

Letter 10

Buenos Aires. OK. It's a big, sunny, cosmopolitan city. Could be anywhere except that the buskers dance tango's. But not a city you need to be a single bloke in. I sat in the park and got propositioned by more professional ladies than I care to think about (and that's a lot). Every ten yards someone tries to persuade you into their bar come strip club or forces a leaflet for yet another sex shop into your hand. This rapidly becomes very annoying. I really didn't like BA much. However some of the highlights (or lowlights) were:

Parachute Jump. So Adam, Eddie, Helen and myself trekked off to a distant airfield in another attempt to throw ourselves out of a plane. When we arrived the plane was in bits and there was a queue of people from the previous day still waiting to jump. It didn't look promising and I was secretly quite relieved. So we sat in the sun and drunk beer, which is always a pleasant thing to do. Then, suddenly, the plane is fixed and were off. So I find my self sitting on the floor of a much too small plane, between the legs of a large Argentinean who is strapping me to his groin. And I start to regret the beer and not using the facilities. What if I pee myself on the way down? God, what if I crap myself? I'm tied to the groin of a large Argentine, I'm wearing swimming shorts and I'm going to crap myself during free fall. Let's face it, He's going to cut me loose and I'm going to die. It's not an enjoyable flight. Then the door is open and my legs are waving about in space. We go on three, I'm told. One – aaaaarrrrggggg. I forget all the instructions and we spin a bit before I am forced into the correct position. I open my mouth to scream and the wind prevents me from closing it. Its, Its, actually its fantastic. There is no sense of falling, just this rushing wind and the distant ground growing larger at an alarming rate. It's a shame that it's only 30 seconds free fall. Only I've counted to 30 and we're still going. Now I've counted to thirty twice. We must have been dropping for at least an hour. Something's gone wrong. The chute won't open. I'm going to Die. And finally the chute opens. I drift down enjoying the views and slowly losing the circulation in my legs. Back on terra-firma I feel great. I want to go again. I want to become a professional skydiver. I want a lot of beer. It's a terrific buzz. Fortunately it wears off. I have crossed skydiving off the list and never need to jump out of a working aeroplane again.

Boys night out. The girls decided they wanted a girls night out so defacto we had a boys night out. Sara became an honorary bloke for the evening although there are a couple of fairly large (and pleasant) reasons why that's not entirely possible. So we found a nice bar in a fashionable district and sat in the plaza and drank. Then we went to a rather nice restaurant for good steaks and alcoholic beverages. Then we went to another bar to have a few more gentle ales and engage in the sort of reasoned debate that occurs when men get together in the presence of alcohol. The wise people (including myself) left when the 'cocktails' started arriving. According to Adam (who's opinion on drinking matters I have much respect for) it got a little messy after that.

Shopping. The collection of bent metal and gaffer tape that allows me to see gave up the ghost so finally I replaced my glasses. I also decided I needed a new suit. The tailors are wonderful. I found a very old guy in a very posh looking shop who picked out a suit for me. The jacket was perfect but I had to try on a few pairs of trousers as apparently I am a bit long for my width. "and does sir want a shirt and tie?" no, sir is going with a white T-shirt. Clearly this does not meet with approval. I look at the result in the mirror and it might just be a bit camp. So I ask my man "do I look slightly homosexual in this. And my man replies "I'm not sure I'm qualified to comment sir. Marcel!". And Marcel minces over and assures me I look really great. Hmm? Still, a new suit for \$50, a pair of hush puppies and some new trainers on the cheap. New socks and underwear. Boy will I be irresistible to the child prostitutes. Except that it seems I already am. [unfortunately now days I am currently a bit wide for my length and the suit no longer fits].

The one hundred dollar hand job. Those of you with a sensitive disposition may choose to skip this bit. So, I'm standing at the traffic lights and I get chatting to this bloke. He's very friendly and he notices my overland truck T-shirt. Oh, I have a bar he says. Not interested. Oh, we have girls performing, he says. Not interested. It's not open at the moment but I can show you around and maybe if you like it you can come back with your friends. That sounds safe so like a complete muppet I go. It's a very nice bar. "just one moment, I will pop out the back and check none of the girls are practising before I show you around". And off he goes. So I'm sitting there when a very pretty, scantily clad girl joins me. She tells me how handsome I am. A lady of taste. She explains that drinks are \$30 a time but the sex show is free. She tells me that

after the show, for a few more dollars I can go upstairs. Good oh. My friend seems to have been gone a long time. She tells me I look really young for 40. She tells me she's 21 (but wouldn't get served without ID in any pub I know). An ugly friend arrives. A beer arrives. Hell, I can afford \$30. Underage and ugly have a drink. Hell, I can afford \$90. I take a swig of my beer. It burns. Laced with rocket fuel. Its time to go. 95% of me gets up to leave. Unfortunately, underage's hand is in my shorts and the 5% I think with is has got up for an entirely different reason. I accept there is going to be a bit of a bar tab and sit back. So its all very pleasant and ugly friend clears up the mess. I am invited upstairs but decline and the bill arrives. A little bit of currency conversion reveals that it's in excess of \$1000. Not paying that, I get up to leave and odd job appears. He's five foot tall, five foot wide and dressed for the oscars. 'You must pay' he tells me. I'm not paying I tell him. Pretty girl is hanging off me telling me 'you must pay. He's very bad man, he will kill you'. You're not helping love. I'm not paying. I'm not leaving until I pay. The conversation is going nowhere. I'm in shorts and flip-flops. I'm not even going to get a lucky kick in. But, I'm not paying. But I'm not leaving until I pay. I'm very scared but I'm not paying and he's not moving. Finally I decide I'm going to swing, and with luck I'll wake up in casualty on a lot of painkillers. Fortunately, before I can extract myself from underage, odd job cracks his knuckles in true comedy bouncer fashion. So, in a slightly hysterical and girlie fashion I start to laugh. This clearly throws odd job and underage. So I offer them a \$100 dollars or we can fight. And odd job looks at underage, underage nods and I'm poorer but alive. And as I leave I tell them how stupid they are. If it had been a good, honest bar I would have come back with the rest of the truck boys, we would have spent a lot, watched the show and recommended the place to all the other overland trucks. Suddenly its all been a huge misunderstanding. No refund, but I get a free pass and if I come back with my friends I can go upstairs with any two girls I want. And underage whispers in my ear 'and if you pick me, for \$10 more you can f*** me up the arse'. I didn't go back. I was so glad to be out alive I actually walked about 4 miles in the wrong direction before I finally found the hotel & locked myself in my room.

Tango Night. We're going to a Tango show. I can't say I've much enthusiasm for it but its one of those things you've got to do. And it's brilliant. The musicians are great, the dancers staggeringly good and not just for the amount of firm thigh on display. A couple

of the singers are a little worn at the edges but you can tell that they were once quality. Even the dreaded Peruvian pan pipe band that comes on in the interval is better than most we have seen and borders on tolerable. I even considered taking tango lessons when I get home. Fortunately I realised what a terrible humiliation that would be before I parted with money.