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**Samia
Longchambon**

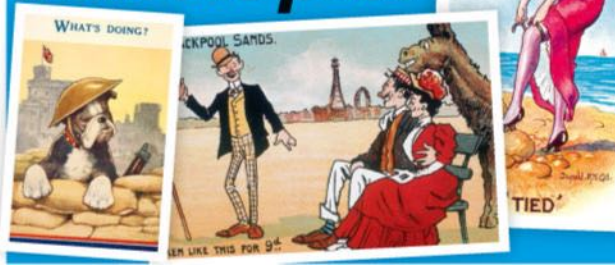
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heartbeats – being
a mum is absolutely
my most important job

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**POSTCARDS
from the past**



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Hello!

Posting some pleasure

“People don't tend to send postcards any more, do they? The days when little children would explode with delight at receiving a postcard from a maiden aunt holidaying in Worthing, or a young lover would hold to her heart a card just arrived from her new beau off on his Greek break with mates, are sadly over, I think. These days, it's text messages galore, smartphone pictures instantly sent, and social media updates on an almost hourly basis to keep everyone informed – albeit with sometimes a little look-at-me bragging thrown in. But that simpler postcard-only era had a lot to commend it.”

See page 10.

Geoff

EDITOR

geoffrey.palmer@futurenet.com



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FROM US TO YOU

Good to SHARE

Refreshing a giant, Kew to the rescue,
and the return of a special moth



SHE'S EVERY WOMAN

Not many performers could do justice to the music of Chaka Khan, but Alexandra Burke's star quality shines in *I'm Every Woman*, a new musical. It's packed with hits, tracing the life and loves of the Queen of Funk. At the Troubadour Wembley Park Theatre, until 27 September.

* imeverywomanthemusical.com

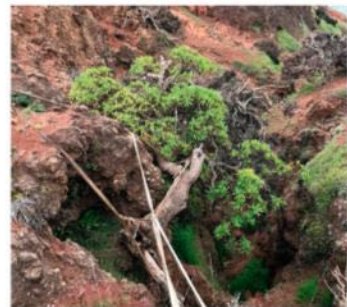
An enormous project

He's at least 1,000 years old, but his chalk outline still inspires either shock or a giggle at first sight. Dorset's Cerne Abbas Giant stands at 180ft tall, making him the biggest hill figure in the country, but a combination of natural weathering, rain and plant growth means he needs to be re-chalked regularly, with around 170 tons of chalk, by experts and volunteers. The Giant's future has also been secured by the purchase of land around the figure, thanks to fundraising led by Sir Stephen Fry.

* nationaltrust.org.uk

Did you know?

On Chile's Robinson Crusoe Island, the last known *Dendroseris neriifolia* tree in the world clings to a cliff face. But after scientists managed to harvest 29 seeds, eight have so far germinated at Kew's Millennium Seed Bank; kew.org.



On this day in history

10 August 2003 Beaches were packed on a scorching summer day with a temperature of 38.1C recorded at Gravesend in Kent. It was the first time the UK had gone above 100F since official records began in the 19th century. Since then, however, temperatures have continued to rise, with a new record of 40.3C (104.5F) set in the 2022 heatwave.



RIPE AND READY

Have you had a bumper crop of tomatoes from your garden, allotment or growbag? If so, this Heirloom Tomato Stoneware plate, £10.99, could be the perfect way to show them off. Or serve up in a cute tomato-shaped bowl, £6.49. Both from Gisela Graham.

* giselagraham.co.uk



ALL THAT GLITTERS

In striking stained glass, these butterfly garden stakes are a cheerful solution for plants needing support. Each is made with 13



pieces of coloured glass. £20 each, thebritishcrafthouse.co.uk.

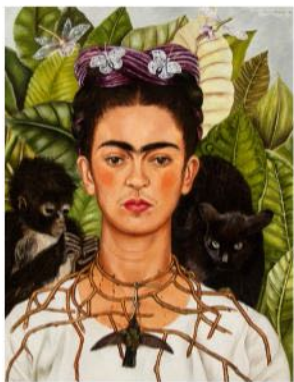
Money-saving tip

Drink up Take your own drinks on road trips, as service stations can charge around 90% more for bottled water than high street stores. Invest in a large flask, like the 1.8-litre Mondial from Argos, £18. It will pay for itself quickly when a motorway coffee costs up to £4.70.

FOR FRIDA KAHLO FANS

The Tate Modern's Frida: The Making of an Icon exhibition is a must for fans. The artist said she had 'many selves', and they're represented here in 30 of her most famous works. The show also includes 200 pieces by artists inspired by Frida's style.

* **Tate Modern, London, until 3 January 2027; tate.org.uk**



NATURE NOTES

From Louise Midgley



Since seeing a hummingbird hawk-moth, back in March, I've spotted many more of these little drone-like creatures, often in pairs, over the past few months.

We don't have hummingbirds in the UK but our hummingbird hawk-moths are the next best thing, albeit slightly smaller. They zoom from flower to flower, beating their wings at an incredible 70-80 beats per second, while extending their long proboscis into the blooms of their favourite flowers.

Experiments have shown they have spatial memory, so if they have visited your garden to feed on your salvias, honeysuckles or valerian, they will likely return.

My garden week

Today I pruned my espalier apple trees so that the sun can reach the fruit. Last year's crop was epic, so it's unlikely this year's will be so abundant.



FROM YOU TO US

Good to SHARE

We love to hear what you've been up to, so do get in touch!

Follower of fashion

With a sunny bank holiday ahead, I browsed the magazines in my local supermarket looking for some summer-sun reading. At a bargain price, *Woman's Weekly* caught my eye. Along with informative advice and lots of fun articles I was surprised at how impressive your summer fashion features were. I loved the What You're Wearing and You Wore It Well. Fantastic fashion inspiration from real women. They all look amazing. The 25 under £25 T-shirt article was great too, affordable fashion for all. I'll definitely be buying and following these pages as the seasons change.

Zoe Irwin, Hexham



Letter of the week

GET IN TOUCH

WE LOVE LETTERS

Woman's Weekly, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR.

P.S. It really helps when you put your details in capitals.

* We do not return photos (apart from You Wore It Well) so please do not send originals.

EMAIL US

womansweeklypostbag@futurenet.com

Tell us your full name, address and daytime phone number, please.

LOOK WHAT I MADE

I found a knitting pattern that's so useful for leftover wool. A few extra stitches make a fingerless mitt to fit so many different hands!

Noreen O'Connor, Reading



Important! All contributions to *Woman's Weekly* must be original and NOT duplicated to other publications. £25 will be paid to the writer of the 'Letter of the week' for all rights in each letter printed. The Editor reserves the right to modify any letter. Future plc reserves the right to reuse any submission to *Woman's Weekly* in any format or medium, including social networking sites. We regret that we cannot enter into personal correspondence. Photos of children under 18 must be accompanied by written permission of a parent/legal guardian. All details correct at time of going to press.



PAWS FOR THOUGHT

I thought I'd send you a picture of our rescue cat Billy, from Borders Pet Rescue in Earlsdon, looking rather Bond-like!

Avril Watson, Galashiels

* Got a pet pic that makes you smile? We can give it a good home



TRIKING A BALANCE

I've suffered with osteoarthritis since my 60s, and it got to the stage that I was unable to walk. But I wouldn't be accepted for hip replacements until I'd lost enough weight. Obviously, sitting

around so much hadn't helped. My hospital consultant advised me to try cycling and my hubby treated me to an electric pedal assist tricycle. That was back in 2021. I took to cycling like a duck to water, and by late summer 2022, I had lost over 19kg! I had both hip ops within six months, and was soon back on my lovely trike. I have ridden over 8,000 miles now, and my 81-year-old hubby has joined me. Life has never felt better... in fact, I feel 'wheely' good!

Brita Bevis, Sleaford

What you're WEARING



Fajr Altaf, 31

Tell us about your look

My dress came from a market about 15 years ago. I love the breathable cotton fabric, and the more I wash it, the softer it gets – which is wonderful as comfort is my top priority! I also really love the print – so much so that I've created a painting inspired by the floral design. My sandals are Deichmann and the bag is from Shein.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My sense of humour.



Amanda Short, 59

Tell us about your look

I'd say my style is classic with a modern twist. My white trousers are from M&S – they're such an effortless summer look. I've updated them with this blouse from Next. I like the on-trend lace detail. It's such a lovely feminine touch. My bag is by Elie Beaumont (the neutral colour goes with everything) and my sandals are from a local boutique.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My hair.



Gina Bochis, 58

Tell us about your look

I bought this silky print dress in Spain. It's such an easy shape and very comfy to wear. I love bold, bright colours and prints, so this dress is very me. My bag is from Italy and my gold sparkly sandals came from a local boutique. I love a touch of sparkle!

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My confidence.



Sarah Etienne, forever 21!

Tell us about your look

I love to shop on Vinted. co.uk as you can find some fantastic bargains. I call this my flamenco dress. I like the full-tiered skirt and the red/pink floral print. It's by Another Sunday and would have originally cost £120 but I paid just £18 on Vinted. My bag was a holiday buy and my sandals are Zara.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My brain. I always go for it and never overthink anything!

