to be one of his greatest friends, and could he crash in my guest house, just for a couple of days, you understand, just till he can patch things up. Through several veils of sleep, one disquieting word beams hard and fast directly into my consciousness like a laser onto a Slade CD – Georgio thinks I'm his friend. How on earth did he get that impression? Perhaps I've been feeling too sorry for him lately, taking time to say hello, asking him dumb questions about weightlifting and the Muscle Beach social whirl – really anything to lighten the mood when this prince of pouting poolmen is around. Must still be three-quarters asleep, because I tell him he can come over, let himself in, and I'll deal with him in the morning. Next day, while Georgio is up early and off on his rounds, I ruminate on my folly. I suppose I was stupidly flattered to hear him say I was his friend – If you knew Georgio, you would consider him incapable of any subtlety, including lying, or even exaggeration. Still, only for a couple of days....

Caught Mavis the other night almost in the act – returned home unexpectedly early from seeing 'Mama Mia!' – couldn't dine afterwards due to a tummy upset from an earlier encounter with a dubious kebab– to find her and her chap on the couch, retreating rapidly from the precipice of union, and throwing on a few flimsy garments to cover their

more sensational attributes. Mavis' poor sense of time and place are really her only drawbacks – otherwise she is a great asset as child-and/or zoo-keeper (not much difference). Her boyfriend, name of Tailbone, didn't have much sense of time and place either – instead of being embarrassed and beating it humbly, he insisted on sticking around for some post-tumescent bonhomie. What is it about men with one name – Sting, Bono, Edge, Vangelis, Prince, etc? “Oh, it's just an old nickname from school”, they insist, as if their egos had nothing to do with it – frankly you have to be a bit of a twat to go along with it, I should say. Tailbone definitely fits the profile, and was probably heading for a fine career in heavy metal when the audience dissolved. He's currently a movie extra, therefore an actor, therefore in showbiz, etc. As these things are often measured in self-obsession alone, he may be in for a big break. After he finally, finally left, I told Mavis that this sort of thing wasn't on, kids might wake up, stains on the sofa, betrayal of trust and all that. She swore that he'd taken advantage of her, had her half naked before she knew it, and then started to go into details the like of which were too much for my Presbyterian upbringing, and I shrank and withdrew (echoing but not duplicating the activities of Mr. Tailbone).

Spent a while commiserating with Georgio, and then I had an idea – if he was a Slovakian man of steel, couldn't he lift a modest concrete Japanese shrine-thing, and haul it to the nearest pick-up truck? I took him over to the oriental section of the garden, and pointed out the offending object. With neither grimace nor grunt, he had the thing up in the air, and was almost twirling it around in a second. I told him this was not the moment; under cover of darkness we would sneak back and remove the eyesore, and blame it on the raccoons, or thieves, or something – why in England it's the height of fashion to have one's statuary pinched. Georgio smiled for the first time since his exile –I think he enjoys the skullduggery of it all.

I'm still worried about Mr. Alphonso's love of uniforms – he's thinking of having his house repainted, and he told me his colour of choice was that smart grey-green worn by workers on the German railways. Now I must say, as colours go, that is a spiffy look for a ticket inspector, but on the side of a house, well – I feel myself an expert now on

house painting, having changed my mind so many times, and I tried to talk him into something a little more Mediterranean – but he's having none of it, and is planning to get Akbar and the boys in to do the job. Much as I resented Akbar's attitude, I must say he did a noteworthy job, very meticulous, and I did recommend him. Speaking of railways, when they tried the self-same uniforms on British Rail, the employees looked as scruffy as ever – it obviously takes attitude to achieve the look...

Mavis has taught the African Grey Parrot to say "Turned out nice again, 'ent it?" in proper George Formby tones, to further confuse it's sense of worth and identity, and our sense of sanity. The house next door is vacant, and we're looking into leasing some garden space to keep the animals in. Meanwhile, Mavis is working wonders with the weasels, (Rat Fink, Spats, and Little Caesar) who look on her as Mother now. The energy of three weasels could probably run a small country the size of Lichtenstein, say, if properly harnessed (latest wheel technology) – so Mavis taking them for a walk on leashes is a bit like uncorking a tornado – see dogs flee, au pairs climb trees to safety, pensioners lie on the ground and wait for the end. Ever see a cat scratch its head in confusion? Introduce it to a weasel. Mr. Alphonso can't understand why we have a million animals but no horse, and he may have a point – you only see a saddle on a weasel in the most far-fetched children's literature – and weasels don't make you piles of money by winning the Grand National. There's still time....