



Columnist of the Year

PIERS MORGAN

THE INSIDER

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12

My phone vibrated with sensational news this morning. 'I've got a big shock for you,' texted Amanda Holden. 'I was out jogging this morning, training for the London Marathon...'

Blimey. Talk about words you never thought you'd hear. I'd have been less surprised to read 'AMY WINEHOUSE TO MARRY ALISTAIR DARLING'.

But Amanda's truly shocking revelation was still to come: '...and I found a dead man!'

'WHAT?' I texted back, seeking urgent clarification.

'He had kind of hung himself by a tree,' she explained. 'Looked like some form of self-strangulation. Brandy and Night Nurse lying there. Dressed warm, with socks and shoes, which I found really sad. Thought he was a tramp but he wasn't. It's weird, but I wasn't surprised to find him even if it was a million-to-one chance. And I wasn't fazed. I just ran around trying to get people to help.'

The great thing about Ms Holden, though, is that she can always see a potential career opportunity looming out of even the darkest clouds.

'At least I now know I can take over from Amanda Burton in *Silent Witness*,' she added.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

I checked out of my ludicrously extravagant Imperial Suite in Dubai today with a heavy heart.

It's all very well living like a king for three days, but what happens when you then have to return to normal life back in grey, rain-soaked Britain?

Sod that for a game of soldiers.

I flew straight to the Maldives instead, and checked into an absolutely stunning resort called Baros.

'Congratulations, Mr Morgan,' said a smiling manager as my speedboat swept in from nearby Male airport. 'You will be the very first guest to stay in our top suite, The Residence, since it was voted The Indian Ocean's Leading Villa.'

Oh, the relief...

An hour later, I was sipping champagne in my vast plunge pool, cooling myself from the 95°F heat, while an army of staff prepared a lobster feast on my terrace.

I only report all this because I know that, inexplicably, there are some people out there who really don't like me very much. And I want them to dislike me just a little bit more.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

News of Amanda's bombshell discovery is all over the papers. But she is not happy.

'They all said I'm 30 ****ing 9, darling! I am more shocked by that than the stiff!'

For the record, Ms Holden was born on February 16, 1971. Which makes her 36. Give or take a bit of Botox.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15

I've always had Penélope Cruz down as an irksomely ambitious little Spanish madam. Why else would anyone voluntarily sleep with that ghostly sexual android



Penélope Cruz with boyfriend Javier Bardem

'I've always had Penélope Cruz down as an irksome, ambitious little madam. Why else would anyone sleep with Tom Cruise?'

Tom Cruise? But I heard a little story about her today which rather changed my view.

Apparently, she pitched up unexpectedly at my resort two weeks ago, having booked the trip herself online without the help of a manager, agent, lawyer, or PR - which, for an A-list movie star, is virtually unprecedented.

Once here, she heard that the full moon would occur, an event that always causes a small sand dune to appear 200 yards out to sea. So Penélope secretly arranged for a candlelit dinner to be set up for her and her new man, fellow Spanish actor Javier Bardem, to eat under the twinkling lunar light until lam.

Apparently the word 'tactile' barely does their dune antics justice...

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16

I spent most of my time as a young lad watching Sussex play cricket at their ground near Brighton, and waiting for the chance to bowl at some of the star players in the practice nets.

One man took me under his wing, let me bowl at him almost every time, and was a kind, patient and utterly charming coach.

That man was Imran Khan, who is currently at the

centre of the political turmoil engulfing Pakistan. I'm no expert in what's going on out there, but I do know that Imran is one of the good guys in life. And I wish him well.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17

I've been voted the 29th Sexiest Brain In Britain by *Psychologies* magazine. The criteria for voting was apparently men who 'combine wit, intelligence and natural charm'. Which made it all the stranger that Louis Theroux won.

But as with all these ridiculous lists, the real joy comes from seeing whom I beat.

My old friend AA Gill stutters in at No 31 for example, which will utterly enrage the limp-wristed little chump. But try to spare a thought for Sebastian Faulks (40), Melvyn Bragg (41), John Humphrys (42), Andrew Neil and Martin Amis (joint 45th), and Clive Anderson (50).

To say that these intellectual giants will be distressed at losing to me in a 'sexy brain' poll is a bit like saying Saddam Hussein was a tad irritated when those US Marines found him in that hole.

In another amusing survey, Simon Cowell came 47th in a list of 50 Greatest TV Icons.

What made me laugh was that he got beaten by Lassie, Homer Simpson and Kermit the Frog. He took my teasing on the subject well, of course.

'I have the top one million list print-out in front of me, Morgan,' he retorted, 'and Rin Tin Tin is quite a lot higher than you...'

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

OK, I can now reveal what I was doing in New York for the past month: I've been filming *Celebrity Apprentice* with Donald Trump.

Other contestants include Lennox Lewis (hence the endless games of chess), Vinny 'Big Pussy' Pastore from *The Sopranos*, Stephen Usual Suspects Baldwin, Marilu Henner from that wonderful Eighties TV show *Taxi*, Kiss rocker Gene Simmons, a *Playboy* pet called Tiffany, former Olympic gymnast legend Nadia 'Ten' Comaneci, and a 6ft 7in cowboy country singer called Trace Adkins.

I'm not allowed to say too much about what happened yet because it doesn't start airing on NBC until January 3.

All I can say is that it was the craziest, most grueling, hilarious, challenging, scandalous and often disturbingly competitive four weeks of my entire life.

And Mr Trump, to my delight, quickly identified me as 'one of the most ruthless, tough, mean, and obnoxious Brits I've ever met.'

As I said to him, '... and what's the bad news?'

STOP PRESS

Did you see those photos of Kate T'm the world's most ****ing beautiful woman, me' Moss at Davinia Taylor's 30th birthday party? If a pig was that ugly they would put it down... ■

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