

Feeling Jung Again

Nowadays there seems to be a festival for everything and, indeed, everybody. No matter how small a group, how obscure a following, how embarrassing an addiction, they all get their moment of glory, their ten minutes in the sun. And so it was just last week with the celebration of the 'mid life crisis' festival, held in the Bas Var.

The participants were mainly middle aged professionals, doctors, dentists and lawyers, almost all of them overweight and sporting tattoos and facial hair, that might or might not have been their own. They cruised around St Tropez and its hinterland of villages, slowly, sedately and noisily, on their oversized and over priced 'Hogs'; better known to the uninitiated as Harley Davidsons.

This touring Bravade were constantly uncertain as to whether they were the animals or the audience, they travelled in groups ranging from half a dozen to thirty or forty, and even on these hot days they wore their tell tale leather jackets announcing that they were members of this chapter or that.

The only one to raise a smile to my lips was a T-shirt bearing the inscription "If you can read this, then the bitch has fallen off." I had seen it before but I was glad of any relief.

Later that week, I found myself at a dinner party and the bow tied gentleman I was sitting opposite at the table turned out to be a psychiatrist. I posed the mid- life crisis question to him; he looked at me, smiled, and announced that he was a follower of Jung.

"Jung," said my new friend, "propounded that for the first part of a man's (and woman's) life, they are climbing a mountain and all they can see is the distant peak. As they get closer their sense of triumph and invincibility increases but when they reach the summit all they can see is a slope down, and at the bottom of it, a small white cross with their name on it." - "This is the moment that they try to scramble back into their youth, or in this case onto their Harley Davidsons"

"Jung had it so right" he continued, "had it been that other guy, the explanation would have had something to do with breasts".

Perhaps, I thought to myself, I could open up my soul to this man, perhaps he could help me, after all I can't discuss this sort of thing with my wife, she will only think it has something to do with breasts.

I set off, my knees trembling below the table; I stumbled and stuttered but eventually was able to explain my current condition “exacerbated mid-day crisis” syndrome.

He smiled a snarley smile: I went on about how my increasing insecurity to find somewhere to provide me with the necessary sustenance at lunchtime had led me to this embarrassing situation.

Of late, I was frequently to be found lurking, in a shameful way, around building sites and as the 12 o'clock bell went off I would crouch behind some bins and wait until a suitable mark appeared, usually a plumber, and then I would follow him to his lunching destination.

My theory was, I explained, that French plumbers, unlike their Polish counterparts, do not take sandwiches to work. They are the aristocrats of the building trades and with the prices that they charge they can, and do, take their lunch seated in an appropriate restaurant which has, necessarily, to provide both good food and good value.

My first ‘outing’ had taken place in St Maxime; I could not take the chance of being spotted too close to home, I wore a cap pulled down over my face. The plumber I chose came from a nice middle class site that was a renovation job and as he emerged, Knight-like, from the gloom of the site, he set off briskly, with his mate in tow, and quickly led me to a restaurant in the middle of town near the covered market; a restaurant called La Derire.

He and his chum were greeted volubly, old customers obviously. I snuck to a table at the back but within sight of them, after all, I needed to know what they ordered.

There is a small menu here and this day the choices included *Pieds de Porc* and *Tete de Veau*, real French food fit for real French plumbers, and certainly good enough for me. Both dishes, and there were others, were served with good frites and a salad. The carafe wine was just right and the price was even better.

Over the ensuing weeks, I was to be found shamelessly skulking around building sites and brazenly following plumbers, electricians and on one occasion a rather muscular van driver. He led me a merry dance ending up at Trans, at a newly renovated restaurant called Le Moulin de la Gardiole; here the menu is €12.50 and included a *tarte chaude a la tomate* followed by *cotes d’agneau* and a *carpaccio* of fresh fruit for desert. They had an interesting selection of Italian wines, I chose a butch Sicilian; I was in that kind of mood that day.

More recently I trailed a blond tiler to Chez Syndie on the route des Plages in St Tropez, the meal for two including wine was €18.20; I left a €20 note, I might want to

return and they always remember a big tipper.

This was beginning to become addictive, and as I rolled out my embarrassing tale my listener was becoming more and more enrapt. At any moment, I felt, he was going to ask me for the address of a muscular plumber to unblock his pipes. I did not let him; without pausing I went on, pathetically, to attempt to demonstrate the steps I was taking to redress this unnatural past time. I had recently begun to follow women again, and had started this youthful preoccupation with an Air Hostess at Hyeres.

She was long legged, redheaded and wore those high stilettos that are a real trip. She strutted from the airport to an adjacent restaurant called Le Flanajine; unnoticed I crept in behind her. I was at a loss to orientate myself.

This was a bizarre film set, a scene from *Dolce Vita*, a daylight disco, a white leather bordello, Dante would have taken Santa Claus here for a morning reviver and then taken his Ryannair flight to hell.

On the other hand, the *Formule Business*, was €14 for two courses, on this occasion they were a *feuillette de St Jacques* and apple crumble for desert. The *feuillette* performed a miracle; it tasted fresh and full of the flavour of St Jacques, but without apparently having a discernable piece of that delicious shellfish within it. The apple crumble brought a childhood tear to my eye and the full weighted Spanish red wine brought a flush to my cheeks. I was still in this melancholic reverie when my hostess set off for foreign parts. What was I going to do next? Where was all this leading? I reflected on my next move. Who was to be my next victim, how would I choose them and what would happen if I got caught?

I posed these questions, in hushed tones, to my eager listener. He sat up and reached for his professionalism, coughed once and said, or at least I think he said - "Carry on, it is just a Jung man's fantasy, but remember, don't be a Freud. "

Pip. Pip.

Trencherman