

YOUR PERFECT HOLIDAY. (NOT).

I was sitting around a table in a café with some friends, pre-Covid, when we were discussing where we wanted to go on our holidays. We had the usual suspects. I tried to impress my friends by coming up with Venice and Florence, even though I would probably prefer Blackpool and Benidorm.

As we went around the table, I was particularly interested in the contribution of Eric, who I had not met before. As he was an unattached, not unattractive, young man, I thought he might make a play for Rosanna, an attractive, equally unattached, young woman. Would he make a direct, but unsubtle play, going for Ibiza, whilst raising one eyebrow and making eye contact, his forehead slightly lowered, or would he go for another tactic?

He could, for example, make a deliberate mistake by opting for the Learning Tower of *Pizza*, in the hope that the ensuing laughter would evoke a maternal sympathy in Rosanna, thus opening the door to further conversation and interaction.

But no. Eric did not go for any of these options. Instead he opted for.....Mars.

Mars! Can you believe it?! Just what was the man thinking about? Mars? Was he teasing us or was he serious?

Then Eric explained that he had put himself forward to train as an astronaut on the planned NASA mission to Mars. He hoped to arrive before his thirtieth birthday.

What was worse, he had no intention of coming back!

Here was a young man who was prepared to sacrifice all that Life on Earth had to offer to 'have his own page in the history books!' 'People in years to come will know my name. I will be famous. The Christopher Columbus of Bushey Heath.'

So this young man would sacrifice all the beauties, human and non-human, of this world to secrete himself away in a space vehicle?

I don't know how I refrained from spitting out my coffee, spraying those close to me, but I did.

Once there, what would Eric do all day? I thought lockdown was bad enough, but this? As Eric expanded on his 'Perfect Holiday' he explained that they had been promised they could leave their hastily-erected hut for an hour each day, 'for a stroll through the charming fields of basalt.'

And what about the next generation, if they were ever to be created in such a dark and dismal place; would they be Martians or would they entitled to an Earthling passport? Just imagine the politics surrounding all of that! 'We don't want those bloody Martians livin' over ére.'

That's assuming that there would be the means to creating the next generation. The normal precursors to any meaningful relationship, such as physical attraction, would have to be put to one side as Eric and his friends attempted to make their assessments through the medium of space suits. I could just imagine it, 'Fancy the helmet on that one?!'

Yes, it was the Perfect Holiday for Eric, but certainly not for me!