YOU WORE IT WELL

Rosalie Ison, 1956

I love this photo of my mum and dad on their wedding day, taken at St John the Baptist Church in Ault Hucknall, Derbyshire (known as the smallest village in England). Sadly, they are no longer with us, but they had an exceptionally happy life together.



* We'd love to see how great you looked in any era up to and including the 1980s. Please send a good-quality photo with your name, address and daytime phone number clearly written on the back, to: Fashion Dept, *Woman's Weekly*, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR. Photos will be returned.

‘Being a mum is everything to me’

She’s spent the past 26 years on *Coronation Street*, but actor Samia Longchambon tells us about the role that matters most to her

When Samia Longchambon became a mum for the first time, she decided that the life of a jobbing actor was not for her.

The *Coronation Street* star – best known as hairdresser Maria Connor – didn’t want to be away on filmsets or theatre tours and leave her newborn baby behind.

Today, with her daughter Freya now almost 17, Samia says she is glad to have been lucky enough to enjoy a career that has enabled her to be there for her children every night.

‘Being a mum is everything to me,’ smiles Samia, who also has a 10-year-old son, Yves. ‘It’s the reason for everything. They’re my little heartbeats and being a mum is my absolute most important job.’

She tells *Woman’s Weekly*, ‘Corrie has given me the best of both worlds. It’s a brilliant place to work. I love the people and, best of all, I love going home at the end of every day and being with my kids.’

‘It’s been a great job in that way. I made quite a conscious decision once I had Freya. I thought, I don’t want to be an actress who has to go up and down the country, not knowing where I’ll be from one month to the next. It’s really important to me that I don’t miss children growing up.’

The 44-year-old lives in Cheshire with her husband, personal trainer and *Dancing on Ice* professional skater Sylvain Longchambon, and Freya and Yves.

Samia recently proudly posted a picture on social media of Freya ahead of her school prom and admits it was an emotional occasion.

‘Driving to her friend’s house to take her to prom that night, I was



Corrie viewers have warmed to Maria through her many trials and tribulations



literally in tears,’ she confesses. ‘She was like, “Mum, what are you crying for?” I didn’t actually think I’d get that emotional, but I did.’

‘I feel like prom is quite a momentous occasion – it’s a kind of coming of age for kids. And it’s a big thing as a parent to think that my little baby girl has left school now and is about to go into the big wide world.’

Samia met Sylvain when they were partnered together on *Dancing on Ice* in 2013, and the couple will be celebrating their 10th wedding anniversary later this month.

‘Freya actually gets her GCSE results on our wedding anniversary, so either way that day, I’m going to be drinking champagne,’ she laughs.

What’s more, the couple won’t have to venture far for a tipple as they have their very own bar in their back garden

– a brainwave of Sylvain during the pandemic.

‘He built it out of some old fence panels, and he put wheels on it. So when we’ve had street parties, he’s wheeled it out of the garden and on to

the street. All the neighbours stand propping it up – they love it!’

When she’s away from the cobbles, Samia keeps fit by

running, as well as taking regular yoga and Pilates sessions. She says, ‘I also enjoy going out for bike rides. It’s nice. It puts things in perspective when you’re in nature.’

‘And I love going for lovely walks with my little Maltipoo, Ralf – that’s probably my favourite thing!’

Samia was only 17 when she joined *Coronation Street*, having been a child actor since she was 11. Her cobbles role



Samia met Sylvain on *Dancing on Ice*. They have a 10-year-old son, Yves (left)



 THE
 Woman's
 Weekly
 INTERVIEW

was initially only meant to be for three months, but viewers soon warmed to kind-hearted Maria. Over the years, they have sympathised with her countless trials and tribulations – and things are no different today.

Viewers know that Maria's husband, Gary, helped Sarah Platt cover up after she killed Theo Silverton. Maria has been suspicious about Gary's strange behaviour and has been forced to cover for him, even though she doesn't yet know quite what he has done.

'It's been a really hard time for Gary and Maria, and it's touch-and-go whether they're going to make it through,' Samia says. 'I wouldn't have her patience – absolutely not! But she doesn't want another failed relationship, and as heartbroken as she is that he's chosen Sarah above his own family, she does love him and doesn't want to break up their family unit.'

She continues, 'There are loads of twists and turns to come. I had a meeting with the producer the other week, and I'm still on the fence as to whether they're going to make it through.'

As for the future, Samia believes there's a lot more life left in Maria, but she also admits to having one outstanding personal ambition.

'It's always been on my bucket list to own a quaint little tea shop,' she reveals. 'Hopefully, I'll do that at some point. I'd like a proper old English tea shop, where you can read books and maybe have reflexology sessions upstairs. I've even got a name for my tea shop, but I'm keeping that private for now!'

The star concludes, 'I love baking, and Sylvain will make the crêpes; that's his job! It's just the dream, isn't it? Being out in the countryside somewhere – slow living. I feel like that's the way forward.'

*** *Coronation Street* airs weekdays on ITV at 8.30pm and on ITVX from 7am.**



CELEBRATING BRITAIN

POSTCARDS *from the past*

Putting a stamp on holiday memories

They might be small, but postcards have played a big part in keeping us connected. For more than 150 years we've used them to share secret love

messages, boost wartime morale and giggle over our quirky British sense of humour. 'Postcards were the text messages of their day, a snappy way to

send a short message, at a cheaper rate than posting a letter,' explains Joanna Espin, senior curator at London's Postal Museum.

The first postcards

Introduced in Britain in 1870, postcards then were plain and practical with a prepaid stamp, no pictures on them and strict rules about exactly where you could write your message. Back then, posting one cost a ha'penny (half the price of a letter) and, at the

height of their popularity, over 900 million cards were delivered every year in Britain. Today, it's the same price as a letter – £1.80 first class, 91p second class – and with holidaymakers often arriving home before



their cards, it might help explain why one rarely drops through our letter box any more!

LOVE MESSAGES

We might associate postcards with seaside holidays, but in Victorian times they were used for something far more romantic. With several postal deliveries every day, they were a quick and easy way for courting couples to arrange meetings and send secret messages to one another without writing a single word. 'The language of stamps became a popular way of hiding a message in plain sight,' explains Joanna. 'Angling the stamp in

different directions could mean "I love you" or "Have you forgotten me?". The code could also be used to send more negative messages, and receiving one with a stamp angled at 90° could mean "I hate you!"



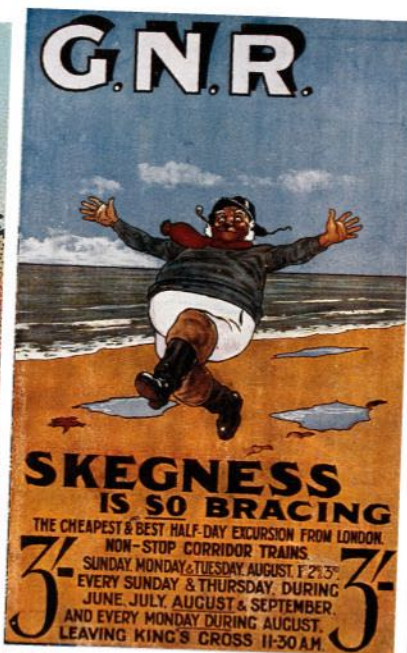
WHAT'S DOING?



Morale boost

During both World Wars, postcards played an emotional role for soldiers and their families. 'Romantic postcards were a token of

SANDS.



Holiday boasts

Picture postcards didn't appear until 1894, just as seaside holidays were catching on. With train travel expanding and more time off, families began flocking to resorts such as Blackpool and Brighton – and sending postcards soon became part of the experience.

Featuring iconic seaside images of donkeys and deckchairs, sending a postcard was a simple way to tell everyone you were 'Having a wonderful time!'. Before selfies and social media, sending a postcard from far-flung destinations became the ultimate holiday boast, with the famous phrase 'Wish you were here' designed to make recipients jealous.

SAUCY SOUVENIRS

The 1930s were the golden era for naughty postcards, which often reflected the quirky British sense of humour. Frequently featuring bare flesh accompanied by lewd jokes, these cartoon-style postcards poked risque fun at buxom landladies, hen-pecked husbands and tipsy holidaymakers. But not everyone was a fan of the ruder versions. During the 1950s, the newly elected Conservative government, worried about the decline in moral standards in Britain, decided to crack down on their sale. Famous postcard cartoonist Donald McGill, who created thousands of designs of scantily clad figures in compromising positions, was prosecuted and fined under the Obscene Publications Act. 'Censorship boards were set up in seaside towns to judge which designs could be printed,' explains Joanna. Today, original saucy postcards are highly collectible, with one fetching £3,850 in 1994.



DID YOU KNOW

During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, boring postcards of motorway service stations, dreary civic centres and airport terminals were popular too!

love and an image to treasure throughout their separation,' says Joanna. They were a way for soldiers to send a quick message home with the phrase 'still going strong' used to reassure their loved ones they were OK.

Postcards also became a propaganda tool to boost wartime morale. Images of trenches and troops with patriotic slogans were used to show the strength of the armed forces and present an idealised image of life on the frontline. 'Soldiers' postcards were censored to prevent information leaks to the enemy,' explains Joanna, 'and picture postcards had their captions struck through in order to hide the sender's location.'

STOP *holiday tummy troubles* FAST!

