

When a chance meeting delivers the rabbit's paw

IT was an auspicious start to the forthcoming Chinese Year of the Rabbit. As luck would have it I was down and out on a Friday night, strung out on the end of my phone with no one at home at the other. Shucks! That's life in the big city for the single girl. I went jogging, shopping, liberated the fridge of its post-Christmas carcasses and was about to commence vacuuming when the phone rang.

Resisting snatching it up, the giveaway sign of the desperado, I allowed it to ring a few times.

"What are you doing for dinner?" asked the familiar but thoroughly unreliable male voice.

An hour later we met at Mikki's, a Japanese el cheapo at North Bondi, one of Sydney's best kept secrets, which looks like a tobacconist from the outside.

That was my first stroke of luck. I was penniless, having blown my weekend budget on muesli, lecithin, wheatgerm, toothpaste, vitamin pills and a new bathing suit. The small luxuries which make life worth living in the big metropolis.

My friend was feeling magnanimous. He paid and provided some great plonk.

After sushi-ing ourselves to a standstill and running up a bill which sent his eyeballs into a momentary spin we strolled along the Bondi esplanade where the usual bikes, boards, skates, lovers, tourists, westies (tourists from Sydney's western suburbs), dags, runaways and the odd deviant or two were taking the evening air or setting up home for the night.

Menacing low clouds raced over the glinting ocean.

First Person

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When the clouds parted they revealed an unusual moon, shaped like a rabbit's ear, a horn and then a banana. Without doubt an omen which drew an increasing amount of attention from the esplanade crowd. People stopped, looked up and stared with their heads thrown back gawking. Strangers engaged in conversations speculating upon the shape. Friendships were struck and by the time the moon retreated behind the clouds again my friend and I had been invited to a party, offered drugs, given a hot tip on a race in Moonee Valley for the next day and asked to a beachside bar for a drink.

We accepted the latter, having mentally noted the hot tip, number eight in the fifth race, and taken the address of the party which we were told was being held by a well-known film maker of Bondi who is famous for being what is politely called a tightwad and a little lightfingered.

We were informed that he (the film maker) usually takes a screwdriver to parties and leaves with lightfittings and any other removable objects. We were warned to expect no more than Jatz crackers and that it was likely there would be no music because someone had applied the screwdriver to his sound equipment recently. Not unexpectedly we gave the party a miss and went to the bar where some fellow moon-gazers had gathered.

It was an odd and heterogeneous crowd. To my right Zeno's paradox and St August-

tine were under discussion. To my left, an American was telling tales of real life paranoia in New York.

"I came out of the movie and began to walk towards my apartment in the Village. Suddenly I realised someone was following me. I turned around and there was this 13-foot, 19-inch guy right behind me with two huge dobermans straining from leashes in each of his hands. I walked faster. So did he. I turned left. He turned left. I turned right. He turned right. I reached the door of my apartment block and entered. He came in right behind me. I tried not to panic as I waited for the elevator. I stepped into it. He stepped in too. He said, 'sit'. I sat. Slowly we made our way up the floors of the building. When we arrived at the fourth floor he said, 'stand' and stepped out with the dogs. As the doors closed he looked around at me, shook his head and said, 'weird'. As it turns out he lives there with the dogs..."

Finally it was agreed that next year we would all meet again at the same place, at the same time and we all went our separate ways. Watch this space around this time next year for further details.

Postscript: The next day I made my first visit to a TAB. With my last \$4 for the weekend I bet \$2 on a place and \$2 on a win. The horse came first. I made \$30.40. I estimate the punter made more than \$3000 and the Year of the Rabbit hasn't even started.