

Oh Three Three Oh

Just in case you're wondering, this isn't a profile for a lesser known, but equally loveable Star Wars character, the long lost cousin of 3CPO (or however that should be written).

Instead, it's a reference to the dead of night. Yep, that magical time when monsters roam the landing, the birds are yet to stir and break into song, and all is quiet in the house.

For some reason, best known to the power that is, it's the time that I seem to frequently stir at. Literally, to the minute. Realise you're awake, turn over, decide that maybe a slurp of squash might be in order (optional), check watch – 0330.

On the dot.

Why? It's not as if there's much to chew over at the moment – no errant Teams calls with colleagues, no wondering what the size of the next credit card bill will be, not even a sizeable garden project to scope / spec out. Nada, things should be all in order, to my mind.

And yet, to my mind, they clearly aren't. Stuff needs organising, thinking through and considering. And apparently 0330 is the time that the old grey matter decides to come out of hibernation, the hard drives whirl, the VDU in my head awakens from standby and something wiggles the theoretical mouse and there you have it. Password please....

It's actually irritating. Not least because I do have a little notepad by the bedside, complete with pencil, to note down the thoughts. Because in theory this allows the mind to drop back to power saving mode, and get back to the job of sleeping. Except the only thing that comes to mind to write down is 'why the hell have I woken up at 0330 again?'. Which I can't see as particularly fruitful labour. That said, I haven't actually written this down, so perhaps before I dismiss the guidance of those sufficiently qualified to have come up with the idea of this sodding notebook, maybe I ought to give it a go. Perhaps a sketch of 0330, replete with wandering ghost people in a land of confusion might do it.

Of course, what happens next is wholly foreseeable. Having woken up, gone through the process of questioning why it's happened again, the mind then decides 'well, I'm up, may as well sift through the in-tray and see what needs dealing with'.

Which is a source of further irritation.

Hot topics seem to include:

Should I get an electric car, and keep Thunberg the Greta happy (not to mention Attenborough) ?

Shall I buy a trailer tent, and finally break free of the invisible and virtual shackles of lockdown and just fluff off on a UK adventure – me, my tent and I. Plus cameras, credit card, changes of clothes, phone, etc etc. ?

Is France a good place to buy a house at the moment (assuming we'll ever get to travel again) ?

Did I make the right choice in divesting when we did?

Should I do something more productive with my time?

The problem is, some of these things are within my grasp to sort (trip, tent, electric car). Others are decisions made and non-reversible. So why do the latter pop up ? There's nothing I can do about them.

Unlike the other questions, which might require some discussions :

'Hey, thinking of buying a trailer tent and going on a trip...'

[Why?]

'Err, because I can, and I want to..'

[Where will you go? Where's this trailer tent going to go at home? What do you want to go for?]

'Errr, I haven't decided quite yet – Scotland initially – go seem some places I haven't seen before. Don't know about the storage – haven't thought about that yet. I'll come up with something'

[Have you thought this through, or is it just another spur of the moment thing?]

And that's the tricky bit. The only answer, really, is 'actually, yes, every ruddy morning at 0330 whilst the inquisitor slumbers on'. Because then the conversation will shift to why 0330 is a regular thing, and then we're off down the wrong road and poor old UK road trip is doomed to the bottom of the in-tray. Until 0330 in a day or two's time, and we'll be off again around the same cycle, with predictably the same outcome. Or rather non outcome. Which begs the question whether an outcome that has no outcome can be classed as an outcome.

When is a non result a result? Answers on a postcard please, or email me at 0330.

Of course, one of the other issues that I've identified with this process is one associated with 'paralysis by analysis'. Because there are options open now that once weren't there, the challenge is to try not to evaluate them all and choose one – in actual fact the simplest answer is probably 'list them in order of what you want to do most, then just ruddy well do them'.

What's the worst that can happen ?

Let's work these through:

- i) Start trip. Decide weather is crap, no good opps for photos, realise my own company is not what I yearn for. Turn round, go home, shower and get warm. Sum total of things wasted diesel. Not that bad.
- ii) Trailer tent – OK, this one probably is a bit more complex, but you could boil it down into 'buy tent, realise crap idea, sell tent'. In fact, scale it down and just buy a nice, easy to put up tent and invest in comfy camp bed that fits in the car in case the weather turns horrible. Or just change plans at last minute, forfeit site fee and book a room. All assuming that the whole of the rest of the population haven't already done this when you're there, and you can. Fallback – drive home, napping in laybys when tired. Or go when everyone's at school, because, err, you can you ruddy idiot. That's the whole point. I ought to have written that down.
- iii) House in France. In principle, a brilliant idea. Just the small matter of budget, location, style, size ... the list goes on. And, like most things, those who are inputting into the list have, let's say, very different ideas. Which makes the choice of property a bit of a challenge, to say the least. All of which is a moot point at the moment because you can't actually travel there anyway. And according to current news, France is about to dissolve into civil war, with the true locals all stirred up against the marauding foreign invaders. Thankfully not the Brits, this time, but the longstanding, hardworking, err, French citizens whose origins rest with the countries that France have historically annexed / colonised / whatever'd. Vive l'entente cordiale. Time will tell.

So, where are we – ah yes, probably at about 0345. And still ruddy well awake.

It's at that point that the twist in the tale takes place. It's quiet. Lie still. Breathe regularly and relax.

Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum. It's 0345, your brain is alive, your mind is churning and you have the rhythmic clump clump of your heartbeat to keep you company.

And, at 0330 in the morning, given what's gone before, that isn't the comforting rhythm you might well imagine. Because, yes, the night elves take it upon themselves to chuck a few more unanswerables into the equation.... Does it sound ok. When you get an ache in your arm, is that because you've slept on it. You feel a bit hot, perhaps open the window a bit.

Eventually, things calm down and you drop off.

0530 – the sodding window's open, and the birds have started morning chorus.

Bugger.