Don't let stomach problems ruin
your fun – at home or away



Swerve sickness

'The risk of food poisoning rises during the warmer months, partly due to unsafe practices when eating

outside, combined with warmer temperatures, which help bacteria in foods grow faster,' says GP Dr Anya Leaver*.

Take care when:

On a flight 'Avoid alcohol, caffeine and gas-producing foods, such as beans, lentils and salty snacks, before and during your flight,' says gut health nutritionist Adrienne Benjamin.

'Peppermint or ginger herbal teas can soothe the digestive system in the air.'

Cooking on the barbecue

Defrost frozen meat thoroughly before grilling and use a meat thermometer to ensure food is cooked all the way through. Raw and cooked food should be kept apart, using separate utensils for each.

Preparing a picnic Wash your fresh food first. 'Bacteria that cause food poisoning, such as salmonella, listeria and E. coli,

There are plenty of triggers that can disrupt your tum during the summer.

From flying abroad to staying at home with the temptation to overdo alcohol, barbecue food and snacks – all bad news for your digestion. But some simple measures can help you avoid discomfort during the summer holidays. Here's what to try.



Beat gut-lag

Your digestive system and gut microbiome are closely tied to your body's internal clock – the one that controls your sleep, eating patterns and metabolism. When your natural rhythm gets disrupted, it can lead to

Drinking tap water in some countries can cause an upset tummy. Check your location and stick to bottled water if needed.

bloating, constipation or nausea. Jet lag also affects melatonin and cortisol, which dictate appetite and digestion. 'To help your gut adjust, adapt your eating and sleep cycles to the local time zone from the moment you arrive,' says Adrienne.

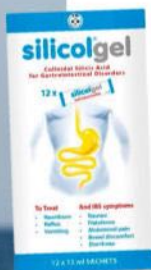
HOW TO EAT IN THE HEAT

Hot weather can lead to queasiness and reduced appetite. Avoid heavy meals during the hottest part of the day and eat smaller portions to maintain gut regularity, says Adrienne. 'Focus on salads, fish, fruit and wholefood ingredients. Water-based fruits, such as watermelon and cucumber, can help with hydration.'



STAY REGULAR

Constipated? Eat fibre-rich foods, including apples, blueberries, broccoli, beans and seeds, to help food pass through your digestive tract. And don't forget to move.



A brisk walk a couple of times a day will help release wind and get your bowels moving. Silicolgel, £11.95 for 12 sachets, Holland & Barrett, can help stop acid reflux by lining the stomach with a protective layer.

RELIEVE HEARTBURN

Overindulging in the summer is a fast track to heartburn. 'Your stomach has to work harder to digest food, putting pressure on the muscles that prevent stomach acid backing up into the oesophagus (food pipe),' says Dr Deborah Lee from doctorfox.co.uk. Avoid triggers such as fried food, citrus juices, booze and late-night meals.

EXTRA HELP

Need to stop diarrhoea for your flight home? Try Superdrug Acute Diarrhoea Relief Capsules, £2.49 for six, for short-term relief. Seek medical help for worsening dehydration, symptoms that aren't improving after three days or a persistent temperature.



BANISH BLOATING

Does your favourite floaty dress or swimming costume feel tight? Poor chewing habits, unbalanced gut flora and food sensitivity, due to a change in diet, can cause an uncomfortable tummy swell. Dehydration is also a trigger. If you deprive your body of fluids,

it goes into 'famine' mode and holds on to what you've got, causing bloating, explains nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert. Sip water throughout the day and try to avoid fizzy drinks. 'Sucralose and aspartame, often found in fizzy drinks, can't be effectively broken down by the body and can lead to bloating,' adds nutritionist Kim Pearson.

Is it something else?

An upset tummy might be down to more than just summer triggers. 'If you regularly experience symptoms, such as pain or discomfort, bloating, wind or a change in bowel habits, it could be irritable bowel syndrome,' says IBS specialist dietician Laura Tilt. Talk to your GP about an IBS diagnosis and rule out other possible causes, such as more serious inflammatory bowel diseases.

- try banana, white rice and plain crackers.
- * Avoid dairy products – sensitivities to lactose can occur after any gut infection.
- * Anti-sickness tablets can help you to keep fluids down and improve your hydration levels.
- * Oral rehydration sachets containing electrolytes can help after episodes of vomiting and diarrhoea.

TRY...

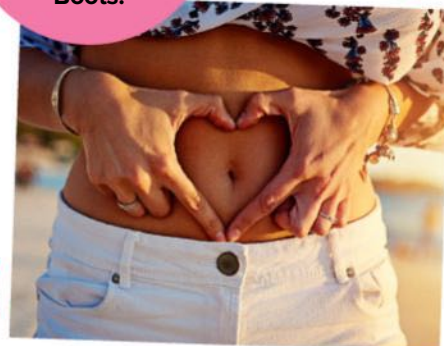
Dioralyte
diarrhoea relief
rehydration sachets,
£4.90 for six,
Boots.



AND IF DISASTER STRIKES
Most stomach issues settle after a few days, but these tips can help recovery, says GP Dr Unnati Desai:

- * Rest your stomach after sickness and reintroduce food slowly when feeling better.
- * Keep your diet bland

can live on the surface of fruit and vegetables,' says Dr Leaver. Washing them before eating or cooking them helps prevent infection. **At the hotel buffet** Check that surfaces, crockery and utensils are clean before tucking in. Also, be careful that the food hasn't been left out for too long. Food should always be covered and old dishes shouldn't be topped up with new food, says GP Dr Krishnaraj Sivarajan*.



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IT'S A FUNNY OLD WORLD

'It's amazing waking the nation up'

THIS WEEK'S COLUMNIST Journalist and presenter Charlotte Hawkins

“I absolutely love working in news and feel so lucky to be doing the job that I wanted from a young age. I was always that person

who would question things and want to know more, never quite happy with the answer I was given and thinking there must be more to it. I just like getting to the heart of a story.

I started off as a news trainee at ITV Meridian and worked my way up the ladder.

For a number of years, I was a reporter, and got to go out on the road and chat to people and hear their stories. But I felt I hadn't reached where I was supposed to be, so I just kept

pushing forward. Sometimes there's a place where you're destined to be and you just have to keep going until you get there.

Working on *Good Morning Britain* is brilliant. We get to wake people up and tell them what's going on in the world, which is amazing. The responsibility of communicating

with people and passing information on, in the right way, is something I really believe in.

It is also such an honour to be part of *ITV News* – I have got to break some brilliant stories and have had the chance to be part of the editorial process at the same time. They're an amazing team and are all massively supportive.

Presenting my first *News at Ten* was a real pinch-me moment. When I was sat there and the 'bongs' were going, I thought of all those iconic people who have presented it before me and felt a real weight of expectation.

Although I am passionate about my job, working in journalism can be tough. When I've had a stressful day, there's nothing like coming home, switching on some

beautiful classical music and just chilling out. There are certain pieces of music that I always turn to for a bit of a musical hug.

I have an 11-year-old daughter and I'm enthusiastic about making sure she has classical music in her life, as well as bopping along to Taylor Swift! I think it's essential

that it's passed on to future generations.

That's partly why I'm thrilled to once again be part of André Rieu's annual summer concert. It's a very special one this year because he's celebrating two decades. I've worked with him now for 15 years, which is a milestone in itself.

André is such a showman; he really knows how to engage with an audience. I absolutely guarantee it's going to be such a special thing to watch – I love working with him.

'I was always that person who would question things'

*** Watch Charlotte on *Good Morning Britain*, *ITV News* and *ITV Racing*. For cinema tickets to André Rieu's *Viva Maastricht!* 2026 summer concert, which will be shown at over 600 venues nationwide on 8-9 August, visit andreincinemas.com**

'My funny old week'

WHERE I'VE BEEN I've just had a few days sailing with friends. On the Isle of Wight, we visited one of my all-time favourite restaurants – The Hut, in Colwell Bay. It ended with dancing on the tables, so was quite the night!

WHAT I'VE SEEN We had a family trip to London to watch *The Play That Goes Wrong*. It was so funny, we loved it.

WHO I'VE MET I was lucky enough to be invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party recently. I met [singer] Sinitta there and had a lovely chat with her.

WHAT I'VE BOUGHT I was buying a bracelet for a friend's birthday from Catherine de Crèvecoeur and there was a discount if you bought two items, so I couldn't resist. I've worn the earrings I bought for myself loads since.



Charlotte crossed the Solent to the Isle of Wight

Set for SUMMER

From hi-tech sunscreen to glow-giving skincare, Boots has everything you need to enjoy the great outdoors this season



Whether you're jetting off somewhere or planning a summer at home, there's nothing like getting outside and immersing yourself in nature. Simple pleasures – like beach walks, picnics in the park, evening strolls at sunset, and hours spent pottering in the garden – are hallmarks of a summer well spent. But how to balance the joy of time in the sun with keeping your skin, hair and body in peak condition? Boots has you covered, with a range of skin-prep essentials, wellness solutions and superb sun protection to take your beauty routine outside.

Be prepared

There are always those unexpected moments, and nothing ruins time outdoors like sunburn, insect bites and dehydrated skin. Boots is on hand to help you prepare, with essentials to restock your first aid kit, like plasters and wipes. Skin conditions like rosacea and psoriasis can flare up in summer, so pop in-store to speak to an expertly trained member of the Boots Beauty Crew or No7 Advisor for tailored advice.

