

Analytical Reflections.

'Did it help you then? You know, doing that CPD course?' Henrietta asked, as soon as they had found seats on the crowded train.

Now that Lois been on the course she had worked out that Henrietta was an 'Interacting Socialiser', an IS type, and so she must careful what she said. Wild-fire was like a snail compared to Henrietta. So Lois said nothing, just waited. "Henrietta the Bumblebee", thought Lois, the girl with her proboscis probing into everyone's life. And often, "Henrietta the Wasp", the girl whose gossip, often inaccurate, that could be so hurtful.

'Well, Lois, tell all? I heard the guy doing it was really dishy. Was he?'

Right, it had worked. Now Lois knew she was on safer ground, sort of. She had learned on the course never to reply to an IS type if you want to keep a secret, just wait for the next nosey inquiry, as if for a the next bus, and an IS will be sure to provide it, and only then hop on, or keep waiting for the next 'bus'. With an IS type, buses were frequent and if ignored, zoomed by without stopping.

"Oh yes, Henrietta, you would have loved him. He was very attractive!" Lois thought, but said nothing. She eased herself back, and set her face to 'listening' and let the girl rattle on: there was little point trying to contribute when Henrietta was flying like this.

As 'Henrietta the Bumblebee' droned on from one topic to another, Lois was able to pick up the latest threads of the continuing Office saga, as the girl weaved a beautiful but clearly absurdly wrong tapestry which purported to depict the many dramas that had occurred during her absence. Lois would later unpick this version and, after a few carefully placed questions to others, would discover for herself something nearer to the true picture.

Before the CPD course she had found most people, especially those of other 'personality types', to be quite annoying, sometimes making her blood boil. Even those who seemed to be quite nice at first had eventually become annoying, when you got to know them better.

Henrietta was in Lois's team, under her 'control', but the girl just never seemed to listen, always shot past the main point of things, moved on before the most important ideas had been fully explored, interrupted as you tried to explain things. Then, when she actually stopped talking, and got around to doing anything, well, it was always full of holes, spelling errors, mis-filling of documents, going off half-cock on harum scarum notions about 'improvements' she had half-heard about in other

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Departments, missing out folk from email lists, adding inappropriate people to email lists.....

The train trundled on. She left Henrietta to her ramblings as her mind drifted back to Manchester, to that first morning.

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Lois had had a fit of the giggles when he walked into the room and said, quite straight faced:

"Hi, Folks, I'm Thom the Tutor.

I'm here to make your life better, easier, more productive and, I honestly believe this folks, happier.

So, please sit back, relax and enjoy!

Aaaand.....Let's get 'Working Smarter!'"

The tall handsome man in his mid-thirties seemed genuinely oblivious of his ravishing good looks and the effect of his gentle mellifluous voice, like warm dark chocolate. She had felt a flutter right away. Baby snatching. Still, it never really leaves you, the desire, she thought, thinking of what it would be like to spend the night with him, upstairs in her big queen-sized bed.

She remembered being shocked by her Gran telling her at ninety-six:

"Lois, your Grandfather was still, you know, 'troubling' me right to the end, even when we were into our eighties."

"Hey wait, I'm not that old", thought Lois. "And I'm still very presentable. In my prime, really."

When she had signed herself up for 'Working Smarter' she didn't have high hopes; in her long experience such courses seldom 'delivered'. At least this was a break from the constant pressure in the Office, time out, away from the hassle. Seated at the back of the room with her Kindle she would chill, let it all wash over her. She was good at tuning out now after years in an open plan office. Later she would skip the afternoon session, slip away at the coffee break, sneak a session in the gym and use the Hotel Spa; naughty girl.

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But right from the outset not only his voice but his ideas had gripped her. During the session on 'personality types' she was at first astonished then angry. Why had no one told her about this before? It was so revealing of herself and of others around her, explaining why she had always been so tense, both in the Office and at home.

The psycho-metric self-assessment revealed her as an 'Analytical Reflector', an AR type. Well, maybe, she conceded reluctantly, but she wasn't 100% sure yet. She needed to think this about more: she could see other personality traits in herself too.

