



The Roaming Pen... "Loving his fish and chips... and trains... and buses..."

So we've survived the cash crisis that is Christmas, now all we've got to do is pay for it and oh no what's this, Valentine's Day! My suggestion is quite simply to ignore this American import designed to get you to dig even deeper and waste money telling your loved one something he or she should already be well aware of. If you feel that the pressure is too much to resist, avoid flowers, chocolates and restaurants, all wildly over priced on 14th February, fish and chips and a bottle of wine should fit the bill nicely.

What's new in Kemp Town? Well sadly we have to say goodbye to The Swan in Rock Street, after a very brief 12 months this fine looking bar/bistro has closed its doors. We can only hope that the new boys at The Rock Inn will do better. A warm welcome to The Artisan, a new deli in St Georges Road, fantastic bread at an equally fantastic price, but very tasty! Spring is nearly here and it's time to think about holidays and if you're planning on staying in this country beware of the farce that is the train ticketing system. I mentioned this before but it is always worth repeating. We all know that train fares have gone up, a lot, so we need to be aware of how to save money. Everyone knows advance train tickets are much cheaper, but most don't realise you can buy advance tickets the night before or even on the way to the station. Advance fares are available 12 weeks early, simply because National Rail has to publish timetables 12 weeks in advance and train companies usually announce their offers at the same time.

There are more promotional train fares available than people realise. For the ultra-cheap deals you have to know where to look and be flexible. I am assuming that most people have internet access, without it you could spend more than you need. The National Rail site has a full local promotions index which lists all the special offers available. You can still get from London to Birmingham on Virgin for as little as £7.00 each way and for Manchester and Liverpool singles start at just £11.00. Check out Virgin Trains 'Farefinder'

But most commonly we use the Southern service to

Victoria. Regular readers will know that I am a great supporter of Southern's Day Save tickets, but, surprise, they have gone up from £10.00 to £12.00 mere 20% and the group ticket for four is now £24.00. Still they are reasonably good value. They have, however, increased the number of fast trains from two to three an hour. You have to really interrogate websites and ticket offices for the best deals, never believe the first answer. I was recently at Gatwick and overheard a passenger asking for a National Express ticket to London, the sales staff simply told him the cost of a standard ticket when in fact, being clearly over 60, he should have been offered a reduced 'route 60' fare. I mentioned the fact, the sales girl was not pleased. We have an excellent bus service in Brighton, albeit among the most expensive in the country. I am aware thanks to their heavy marketing that you can buy combined bus and train tickets actually from the bus driver. I was travelling in a bus recently when a young man got on and asked the driver for one of these tickets as he was going to London. The driver was helpful and asked whether he wanted Southern or Capital First Connect; they have different prices and of course take a different route through London. The passenger was unsure, so he bought a Southern ticket, then realised that he had made an expensive mistake. The driver could not cancel the ticket and so he was £15.00 out of pocket. Don't forget that you cannot travel on either service without the relevant ticket; if you're on a Thameslink train you must have the correct ticket, even if you are only going to East Croydon and vice versa. Thinking about holidays invariably brightens up the winter months; you may have read elsewhere that we recently took the ferry from Portsmouth to Santander in northern Spain. With the car this wasn't the cheapest option but the new Brittany Ferries ship, the Pont-Aven, is more like a cruise liner, taking 24 hours for the crossing. We were very presently surprised at the comfort and facilities on board.

Keep warm, take it easy and snuggle up with a hot holiday brochure.

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The stars are out - February 2011

SAGITTARIUS (24 Nov - 21 Dec)

Your restless nature has you pawing the ground and sniffing the wind for far-off scents. If your finances are holding you back then go for a cheaper option but go. You won't settle until you do.

CAPRICORN (22 Dec - 20 Jan)

Have you finalised those New Year resolutions yet? Thought not, yet this is a time of greater clarity for Capricorn and you will instinctively know what you need to do - and what needs to end. A new beginning is on the cards.