Skincare switch-up

Summer also means tweaking your regime to suit your skin's seasonal needs. Boots hydrating cleansers and lightweight moisturisers will keep skin feeling refreshed. When you're spending time outside, the most important consideration is protection. At Boots you'll find a range of SPF products, from water-resistant formulas to easy spray-ons, to keep skin happy and healthy.

* Shop new launches, exclusive products and summer saviours in Boots stores and online at boots.com

OUTDOOR-PROOF BEAUTY BUYS



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La Roche-Posay Cicaplast Baume B5, £11, is a soothing cream, suitable for the whole family.

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A sunburnt scalp is painful, so protect your hairline with Hawaiian Tropic Hydrating Protection Scalp Mist SPF 30, £17.

THE MAKE-UP PERFECTOR

No7 Prime Forever SPF 50 Primer, £24.95, helps your make-up stay put through heat and humidity, with bonus sun protection.

THE STAY-FRESH STICK

Use Sure Whole Body Deo in Rio Coconut, £5.25, in summer-scented coconut, wherever you need odour control.

THE EASY-TO-APPLY SPF

Soltan Once Advanced 8hr Protect Suncare Spray SPF30, £13, has long-lasting protection and 40 minutes of water resistance.

THE KIND CLEANSER

CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser, £12.50, goes deep to remove dirt, excess oil and sunscreen, while leaving skin comfortable and soft.*

MAIN PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY. *LRP CICA BALM: £220 PER 1L. HAWAIIAN TROPIC: £141.67 PER 1L. NO7: £499 PER 1L. SURE: £35 PER 1L. SOLTAN: £70 PER 1L. CERAVE: £52.97 PER 1L.

10 OF THE BEST

Seasonal SCENTS

Transport yourself to the tropics with perfumes that smell like sunshine

1 FLOWER POWER

Flowerbomb is one of the UK's most-loved floral scents, and **Viktor & Rolf Flowerbomb Peony Eau de Parfum, £72 for 30ml, John Lewis**, is the newest version. It has an extra sprinkling of sweetness, with the addition of strawberry and peony notes. It smells just like inhaling a huge bouquet of blooms.

2 FRESH & FRUITY

We love the French brand's understated yet stylish scent selection. **Caudalie Ange des Vignes Eau de Parfum, £29 for 50ml, uk.caudalie.com**, is juicy and refreshing – like a freshly prepared fruit salad. It's perfectly balanced thanks to the addition of neroli and wood, which add depth to the raspberry and grape top notes.

3 MAKE WAVES When you're looking to treat yourself to a special scent, you can always rely on Jo Malone. Inspired by the great British coastline, **Jo Malone Sea Salt & Bergamot Cologne, £58 for 30ml, jomalone.co.uk**, is as fresh and invigorating as a cold-water plunge. Sea salt and driftwood are lifted by zingy bergamot, which creates a unique, addictive scent.

4 MOOD BOOSTER

Ted Baker Floralicious Isla Eau de Toilette, £25 for 50ml, Superdrug, is an uplifting mix of aquatic notes with zesty citrus and fresh florals. The combination really transports you to a breezy seaside clifftop, surrounded by fruit trees and plant life, leaving you feeling relaxed and refreshed.

**5 SOMETHING SWEET**

Gourmand scents, inspired by desserts, are a huge fragrance trend, but there's a way to wear them without feeling sickly. **Le Monde Gourmand Crème Vanille Eau de Parfum, £28 for 30ml, lookfantastic.com**, is creamy and comforting, with indulgent hints of brown sugar and amber.

6 BARGAIN BUY Primark's perfume offering proves that you don't have to spend a fortune to get a signature scent. **PS... Bergamot 11 Eau de Parfum, £7 for 100ml, Primark**, smells suspiciously similar to a more expensive buy, with a zingy, citrusy kick. The weighty bottle makes it look much more expensive than it is.

10 SHORE THING

Bring the beach to your bathroom with **Summer Sun Eau de Parfum, £24 for 200ml, Next**. One spritz transports you to the seaside thanks to the warming blend of mandarin, bergamot, caramel and coconut. It's also available in a 10ml size, so you can take it on holiday with you.

9 SPECIAL EDITION

We always look forward to the release of **Estée Lauder Bronze Goddess Eau de Parfum, £72 for 50ml, Boots**. Every summer there's a new version, and this year it's a delicious blend of coconut, amber, sandalwood and vanilla. The warmth of amber paired with the sweetness of the coconut and vanilla whisks you right to the beach.

8 DESIGNER INSPIRED

M&S has a new fragrance range, Studio, which has luxurious-looking – and smelling – scents at an affordable price. They are light and layerable, unisex – and they make great gifts. Our pick of the bunch is **Ginger Flower Eau de Parfum, £22.50 for 100ml, M&S**. It's a twist on traditional florals, thanks to the addition of spicy ginger to give it a bit of a kick.

7 MIST ME

Body mists are a great way of experiencing luxe scents at a more affordable price. **Lancôme La Vie Est Belle L'Original Hair & Body Mist, £34 for 100ml, Boots**, smells exactly like the bestseller – a blend of iris, caramel and patchouli – only lighter. It can be used in your hair too.



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M&S



£25,
Matalan



£10, George
at Asda

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£20, Tu
Clothing



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F&F at Tesco

Leap of FAITH

Embracing change can be challenging, but the benefits can be huge. Meet three women who opted for a calmer life



Susie finds it therapeutic being outside with the horses

'My mystery illness vanished'

Susie Gessey, 55, a holistic therapist, lives in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, and runs The Healing Horse Sanctuary.

Arriving at my horse sanctuary at 5am is idyllic, the birds are singing and I often catch the sunrise. Every morning, I feel lucky to be with the rescue horses when most people are still sleeping.

But my life wasn't always calm. I worked in sales for 15 years selling commercial insurance, and I spent my days on the motorway, stuck in traffic and feeling stressed.

I developed a mystery illness, and suffered from debilitating migraines and exhaustion. When I was having an episode, I could barely walk.

One attack was so bad that I was hospitalised for three weeks and diagnosed with chronic fatigue. The doctor told me, 'I'm afraid you're always going to feel this way,' and this scared me. I had to change my lifestyle.

'It's very fulfilling'

I'd read that spending time in green spaces could reduce stress significantly. Volunteering at a horse sanctuary while I was off sick was an ideal way to get out in nature. Although I'd never owned a horse, I loved animals and relished the early starts. The quiet and being outside with animals soothed my mind and, I'm convinced, helped to heal my broken body.

I realised I needed to ditch my old life and retrained as a holistic therapist. In 2008, I set up my own horse sanctuary, and I've since rescued 40 horses and ponies, eight chickens, eight dogs and four cats. I balance my time between the sanctuary and my clients; it's very fulfilling.

I'm earning less and don't take a penny from the sanctuary, but I'm happier and healthier. I used to go to bed at midnight after drinking a bottle of wine, now I'm asleep by 9pm after a camomile tea.

* thehealinghorsesanctuary.com



Swapping the city for the Outer Hebrides has been life-changing for Chris and Maureen





Flexible hours mean
Lisanne can spend more
time with son, Thomas

'I'm fitter than I was in my 20s'

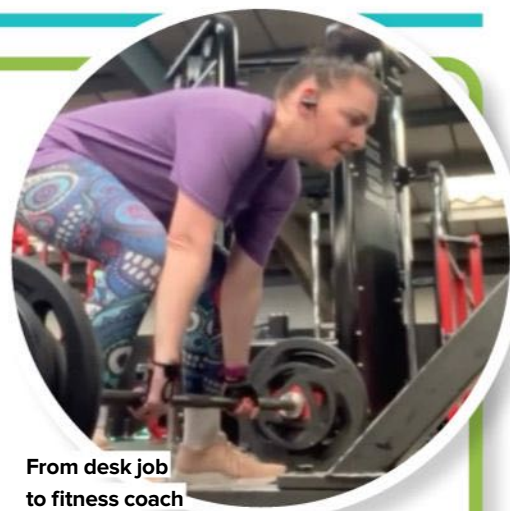
Personal trainer Lisanne O'Neill, 41, lives in Grays, Essex, with her husband Tom, 46, an engineering manager, and their son Thomas, 10.

It had been another busy morning at the bank in my role overseeing corporate payments. I had returned to work following my son Thomas' birth, but as a new mum I felt exhausted and had little time for exercise.

After lunch, more tasks were dumped on my desk that weren't my responsibility, yet I couldn't say no. I had worked in banking for 15 years after leaving school at 17. I was proud of what I had achieved, but, in 2018, I felt trapped in a job that had lost its shine.

I was close to tears that day and called my husband, Tom, from the toilet. He said if I wanted to leave, then he would support me. I went back to my desk and typed my resignation letter. My boss was gobsmacked, but I needed a change and I had to take a leap of faith.

That night, Tom and I researched fitness jobs online and I decided to train as a pre- and post-natal fitness coach. It was a big risk but the new role fitted in with where I was in life, and it felt right.



From desk job
to fitness coach

A month later, I left the bank, completed the training and my own fitness improved. I started running again, and in 2019 did a Race for Life and qualified as a personal trainer,

turning my conservatory into a gym for clients.