The 'Dominant Director' type: that was her husband-definitely, the 'Steady Relater' type, like her Mum and her older son, and then IS type like Henrietta; and like her younger son, never off his mobile phone.

Most of the attendees had revealed right away what they were but she had decided to keep her 'secret' meantime. She supposed that just by that decision alone she probably was an 'Analytical Reflector' as the self-assessment suggested.

IS types like Henrietta loved to 'drive' any conversation; they only really wanted an audience. Of course she had deliberately avoided Thom the Tutor's first general question:

"Did it help you then?"

The true answer was;

"Yes and yes, and OH YES!" she wanted to shout, but she let the others jump in, vie noisily for his attention. And at that very moment she realised what new power his information had given her.

She brought herself back to the present, briefly and looked across at the gabbling girl.

In the past she would have tried to give Henrietta the full answer, a long complicated answer, giving pros and cons, getting annoyed when Henrietta, bored, would cut across her with another question, grasping back control of the conversation.

That girl could be so, so annoying, it was almost a full-time job looking after her. But now, at last, from the CPD course, now that she 'understood' Henrietta she could begin to devise strategies for dealing with her, help her 'to perform', help her 'to progress', maybe even earn a promotion to enable her move on. And perhaps become someone else's problem?

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On that first morning of the course, she was just getting to grips with these ideas when he had flashed it up on the screen without explanation.

"The Platinum Rule' or How to deal with people."

"Any ideas, anyone?" Thom the Tutor had asked.

Almost without thought, it flew from her lips,

"Buy a large high voltage cattle prod!"

The Class had exploded with laughter.

Until that point she had kept her mouth firmly shut, even though she was desperate to ask him all sorts of questions. She was glad it was dim in the room as her face had flushed brightly. Shouting out like this was not her style at all.

Thom the Tutor beamed back, smiling at her:

"That is the very best answer I've ever heard!"

"Eh, it's Lois, isn't it?"

She nodded back. Her tummy wobbled again and she let out a soft sigh of desire as she found her eyes scanning his pert bottom and strong slim thighs as he turned back to his SMART Board. If only! Mentally she was going where she should definitely not go, as a happily married woman with two teenage sons.

"Stop Lois. Danger ahead," she thought. "This is madness. Why would he be interested anyway?"

The class settled back to listen.

'Yes, that's the nub of it', Thom continued.

'Other personality types can be so frustrating, and over time this can build up such resentment in us all. Of course, we think it is just us that feels this tension, but the others, the ones annoying to us, find us equally annoying in return, or maybe even more annoying?'

So we're all travelling on a two-way street. And it's a busy street.

But what each of us thinks, in fact what each of us is sure of, is that it's a One Way Street with all these other people, these idiots, driving along it in the wrong direction!

And so what do we get?

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Yip! Head on Collisions!

In fact sometimes even when we see the danger we think, idiots, they're wrong and I'm right and we accelerate right at the other person!

Worst case scenario?

Smashed relationships; tow trucks to the scrapyard.

Or as a minimum, if we both exercise some control, slam on the brakes?

Minor collisions, bent and bruised 'bumper-egos!'

What Thom the Tutor was saying was so true. Lois could feel the tension draining from her body, feel herself relaxing under the warmth of his hypnotic voice. Relaxed but alert too, able to concentrate, taking in every word he said, watching his face, studying it. This was the best she had felt for ages. But with the other part of her brain she was licking her lips mentally as lecherous thoughts invaded and had to be repelled, half-heartedly.

"Inter-personal relationships are all about resolving these tensions, opening up communications, learning to help others express themselves, to really hear what they are saying, often in code, and then being able to respond to their needs, and help them to respond to our own personal, individual needs.'

Oh yes. How she had her very own personal, individual needs. Stop it, Lois!

It was the same at home, with her husband, and with the boys. Sometimes she thought she must be going mad. Did they actually pack the dishwasher the wrong way on purpose? Did Jeffrey actually think she that after nineteen years of marriage she had suddenly started to like sprouts, dumping them on her plate, time after time? Why didn't they put dirty clothes basket instead of scattering them, hiding them in the bedrooms or the bathrooms? Why did they buy her clothes as presents when she had told them over and over again not to do it, emphasising that she liked to shop for her own clothes! Why did they complain when she repeated her requests, reminding them, before Birthdays and Christmas? Did they ever actually pay any attention to what she said? Oh and Mother's Day? Not a date on their Calendars! Surely Jeffrey could remind them, just once.

