

ROGER IN PARADISE - ALMOST

Roger felt he had taken a wrong turn somewhere. He was descending on a rocky path and it was becoming unconscionably hot. He loosened his tie and undid the top button of his shirt. He carefully made his way amongst the rust-red rocks strewn along the path, supporting himself with his knobbly Brussels-sprout stick. One side of the path fell away steeply into what seemed like a bottomless valley of featureless red rock. The other side of the path was a boulder-strewn plane. 'Rather like those pictures of Mars,' he thought to himself.

He had no idea how he had arrived at the cross-roads now high above. Somehow, he had blacked out at home and been transported there. At the cross-roads, he had felt he ought to go up, but it seemed much too steep. One of the cross-ways was blocked off, and the other looked uninviting - just leading into an unending sandpaper plane. So he had started to wend his way down, but was now regretting his decision. He wondered how the England cricket team was getting on. Their performance lately had been patchy to say the least. Still, Strauss seemed like he was putting some spark back into the team.

A couple of hundred yards further down the path, beyond Roger's sight for now, a small dark figure sat curled up on one of the larger rocks. She scratched the back of one of her wings with the pointed tip of her tail. Why should she have to do these stupid errands? Those daft humans were always getting lost. People were supposed to know which way to go by how they felt. It's amazing how many took the wrong turn at the cross-roads, though, she had to admit, the problem wasn't quite so bad since they had sealed off the Limbo track. Limbo was being done up, made a bit more exciting. The powers that be had decided that it had accumulated a rather staid image and didn't meet current market demands.

Roger came around a curve in the path and Zandy stood up, stretching her lustrous leather wings to their full 12-foot span. Roger was taken aback, then things quickly slotted into place. So, he'd taken the final journey. And obviously been a bit too naughty. He admired Zandy's backside. Standing with her wings now folded, Zandy grumpily announced, 'Hi, I'm Zandy. You must be Roger - you've gone the wrong way.' Roger stopped to turn round and make his way back up the path. Zandy hesitated and the beginnings of a wicked grin made its way around her lips. But she relented. 'Here, there's a quicker way than that - just follow me.'

Roger turned around once more. 'You don't happen to know what the cricket score is, do you?'

'Cricket?' replied Zandy. 'Oh, cricket.' She grinned broadly as she remembered one of the Lord's better jokes. A game that could go on for five days and still had a good chance of ending in a draw!

A short distance off the path they came upon a dark red silk sheet, suspended in the air, but with no visible means of support. It shimmered and ruffled slightly in the light breeze. "It's a Möbius sheet,"

said Zandy, “ It only has one side - go and take a look.” Roger duly did so and saw that, from the other side, well, there *was* no sheet. “Actually,” said Zandy, “the other side is somewhere else - it’s quite handy. Just step into the sheet. You should like it up there - they have Sky.”

Roger stepped out from the sheet into a blaze of light to be greeted by a tall muscular young man, all dressed in white. ‘Bet he’s a poofter,’ said Roger to himself. Then he noticed the wings folded behind the young man’s back. In fact, the unfortunate being had no feelings one way or another, since he had no genitals - one of the less-obvious drawbacks of immortality.

‘You’re late,’ said the angel.

‘Yes, I imagine that’s what they’re saying back home - the late Owen Roger Moores,’ quipped Roger. This, of course, went right over the angel’s head.

‘Well, hurry along, it’s this way - oh, and by the way, there’s somebody waiting to meet you.’

In front of the Pearly Gates (Waits & Son, Ironmongers, 53 BC) stood a figure who was immediately familiar to Roger, but who he couldn’t quite place.

‘Roger Moores - meet Oily Waters,’ said the angel.