I'm now fitter than I was in my 20s and stronger than I've ever been.

But there are more positives about swapping careers. I'm able to work alongside the school runs and holidays, and I adore my job helping people to achieve their fitness potential. It's fantastic that I no longer feel stressed like I did every day in my previous career, sat behind a desk.

* Instagram @lisanneoneillpt

'I no longer feel stressed'

'Free time is spent on the beach'

Photographer Maureen Du Preez, 38, from North Uist, the Outer Hebrides, lives with her husband Chris, 42, a seaweed harvester and fisherman, and their son, Iggy, six, and daughter, Mara, two.

Grabbing coats to head to the beach with my children, it's hard to believe I used to live in London. Home is now a cottage in the village of Carinish on a Scottish island that overlooks the Atlantic.

I grew up in this beautiful part of the world, but I was eager to escape and left at 17 to study media in Glasgow, then I moved to London at 23. I dreamt of a career in photography but worked as a temp. I shared a grubby house in Walthamstow and travelled by bus to save money.

I loved the idea of living in London for all the culture, but I couldn't afford to do much. Chris and I married in 2011 and by 2015, despite me landing a photography and content creation role, we decided to move back to the Outer Hebrides.

I'd realised the city wasn't for me, and Chris felt the same. After 10 years away,

I craved the peace of the islands.

'No more three-hour commutes'

At first, I wasn't sure if my photography career would survive living in such a remote place, but I'm still thriving. I'm in demand for weddings and photo shoots, which often use the island's landscape as a backdrop.

One of the biggest impacts of leaving the city has been the increase in time. No more three-hour commutes every day. I love



Mara and Iggy
love island life

working at home, I can take days off if the weather is nice and rest if I'm tired.

There's no doubt that island life suits my children too – they were both born here, they love walking in nature and we spend lots of our free time at the beach. I couldn't imagine raising Iggy and Mara anywhere else.

* maureendupreez.com

Bella **ITALIA!**

Take your taste buds on holiday with Gennaro Contaldo's easy menu

Fettuccine alla papalina

A lighter version of the classic spaghetti carbonara that was created in the 1930s for Pope Pius XII.

SERVES 4

READY IN 20 mins

- * 1tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- * 50g butter
- * 1 large onion, finely chopped
- * 120g frozen peas
- * 200g thick-cut cooked ham, cut into small cubes
- * 320g egg fettuccine (or tagliatelle)
- * 6 egg yolks
- * 60g Parmesan, grated

1 Melt the olive oil and butter in a pan over a gentle heat. Add the onion and sweat for about 10 mins until it is softened.

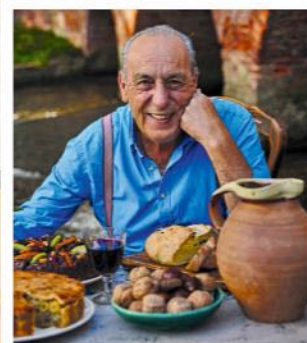
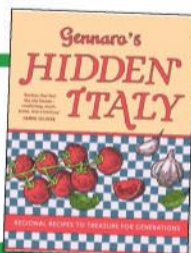
2 Turn the heat up to medium, and add the frozen peas and ham. Season and stir for about 4 mins until the peas are cooked.

3 Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to the boil and cook the fettuccine until al dente (according to the pack instructions).

4 In a bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and Parmesan with a little black pepper.

5 When the pasta is cooked, drain and add it to the pan with the peas and ham, along with a little of the pasta cooking water. Mix together and cook over a high heat for 1 min. Take the pan off the heat and mix in the egg mixture. Serve immediately with a sprinkling of black pepper.

Recipes from
Gennaro's Hidden Italy by Gennaro Contaldo (£22, HB, Pavilion).



PER SERVING
697 cals, 34g fat, 15g sat fat, 59g carbs



**PER
SERVING**
385 cal, 28g
fat, 10g sat fat,
2g carbs

Trota comasca (Trout fillets with anchovy sauce)

Serve this speedy yet impressive main with steamed new potatoes and greens.

SERVES 4

PREP 10 mins, plus marinating

COOK 10 mins

- * 4 trout fillets, weighing 125g each, skin on
- * 4tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- * Juice of 2 lemons
- * 1 small red onion, roughly chopped
- * 1-2 rosemary sprigs
- * Steamed new potatoes and greens, to serve (optional)

FOR THE SAUCE

- * 50g butter
- * 4 anchovy fillets, very finely chopped
- * 1 large garlic clove, finely diced
- * 100ml white wine
- * Handful of flat-leaf parsley, very finely chopped

1 Put the trout fillets in a dish. In a jug, combine the olive oil, lemon juice, onion and rosemary with a little salt and then pour the

mixture over the trout fillets. Set aside and allow the trout to marinate at room temperature for 30 mins.

2 Heat the oven to 200C Fan/Gas 7. Line a flat baking tray with baking paper and put the marinated trout fillets (with the marinade) on the tray, then bake for 10 mins until the trout is cooked through.

3 Meanwhile, make the sauce. In a small pan, melt the butter with the anchovy fillets, garlic and a little salt over a medium heat, then pour in the wine, increase the heat a little and, stirring from time to time, cook until the wine evaporates and the sauce reduces. Stir in the parsley.

4 Remove the trout fillets from the oven and transfer them to serving plates. Pour over the sauce and serve immediately with steamed new potatoes and greens.

Crostata di ricotta e visciole (Ricotta and cherry tart)

Filled with jam and creamy ricotta, this delicious tart comes from Roman Jewish cuisine.

SERVES 6

PREP 30 mins, plus resting COOK 50 mins

- * 220g '00' flour, plus extra for dusting
- * 100g butter, cut into small pieces, plus extra for greasing
- * 70g caster sugar
- * Pinch of ground cinnamon
- * Zest of ½ lemon
- * 1tsp vanilla extract
- * 2 egg yolks, lightly beaten

FOR THE FILLING

- * 500g ricotta, well drained
- * 80g caster sugar
- * 180g cherry jam
- * 1 egg yolk, beaten with a little milk, for egg wash
- * Icing sugar, for dusting

YOU WILL NEED

- * 22cm round pie dish/tin, greased and lightly dusted with flour

1 In a large bowl, rub the flour and butter together with your fingertips until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Stir in the

sugar, cinnamon, lemon zest and vanilla extract, then gradually fold in the yolks, until the mixture comes together to form a soft dough. If necessary, add a little cold water. Shape into a ball, wrap in cling film and chill in fridge for 30 mins.

2 Heat the oven to 160C Fan/Gas 4. In a bowl, mix the ricotta and sugar for the filling until nice and creamy. Cover and chill.

3 Divide the dough into 2 pieces, one slightly larger than the other and, on a lightly floured surface, roll out each to 5mm-thick round. Line the pie dish/tin with the larger piece, spread over the jam and top with the ricotta mixture. Cover with the other pastry circle, and brush the edges with a little water, crimping

**PER
SERVING**
591 cal, 26g
fat, 15g sat fat,
74g carbs



to secure well, so the filling doesn't escape. Brush the top with egg wash and bake for about 50 mins, until golden.

4 Leave in the dish/tin to cool, then carefully remove the pie and dust the top with icing sugar to serve.

Woman's Weekly Travel Offers

Music Thru The Decades at WARNER HOTELS

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Carry on New Year
Isle of Wight
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**Just
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● **4 to 8 Jan 2027**

- James Williams Showband ● Emily Reed as Cher
- New Year Party with Keith Slater & 60s Explosion
- The Fortunes ● Joey Scott ● Jimmy Jemain as Cliff
- Masterpiece' Temptations tribute ● Carnaby Street
- YMCA Village People Experience ● The Decades Band
- Suzy Hopwood as Madonna ● Country Joe
- Uche Eke Soulfully Sung ● The Boulevards
- Jamie Thurston of Herman's Hermits ● 60s Supreme
- Little Miss 60s ● Child ● The GN A-Team



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Carry on New
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- 'Carry on New Year' countdown party with Rich Mix & Keith Slater
- 60s Supreme ● The Boulevards
- Masterpiece' Temptations tribute
- Tameka Jackson as Diana Ross
- From the Gap ● The Beached Boys
- Frankie Valli & Four Seasons tribute West End Jerseys
- CHILD ● Jimmy Jemain as Cliff
- Gaz Jenkins as Billy Joel
- Nancy Ann Lee ● Billy Shannon
- YMCA's Village People Experience
- Hijacked Hollies ● The GN A-Team



**Thru The
Decades
Carry on New
Year Isle of
Wight Party**

Free Drinks

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half board
PLUS from
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Free Car Ferry

**Just
£10^{pp}
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Warner Norton Grange

● **Self Drive to resort**

● **28 Jan to 1 Feb 2027**

- 'Carry on New Year' countdown party with Rich Mix & Keith Slater
- Nancy Ann Lee's Papa Don't Preach
- Soultown Divaz ● The Four D's
- Paul da Vinci's 60s & 70s Explosion
- Suzy Hopwood as Kylie Minogue
- Marc Robinson's Winter Dance Party tributes to Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, The Big Bopper, Dion & The Belmonts
- Sarah Riches - Hopelessly Devoted to Olivia Newton John with Band
- SOS Blues Brothers ● Motown's Legends
- Police tribute The Rozzers ● Joey Scott
- Frankie Valli & Four Seasons tribute West End Jerseys ● Country Joe
- Cheyne Moore's Motown & Soul
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The short GOODBYE

Don't be caught out by sky-high drop-off charges at UK airports

Even if you take a wrong turn at the airport and drive through the chargeable zones without stopping, the number plate recognition could clock you and charge a fine.