Thom the Tutor's ideas explained all these issues and inside her head she felt a light snap on. At last she understood, had a frame of reference. Now she saw that perhaps she actually did annoy them at work, and at home, with her insistence on taking it slower, thinking things over, taking time to get it right, finding the best way to do it.

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And then, if it was wrong, going back over it again and again, to change it, to get it right. Surely that was a good thing? Or was she being overly pedantic?

All of her life so far she had always tried her best to obey the 'Golden Rule':

'Do unto others as you would be done by.'

She had kept trying to follow it, even when the 'others' had continued to annoy her by NOT reciprocating; even the closest of her friends and family had sometimes seemed, perversely, to go out of their way to annoy her.

And now here she was, after all these years, at last learning that all along she had been wrong.

*'Do unto others as they **want/need** to be done unto.'*

That was the Platinum Rule.

She could see the difference. But it only worked if you had the right motives, to genuinely help, teach, and nurture those around you.

As the first day came to a close Thom had reinforced this by doing a Dr Spock with his hand and saying;

'Remember this, now folks, and carry it with you into the Future, and Beyond.

Guide, teach, nurture, and enjoy our differences.

Go forth and prosper.'

And then he had left the room from the door behind her, sauntering. As he passed her, his eyes had sought hers and when she smiled back his left hand had trailed across her shoulder lightly, setting her on fire.

She had rushed out, back to her room, phoned the Spa. Yes they could take her at 6.15 'A Full Treatment'. Bigger the mad cost. She rushed to the gym and did slow warm up, a short intense work-out to earn her calories and then to the Spa. The sign above the door said:

"Relax, enjoy, bliss."

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The Full Treatment had she felt wonderful and her body was flushed with hormones from her fantasies as the masseuse's hands working on her body had become

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Thom's hands. The only problem was that it had taken longer than she had expected and it was nearly eight o'clock.

In her new smart casual outfit of designer jeans and a low necked blouse, she was gliding along to the lift and wearing spicy perfume she had bought for herself as Jeffrey's Christmas present to her, she felt light, trim, young. She was excited, her mind buzzing with naughty thoughts of the kind she had not enjoyed for years. She knew absolutely no-one in Manchester and no one else on the course. She felt safe and she had slipped her coins into the condom machine in the Ladies; just in case.

Emerging from the lift, armed with her Kindle, her back-up if he was not there, she stopped and pretended to check her phone. In fact she was switching it off. Her quick scan disappointed her. She had felt sure he would be there. But no, she would dine alone after all. She should have said something instead of rushing off right as the session ended.

Slowly, reluctantly, she turned towards the in-house Restaurant and POW!

He rose into view from a seat behind a column, casually turning and looking right at her, a naughty smile playing on his gorgeous luscious lips, those same lips that she had already felt exploring her body as she lay in the Spa an hour ago.

She caught a glimpse of herself in the big wall mirror. Not bad Lois, for a Dinosaur! She blushed like a teenager. "God", she thought. "he looks even younger in his jeans and tee-shirt!"

He turned and waited for her. She felt the wobble again. Naughty Lois, stop now.

'Hi, Lois, how are you?

'Hi, Thom the Tutor!'

Oh bugger, it was out and she blushed with embarrassment.

'Sorry!'

'Oh it's OK. My ex used to make that joke too. I'm used to it.

'In fact I say it deliberately now, try to be dead pan, see what happens.

'Sails over most folks heads, but I saw you sneak a smile, knew we were on a wavelength right away. Sometimes I think I'm wasting my life giving these classes but then when someone like you attends, it makes so much of a difference.'

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Lois was stunned that he had noticed her right at the beginning. She had thought she had only come to his notice with her 'cattle prod' outburst. She thought she had been anonymous at the back of the class in the dimness, but he had actually been watching her. God, I hope he is not a mind reader, she thought.

