

In which **Pawn** finds that sometimes life just isn't what it appears, but a roast almost always is. Further, whilst considering this, makes certain discoveries about the nature of travel.

Oh, what a joy Market Day can be. As I described in this morning's account, we shopped heartily at the Marylebone Green Market this morning, and tonight we enjoyed the fruits of that effort. But I get ahead of myself. First, then, is an account of our afternoon.

After returning to the flat after marketing, we settled in a bit, and then had a delightful light lunch of a mini-quiche shared amongst us, Florentine, along with some table water crackers, Saint George (a goat's milk brie), Milano salami, buffalo Cheddar, carrot sticks, Edam and some grapes. Then it was off to see Michael Caine's new film, "Is Anybody There?" We strolled down Tottenham Court Road/Charing Cross [Ed: an aside is in order. For those of you not familiar with this phenomenon, London streets often change names after only a few blocks. In this case, Tottenham Court Road transmogrifies into Charing Cross about 6 or 7 blocks south of our flat.] towards Leicester Square.

First, however, we let ourselves get side tracked into Chinatown. I was shocked and saddened to find that [Lee Ho Fook](#) is gone, replaced by a different new Chinese establishment. An establishment that had survived for many years is gone, just like that, in a little over a year. Oh well, at least I got to eat there once.



The crowds were remarkable, floods of humanity as far as the eye could see. Wall to wall and from one end of the street to the other. We swam through the crowd and finally worked our way back into Leicester Square and the theatre. We were early (a new experience) and got to sit for a spell in the square's park. I decided to take X over to the edge of the square to show her the Glockenspiel over by the Swiss House. Oops! Not there any more - new works are under way, and the Glockenspiel has apparently gone away. Let's hope it is merely in storage, waiting to come back for a new perch on the new building.

Then into the theatre. When buying tickets (matinee, £9.95) we have to choose our seats(!) something that comes as a bit of a surprise. We pick Row C, middle, and after getting our popcorn take our seats in an empty theatre. By the time the film starts there are about 12 other people, but it is a small house, so it isn't empty, at least.

The film was good. It is sentimental to the Nth degree, but that's what its on about, after all, so no surprise there. Michael Caine turns in a stellar performance as a washed-up caravan magician and is countered by Bill Milner as the young Edward (age 10), whose parents have turned their home into an elderly care centre, and who is chafing at the stress this has put on his life (displacing him from his room, his parents fighting, the old people taking attention away from him). There are at least three scenes in this film where you may find yourself thinking, "Oh, this is the scene that will get the Oscar buzz for Caine." and yet they are all really that good, and he does really turn in the performance of what is already an exemplary career. Milner, too, is utterly engaging, and pulls you through the angst of his daily life, and the joy of his escapes into investigating the supernatural. Please, overlook the clichés and the pat elements of the storyline, and just let yourself enjoy an uplifting film with some truly stellar performances. [Or just dab at your furtive tears with a popcorn napkin, as Nic surreptitiously tried to. - X]



[Nic has mercifully acknowledged the existence of the London bus system (above ground, with better views) so we were allowed to "Oyster" the 24/7 #24 right to the grocery store. - X] Next we had to do some shopping. When we got home with our market bags we realized that we had nothing to cook the roast in, so we ducked into Sainsbury's to see if we could score a little roasting pan, you know, the cheap aluminium pans you find in the typical American grocers. Not here! But, as we approached the checkout lane, I spotted an aluminium serving plate (3 pack for £2). Lesson No. 1: In a pinch, use your imagination. [Nic

earned one hour of mocking-free time with this shopping coup; the manager he asked knew nothing of this "manager's special". - X]

Whew!

Okay, the dinner, you ask (I imagine you ask...I would ask). Where to begin. X masterfully roasted that little 1kg piece of meat, producing a lovely rare roast (Lesson No. 1A: always travel with a foodie!), while I prepared a quick salad of gem and carrot shavings with a mustard vinaigrette. Lesson No. 2: making your own vinaigrette in a strange and under supplied kitchen? A cocktail shaker, 25ml of balsamic vinegar, 25ml of extra virgin olive oil, pinch of salt, a few dashes of pepper and about a ½ tsp of heavy mustard with seeds. Yum! Also on the menu, a pound of asparagus sautéed on high heat with some sea salt and olive oil, and a delightful tea loaf from market.



How was it? OMG!!! The best meal in ages! Oh, the meat was like red butter, the asparagus was crisp yet yielding and flavourful, the salad a sweet and tangy delight and the bread was so earthy, with a slathering of butter on it. Add to that a precious little screw-top red (Oxford Landing, Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz) and all that was missing was some little piece of chocolate to polish the whole meal off.

Now we are just sitting about in the salon, watching British junk food telly, and listening to our brains slowly melt and drain out of our ears.

Bliss!