You might think you're doing friends or family a favour by dropping them off for a flight this summer, but that kindness could cost you.

Some airports will hit you with eye-watering fees just for pulling up outside the terminal. Gatwick is the priciest at £10 for just 10 minutes. Stansted isn't far behind at £10 for 15 minutes – and that figure soars to £28 if you stay a minute longer. Heathrow charges £7 for 10 minutes, and Edinburgh and Bristol both

charge £8.50 for 10 minutes. Manchester starts from £5 for five minutes.

Of the big UK airports, Birmingham lets you drop off for free – although that's a five- to 10-minute walk from the terminal. You'll pay £7 if you want to stop right outside.

Leeds Bradford is another with a free one-hour zone, five minutes' walk to the terminal.

Free drop-off spots

So what can you do?

Well, most airports do actually have free drop-off spots.

They're usually located in a long-stay car park with a shuttle-bus service to get to the planes.

It's worth doing a bit of homework well ahead of the date when you'll

be dropping people off so you're not scrambling to work out your options on the day. Look on the airport website for free drop-off information or give them a call. At Gatwick, for example, you can park for up to two hours free in a long-stay car park and use a shuttle to the terminal, which may make more sense than handing over a tenner for 10 minutes.

If you have a Blue Badge between you, always check if there are free parking options. At some airports you may automatically be exempt from paying the drop-off fee.

Watch the clock

If you do end up paying to park them off, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. Firstly, keep your goodbyes snappy so you don't clock up extra charges.

Also, you often have to pay online, so don't forget. There's usually a window – typically until

midnight the next day – to do so. Miss that and you could be looking at a fine. Gatwick charges £100 if you don't pay in time, which will quickly take the edge off a nice holiday send-off.

One way to be sure is to set up an account before the journey with your card details, then your payment will be taken automatically when you go through a chargeable zone.

When the trip's over and you're heading back to pick everyone up, double-check the rules, which can be different in one place from the next.

Some airports, including Edinburgh and Bristol, have a combined drop-off and pick-up zone, but usually you'll have to pull up somewhere else. Often, you'll have to pay to park in short-stay car parks or make use of the free zones in long-stay car parks. Just remember to time it right so you don't end up exceeding the allotted free time.

Birmingham Airport introduced the first drop-off charges in 2007, charging motorists £1.



Drop off only



woman&home
Editor's Collection

Hidden EUROPE

241
dream
destinations
at home & away

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Your wellbeing

LATEST HEALTH SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR MIND AND BODY

3 WAYS TO...

Reduce dry mouth at night



1 KEEP YOUR BEDROOM COOL 'A warm bedroom can make you sweat more and lose moisture overnight,' says sleep expert and

GP, Dr Deborah Lee*. Avoid heavy bedding in summer and sleep in 100% cotton pyjamas.

2 DEAL WITH ALLERGIES 'Dust and pollen can irritate your nose and throat,' says Dr Lee. Keep windows shut, wash bed linen often, and avoid bringing allergens into the bedroom by not bringing clothes you've been wearing outside in there.

3 DRINK SMART Drink lots of water during the day and reduce alcohol close to bedtime because it dehydrates you. If you also snore loudly or feel very tired during the day, speak to your GP.

MY HEALTHY LIFE



Abby Richardson is a cold-water therapist.

My go-to remedy

For me, it's cold-water immersion. It's become a non-negotiable part of my wellbeing routine.

I became a cold-water convert in the second lockdown and now I swim in the tidal pools of north Cornwall all year round. I notice a huge difference when I haven't been in the water for a while. Life can be busy and noisy, but being in cold water forces me to switch off and be completely present. It's my reset button and one of the best things I do for my mental wellbeing.

My favourite meal

I absolutely love food, cooking and discovering new places to eat. Having lived in Venice, my favourite meal has to be a proper Italian feast.

I'd start with antipasti and a Campari spritz, followed by handmade filled pasta with sage butter and parmigiano – although a well-made spaghetti alle vongole would be a close second. I'd finish with a hazelnut gelato. I love how Italian food celebrates simple ingredients.

How I keep fit and healthy

Like a lot of parents, I have to fit exercise around work and family life. I live in Cornwall, so early morning runs along the River Camel are my favourite way to start the day. They clear my head



before everything gets busy. It's less about athletic performance and more about how it makes me feel mentally and physically. These days I try to persuade my teenage boys to come for a dip in the sea with me, although they're not always that enthusiastic!

My perfect day...

Somewhere warm and beautiful, probably in Greece. I'd wake up early and go for a swim in crystal-clear blue water before everyone else is awake. I'd spend time reading, wandering through a local market to buy fresh produce and enjoy cooking a long, relaxed lunch. In the evening there'd be a walk at sunset, a delicious sundowner overlooking the sea, good music and plenty of laughter. The day would finish with card games with family and our best friends – simple pleasures, but they're the things that make me happiest.

NEWSFLASH

Breakthrough drug offers hope for ovarian cancer

An ovarian-cancer drug which reduces side effects, because it targets chemotherapy to cancerous tissue rather than the whole body, is now available on the NHS in England. The new treatment – called mirvetuximab soravtansine – can also help extend lives.



New read

DO BLUE
(£11.99, THE DO BOOKS CO)

Water, waves and wellbeing is the focus of this book which reminds us of how we should reconnect with water to improve our health. From the science behind 'blue health' to inspirational stories and practical advice, this book reveals a multitude of ways to champion wellbeing through water.





Doctor Gill

ADVICE FROM OUR WOMAN'S WEEKLY DOCTOR

Glucose monitoring update

A study of type 2 diabetes patients showed using continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) gave significantly greater HbA1C reductions than using standard finger-prick tests, with no increase in adverse events.

Monitoring glucose continuously gives people a near real-time blood sugar picture, which can be transformative, reducing the need for endless finger-prick tests.

CGM also supports safe, effective day-to-day management, highlighting its potential to enhance glycaemic control and reduce long-term complication risk for type 2 patients.



'PRE-HAB' BENEFITS

Exercise or nutrition-based prehabilitation significantly reduced post-operative complications and shortened hospital stays, says a meta-analysis of 23 trials involving over 2,100 patients. Exercise programmes lowered complication risk the most. Patients taking part in strength/interval training lasting 2-26 weeks prior to surgery had a 55% lower chance of complications with better overall daily functioning. Nutrition-focused programmes showed the greatest impact on length of stay.

28 WOMAN'S WEEKLY

Coping with FIBROMYALGIA

This long-term condition causes pain and tenderness all over your body

The pain of fibromyalgia isn't caused by visible inflammation or damage, but probably due to your brain

and spine being unable to process pain signals from other parts of your body. Studies show the brain registering pain reacts differently if you're suffering from fibromyalgia, possibly increasing the sensitivity of nerve endings, so you feel pain from pressure or minor knocks.

Fibromyalgia is common but complex, with many symptoms, mainly pain throughout your entire body. Other symptoms include tiredness, poor sleep, waking feeling unrested, aching, stiffness, forgetfulness, poor concentration, stress, irritability and low mood. You can also have tender joints and muscles, tingling, numbness and swelling of hands/feet, headaches, urinary frequency, painful periods, irritable bowel, restless legs and increased sensitivity to cold, sound, knocks and bumps. It often flares up suddenly, developing from age 25-55, affecting more women than men, although children can get it. The exact cause is uncertain, possibly a genetic tendency which is then triggered by physical or psychological trauma.

People with fibromyalgia often don't get enough deep sleep which makes pain worse, then the pain, depression and stress worsen sleep further. The

symptoms aren't unreal or 'all in your mind', but anxiety, physical or mental trauma, and sleep disturbance play a role in the condition.

Fibromyalgia can be difficult to

'It is complex, with many symptoms'

Ways to help

*** HEALTHY LIFESTYLE** Avoid being overweight, poor sleep hygiene or too much alcohol. Activity improves fatigue and ability to control pain but pace (balancing activity and rest) activities that feel right for you.

*** IT HELPS TO STAY POSITIVE** It's easy to feel down. Treat yourself with lunch with friends, a massage or facial. It's not indulgent, it helps relax the body, mind and muscles.

*** GENTLY INCREASE ACTIVITY** In pain, you may try to avoid exercise but aerobic, flexibility and strength activities are essential fibromyalgia treatments and can prevent other health problems.

*** DIET AND NUTRITION** No specific diet helps fibromyalgia. A balanced diet, low in saturated fats, sugar and salt, plenty of fruit and vegetables, 6-8 glasses of water daily is recommended.

diagnose, with symptoms varying from person to person. There aren't specific blood tests or scans, although you might have blood tests to exclude other conditions such as arthritis or an underactive thyroid. It can be diagnosed by your GP, without seeing a specialist, but they may refer you to a rheumatologist (bones/muscles specialist) or a pain clinic, to confirm the diagnosis. Other specialists that may be involved



True or false?