AQUARIUS (21 Jan - 19 Feb)

I don't usually encourage people to be inactive but this is exactly what you need to do now Aquarius. Rest and relaxation are the order of the day. Put off any non-essential tasks and just hibernate. A flutter on Saturday may be worthwhile.

PISCES (20 Feb - 20 Mar)

Opportunity is knocking at every door right now, isn't it Pisces? Which one to open? Keep your cool and examine all your options before making any decisions. This is not the time for rash choices!

ARIES (21 Mar - 20 April)

Aries are initiators by nature and this is the time to give that trait full rein. You don't need me to tell you that you can achieve what you set your mind to. Start the year as you mean to go on but make sure you have a plan!

TAURUS (21 April - 21 May)

Aim for the stars this month Taurus! You are right to believe that anything is possible because that is how you will make amazing things happen and inspire others. Fridays are well-starred for taking chances.

GEMINI (22 May - 21 June)

Mind you don't let a bit of introspection get you down. Talk to friends who can put some balance back into your perspective and help you plan changes that will be more constructive. A decision left until mid-week will benefit you.

CANCER (22 June - 22 July)

Relationships are highlighted during the phase of the new moon and loved ones could be the cause of significant discussion. You will need to stay positive and level-headed to prevent things getting out of hand. The full Moon on the 19th should see matters resolved.

LEO (23 July - 23 Aug)

Are things not going as smoothly as you would like? Perhaps this really is the time to re-examine your approach to things. A new strategy will fit better with your generous and warm-hearted nature. A communication on Sunday will bring news.

VIRGO (24 Aug - 23 Sept)

Raking over old coals will do you no favours Virgo. This is not the time to give in to your over-critical side. Let go the anchor of the past and move on. A mid-week encounter proves rewarding.

LIBRA (24 Sept - 23 Oct)

Your ruling planet Venus is calling to you to reach for the heavens! New goals are well-starred and with a positive attitude those secret ambitions have success written all over them!

SCORPIO (24 Oct - 23 Nov)

Has your heart been floating around the ceiling recently? Have thoughts of romance filled your head? What are you waiting for? Make contact and see where this phase takes you! Tuesdays are especially propitious for you

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Down the Rabbit Hole

"You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative," sang Johnny Mercer in 1944. A simple piece of advice it seems - to think positively. But within the simplicity of those lyrics is the key to understanding The Law of Attraction, a universal law that, once understood, allegedly brings happiness and success to those who practise it.

The law of attraction has become a buzz-phrase in new age thinking and there are a myriad of websites explaining it and giving tips on how to practise it. I have reservations about the most well-known advertisement for the law of attraction, The Secret. This is the name of a DVD and book made in 2006, which I found overly concerned with financial and material gain. For me, a firm believer in and user of the law of attraction, consciousness, joy, health and love are the things which I want to be abundant in my life, not holiday homes.

Here is my understanding of the basics:

Controlling attention

Our focus of attention is hugely important. Whatever it is fixed upon shows up more and more in our lives. If we focus with appreciation on all the good things about our lives, the good things will strengthen and amass. If we always think

about all the bad things and what is missing, we will perpetuate a reality we are unhappy with.

Creating your own reality

As many believe, everything around us is illusory, so there is nothing wrong with thinking thoughts that might at first seem delusional. For example, if you feel miserable you can guide your thoughts and attention towards things to be joyful about and joy will begin to become your reality. 'Pretending' to be happy might sound simplistic, I know, but in my experience it does work and can work instantly.

Taking responsibility for your own life

I used to do a lot of blaming. Blaming the weather, my job, my partner, my childhood and so on for not giving me the life I wanted. Actually, as Johnny Mercer tells us, a happy life was up to me. Only by altering the way I perceived and focused on the world, would I become happy. People are not born 'glass half-empty' and they don't 'get out of bed the wrong side'. People create their own reality, moment by moment, whether consciously or not.

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