'Oh I did enjoy you session so, so much. I've needed this course all of my life, I can feel the tension falling away already.'

They were standing at the door to 'The Eatery', looking at the menu. It was all the usual vast array of choices with fancy names at silly prices.

'Oh dear! Probably all 'Boil in the Bag' stuff', she said, seeing nothing that appealed.

'Do you like Asian food, Lois?'

'Yes, so long as it's not too spicy.'

'Well, last time I was here I found this fantastic Malaysian place. Fancy taking a look? If you don't like it we could try for someplace else. All the nice places around here are quite easy walking.'

He knew how to 'package' an invitation so nicely, she thought, leaving her a choice, as it were. Not like Jeffrey who always jumped in, decided for them and then if she objected, if she wanted to think about it, check out the options, he became impatient, angry with her and then everything was spoiled, no matter how good the food actually turned out to be.

Of course, Thom the Tutor would know by now that she was an AR. But what was he, apart from gorgeous? She would not ask, that might be rude and, anyway, part of the 'fun' would be finding out.

'Well, yes, that would be nice, thanks.'

And then before she could stop herself, she added:

'It's ages since I've been out on a date with a handsome young man.'

But before I say, there's one condition, OK?'

My God, why had she said 'a date with a handsome young man'?

Her subconscious was taking over! She was blushing now under his gaze. She could feel a strong desire for something other than food churning down there, below her tummy.

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'Comunque? Dimmi la sua 'condizione sola' signorina?'

She realised that she had stopped speaking as her naughty thoughts had tumbled round in her mind, like the clothes in her washing machine at home.

'Oh my god, you speak Italian too! You know, like John Cleese in 'A Fish called Wanda!'

She realised at once that she was now in deeply suggestive waters and was being swept out to sea. But this was so nice; she had not felt desire like this for years. She realised now that this had all started with her first sight of him this morning and his intro:

'Hi, Folks, I'm Thom the Tutor.

I'm here to make your life better, easier, more productive and, I honestly believe this folks, happier.

So, please sit back, relax and enjoy!

Aaaand.....Let's get 'Working Smarter!'"

Well she had 'sat back', she had 'relaxed' and now it was time to 'enjoy!'

'Hello, hello. Earth to Lois?'

Ah, welcome back from all those thoughts; so, what is your 'one condition'?

Bugger, he could read her like a book. She could feel his hands turning her pages. No one had turned her pages like this for a long time now;

'Well, just that I absolutely insist that I pay for both of us!'

'It's a done deal' he said offering a high five, to which she responded.

Electricity. Crackling, high voltage electricity.

How could anyone find out?

Outside the hotel he slipped his long arm around her shoulders and gently pulled her against him. She responded by slipping her thumb into his waistband letting her head slope sideways and her cheek snuggle in to his neck. He was burbling away with his dark chocolate hypnotic voice. They sauntered along like the lovers they would soon become.

Thom the Tutor did not disappoint. She found that he needed to give her several 'repeat' lessons.

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They had enjoyed two more evenings together before she had to return to Glasgow, to reality. But she had changed and the reality she saw was a different one. She was refreshed, empowered and full of new ideas, new goals, and new desires. Not just for business: what did they call it in on your car insurance, 'Social, Domestic and Pleasure.'

She had already booked for another course in about two months called:

"Taking 'Working Smarter'- Further".

"Too Infinity and Beyond", was how Thom the Tutor had described it as he closed the first course.

Almost from that first minute of the course she had found herself thinking anew, and now after an interesting weekend at home, she was learning how to apply the 'Platinum Rule'.

Working Smarter and Living Smarter too!

Her husband seemed to be becoming more responsive too, more manageable, more willing to listen, more interested in her, in every way, as was she in him.

CPD is a very good thing, she would tell her colleagues at the Management Team Meeting, later today. A very good indeed.

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As the train arrived at the Station Henrietta was mid-flight from topic fifty-three to fifty-four, not that Lois was counting.

'Henrietta, you really are a marvel.

'Now, I've got something I was hoping you might want to try for us.

'It's a new idea I heard about on my CPD course.

I think you will like it and with your special skill set.....'

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