Constipation can cause diarrhoea True. Long-term constipation can lead to faecal impaction. This is where poo has built up in the last part of the large intestine (rectum). Diarrhoea then leaks around or through the build-up of solid poo. Faecal impaction may be treated with stronger laxatives, a suppository or mini enema, as well as addressing the cause of the constipation with more fluid and fibre.

4 FIXES FOR...

Nightmares

1 SLEEP HYGIENE Nightmares are more common if you're tired or unwell. A relaxing bedtime routine, gentle exercise and a warm, not hot, bath, will all help.

2 KEEP A SLEEP DIARY Record your sleep pattern and evening activities. Reduce fluid intake just before bed – needing to pee in the night disturbs your deep sleep, as will noisy surroundings.

3 BACKGROUND STRESS OR ANXIETY Sleep will be affected by the day's events and underlying emotions. Avoid watching scary films, try to deal with daytime stresses, and consider counselling.

4 ASK YOUR GP They'll look at conditions such as restless legs, sleep apnoea, or brain conditions that may increase nightmares.

include a physiotherapist for muscle-strengthening exercises and relaxation techniques (just as important as exercise); a counsellor who'll discuss cognitive behavioural therapy and mindfulness; or an occupational therapist to suggest ways to work around your condition, including aids and adaptations. Pain management won't totally take away your pain, but it can help you manage it better, reducing its impact.

Although there's no cure for fibromyalgia, therapies and self-management techniques can improve your quality of life. It doesn't appear to cause long-term damage to your body. Treatments can tackle specific symptoms. Antidepressants will ease pain and help mood and sleep, but physical and psychological therapies are often more effective. A healthy lifestyle is also vital. For more information, visit Fibromyalgia Action UK (fmauk.org).

Q I'm 35 – what could be causing my facial flushing?

A You also say you've had spots intermittently for the last year or two. Your GP suggested seborrheic dermatitis, but creams containing antifungals and hydrocortisone didn't help. There are several possible causes including acne, lupus erythematosus, and photosensitivity. However, the persistent central facial redness you mention, plus the skin thickening, papules and pustules, and tiny swollen blood vessels, suggest it may be rosacea – a chronic inflammatory facial condition typically involving the cheeks, nose, chin and forehead, but sparing the skin



around the mouth and eyes. It affects around 5% of the population, women more than men, occurs at 20–30 years or 40–50 years, often in fair skin but can occur in any skin type. It can also cause gritty or dry eyes, conjunctivitis, and more seriously, keratitis (inflammation of the cornea). Treatment for rosacea includes creams such as azelaic acid or metronidazole, or oral antibiotics. Topical steroids can aggravate rosacea.



Here to help

LET COUNSELLOR KEREN LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

I regret the move

Q My husband got a promotion at work and we moved to the other side of the country. I left my job, family and friends. My children changed schools and, although they weren't keen, they've all made new friends. My husband is happy in his new job. But I've struggled to find work and, even though I am employed now, I haven't really made any friends. I'm feeling a bit lost and lonely. I don't want to burden my husband with this.

Name and address withheld

A It's hard moving away from your family, friends and work so it's not surprising you're feeling the loss, especially now everyone is settled and you're still finding your feet. What you're feeling is real, as you haven't yet grown a new support network. It's very normal to feel like you do and there's no reason you need to manage this on your own. The fact you feel as you do doesn't mean you blame your husband, so sharing this with him is important. Also, talking to your old friends and family about this will help you feel less lonely. Start thinking about where you could meet like-minded people. Join a class or group once a week that you can go to on your own to build a new network.

I'm never invited

Q My daughter has never invited me to my grandchildren's school concerts and plays.

I know it's her choice but it's deeply upsetting. I feel pushed out of their lives and don't understand why all my friends go to these events but not me.

Angie, Barnstable

A I think it would be helpful to have a chat with her and gently share how you feel. Ask her if there's a reason she hasn't invited you. Tell her how this affects you. Focus on your feelings rather

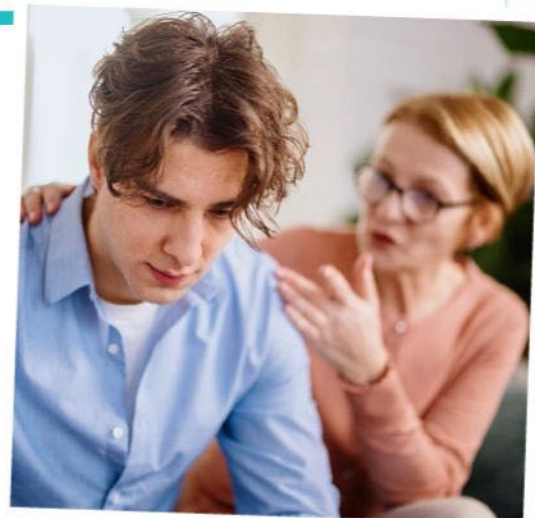
I'm worried about my son

Q My 22-year-old son does nothing besides work. He goes to work, comes home and sits in his room. He has no social life and, when I suggest he and I do something together, he says that he prefers to be at home. I'm really worried about him, as he should be out with friends and enjoying life at his age.

Judy, Romsey

A Many young adults are still figuring themselves out at 22 and not everyone needs a busy social life to feel content. Some people recharge through quiet routines. Your son may need this after a busy day at work. But, if you think he's feeling unsure or low and hasn't been able to discuss this, that's different.

I suggest you broach this gently with him, giving



him the chance to share his feelings. Do this in a supportive way so he doesn't feel he's a failure for not wanting to go out. If you feel he may be depressed, suggest some counselling support for him. Also, let him know you're there if he wants company or support and allow him to be himself.

Our relationship expert Keren Smedley has over 20 years' experience. Keren welcomes your letters, emails and texts, but she cannot reply to individual cases and will select correspondence at random for publication.

than her choices. It's important you don't blame her. There may be a reason and, once you know what it is, you can see if you can change things. It may be the case that she was waiting for you to ask to come

and doesn't want to impose by inviting you. Very often things arise as an issue in families because both parties have made assumptions. I hope you can sort this out.

Missing time spent together

Q My husband and I rarely watch television together any more. He always chooses programmes he thinks I won't like and goes to another room to watch them. I often end up watching something else on my own. It makes me feel disconnected and a bit

unwanted. I don't want to make a big issue out of it but I miss that shared time. How do I handle this without it becoming an argument?
Linda, Bristol

A What you're describing isn't really about television: it's about connection. Sharing small, everyday moments carries more emotional weight than we often realise and, when those disappear, it can quietly erode closeness. It's understandable that this leaves you feeling sidelined. Rather than focusing on the programmes themselves, talk to your husband about what evenings mean to you emotionally. You could say that watching something together helps you feel connected, even if the show isn't perfect for either of you. Suggest that you try doing this once or twice a week while acknowledging some of your tastes are different. Relationships thrive on these small acts of choosing each other, even in ordinary activities.

FICTION & PUZZLES *special*

32-
page mini
mag

- * **21 pages of
brilliant stories**
- * **8 pages of
great puzzles**
- * **Fun quiz**



A climbing rose bush with several large, vibrant pink roses and green leaves is trained along a rustic wooden fence. The background is a soft-focus garden scene with green foliage and a cloudy sky.

Where the ROSES BLOOM

Unearthing a love story,
Gretchen realised she was
losing her own heart



I'll have my work cut out there,' Gretchen had said on being told that Chaphurst Hall had been willed into the care of the Conservation Society.

The shell of the hall – once a magnificent Victorian manor house in the Gothic Revival style of towers, turrets and ornamental stonework – was Gretchen's seventh project as restoration manager and the first in which she had felt so personally aligned.

She was as neglected and unloved as Chaphurst Hall. The collapse of her marriage after 12 years, thanks to her now ex-husband's professed 'finding himself' – as in 'finding someone else' – had left her feeling like a ruin herself.

Though 'ruin' might be a slight exaggeration as far as the hall was concerned. True, it had been falling into disrepair since the 1970s, but it was basically sound.

So, if Gretchen was unable to generate much positivity about her own hurts and injuries, she could at least bring Chaphurst Hall back to life. And despite the dilapidation, the last owner – a distant nephew, several times removed, of the hall's original owner, Sir Henry Chaphurst – had succeeded in hanging on to the estate's art collection, which now belonged to the Conservation Society.

Fitting, for a house from the late Victorian period, the collection was composed of Impressionist paintings from between 1880 and 1894, including a little-known Édouard Manet and a Gauguin! None of the art had ever been insured, so Gretchen's first job on day one had been to put that matter right, at an astronomical cost.

Day two had been no less expensive – getting a quote to treat the woodworm in the furniture. Day three was

bringing in a team of specialised builders to fix a leak in the roof. And so it went on.

'Can you invite the next candidate in please, Maud?' Gretchen asked her deputy, with whom she had worked on various other projects for the last five years.

'He's also the last one,' Maud smiled sympathetically at Gretchen. Interviewing candidates for the position of project manager (gardens and grounds) was a complication Gretchen could well have done without.

Gretchen was seated at a mahogany desk in an office overlooking what might once have been described as the Chaphurst Gardens.

Now the four acres of unintentional 'rewilding' presented as much of a challenge as any other part of the property. Sadly, Tim, the man who had commenced on the garden restoration, was now going to have to be replaced because of a back injury. Due to the urgency of finding a substitute, the Conservation Society had left the decision in Gretchen's hands.

Maud returned with the final candidate in tow. 'Simon McCaulley for you, Gretchen.'

As Maud closed the door behind her, Gretchen stood and offered Simon her hand.

'Pleased to meet you,' she said,

gesturing for him to sit.

'Thank you.'

It had been a statement in Simon's application that had persuaded Gretchen to interview him... 'I strive for a sensual and never overly sensible approach to garden restoration, stimulating all the senses and emotions wherever possible.' It was almost poetic.

The problem was that in the list of garden project managers – the woman Gretchen had interviewed first had been

involved in restoring one of the most prestigious gardens in the country – Simon had the least experience. Not that there was anything surprising in that. He was a good 15 years younger than any other candidate. He was even a little younger than Gretchen herself who, in her mid-30s, could hardly be considered ancient.

Yet today he had turned up looking remarkably relaxed and self-assured, without a hint of nerves on his sun-kissed face (or the hint of a comb through his curly brown hair). He had even considered it appropriate to arrive for the interview in jeans and a crisp white shirt.

Gretchen went through Simon's CV with him. He'd worked in some well-known gardens, but he'd never served as a head gardener.

'Can I be frank with you?' he asked suddenly.

Gretchen nodded. 'By all means.'

'I asked Tim, the garden manager I'd be replacing, to email me his preparatory work – and while it's well researched and excellently presented, I feel you should throw it out and think again.'

Gretchen almost laughed, surprised by his willingness to compliment his predecessor's work, while at the same time suggesting she should tear up the plans and start from scratch.

'You're not serious?'

'I am serious,' Simon replied. 'The garden Tim has drawn up is the model from the late 1960s. Hardly the Victorian masterpiece it once was. I mean, would you replace the Impressionist art I saw detailed in the estate's inventory, with Rothko's colour field painting or Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*?'

'Well, no,' admitted Gretchen, and this time she did laugh.

'No, because Rothko and Warhol, as laudable as they are, ring of the 1960s. If you plan to restore Chaphurst to its heyday, then you shouldn't ignore the original designs.'

'But that's the problem,' argued Gretchen, thoroughly enjoying the discussion.

'There's so little evidence of what it looked like – whereas we have dozens of photos from the 1960s. Lord and Lady Chaphurst, who built the hall in the first place,

were incredibly private. They hardly kept any records. It's quite frustrating.'

Gretchen had been researching the Chaphursts in her spare time and had found very little about the hall, and even less about Lord and Lady Chaphurst themselves. The parish records stated that Lord Henry had died in 1894. And Lady Victoria seemed to have disappeared two years later. It was a mystery, even possibly with a hint of a scandal.

'I tried looking up the Chaphurst's first head gardener instead.' Simon broke into Gretchen's thoughts. 'He was called Thomas Finn and he was as much an artist as he was a gardener. He used plants as readily as an artist might use oil paints.'

Gretchen smiled at Simon's description. 'You've got further than I did.'

'Thomas kept notebooks and a couple still exist in the archive of the local library.'

After a moment's pause, Simon went on. 'Could I show you what I have in mind, using your window as a viewpoint?'

'Sure.' Gretchen rolled her office chair out of the way, so Simon could join her at the bay window. She noticed his natural and most particular aroma – a blend of fresh earth and flower fragrances – as he began gesturing with

'Could I show you what I have in mind?'

He turned up looking relaxed

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

his open palms at different areas of the gardens.

'Here would have been a mass of delphiniums – pink and blue, interlaced with purple and cream foxgloves, towering across the view in a giant swathe. And there, lemon and gold azaleas. Wild running roses would have lit that terrace with glowing peach, salmon and coppery orange tones...'

Simon turned and gazed deeply into Gretchen's eyes, making her draw an almost excited breath.

'As I said, Thomas Finn used the grounds of Chaphurst as his canvas, a reflection of the impressionistic paintings inside the hall. With his bold strokes of vibrant colour, even Van Gogh would have applauded him.'

For a moment, Simon looked as if he was overcome by his own passion, and then Gretchen saw the pleading in his expression.

'Please let me restore the gardens to how they once appeared...'

'Can you spare me some time this afternoon?'

Gretchen wasn't sure why, but she experienced a thrill of delight at the sound of Simon's voice on her phone. After just a few

months, he had already made so much progress in restoring Chaphurst Gardens to their original state. Delphiniums, brought in from a dozen nurseries, were now climbing to their full height, and there were splashes of colour everywhere. The rampant yew hedges had been trimmed back to create a framework.

'I have an hour from about 2pm,' she replied. 'Where should I meet you?'

'My team's been working in the south-west corner of the gardens, the area they've been calling the compost spot, but it looks as if they were wrong.'

'Sounds intriguing,' replied Gretchen, not even trying to hide her excitement. 'I can't wait.'

Simon was sitting on a low sandstone wall when she arrived, his open face turned towards the sun. 'Van Gogh at work,' she thought wryly, half tempted to leave him undisturbed. But he had heard her footsteps and unleashed a friendly smile on her.

'Hey!' he said, which sounded almost overfamiliar.

'So what's the mystery?' Gretchen queried, unable to ignore the pleasant tingle in her tummy.

Simon came to his feet in one fluid motion. 'It's some kind of lost feature that isn't on Thomas Finn's original drawings, nor the photos of the later gardens.'

'Where?'

'I was sitting on it,' replied Simon, with a sparkle in his soft brown eyes.

Gretchen frowned, not sure what she was meant to be looking at, before realising that Simon's low wall also formed a distinctive shape.

'Oh, my word, is that a heart?'

Simon nodded, his face etched with pleasure.

'Part of me wanted to uncover it all before showing

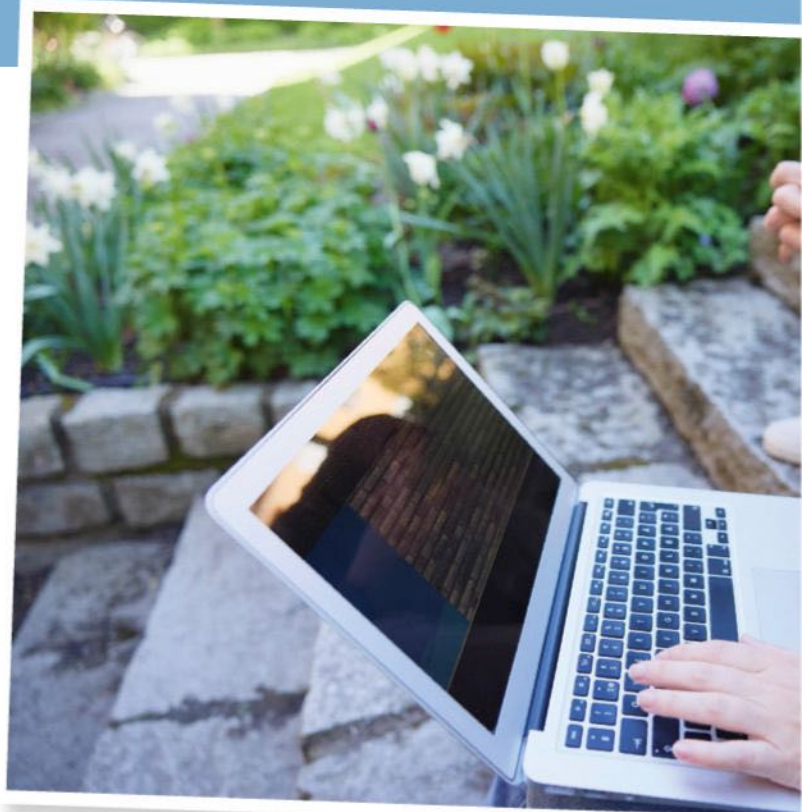
you, but I held off,' he admitted, and it wasn't lost on Gretchen that he was in some abstract way sharing his heart with her.

'The entire shape would have been embroidered with trailing roses,' he added.

'How can you know that?'

'See these rusting staples in the wall?' Simon squatted down to show her what he meant. 'They would have been there to secure a wire on which roses were trained. I can tell that it was roses by the remnants of the old root system – not what colour they were, though.'

'Red or pink – definitely,' declared Gretchen, feeling sure.



Simon nodded in agreement. 'It's been hidden from prying eyes, probably for decades. So the mystery is, who created it, if not Finn? And who was it for, if not Lady Chaphurst?'

Gretchen's face flushed with wonder. 'We have to find out.'

'Exactly what I thought.'

'Well don't just stand there! Uncover the rest,' Gretchen cajoled him, then giggled when he gave her a little salute. Her ex-husband would never have taken it so lightly if she had given him a direct order.

By the end of the week, the heart feature had given up another secret. Freed of weeds, it revealed not just one, but two interlocking hearts, side by side. Simon had started to plant fresh roses – red and pink of course, as Gretchen had suggested – to train around the low sandstone walls. But the mystery of why the hearts existed remained unsolved.

Gretchen had been forced to move offices to the hall's library on the ground floor, as the corridor above was now practically impassable. A huge length of scaffolding was filling it up while the ornate

plasterwork mouldings along the ceiling were repaired by a team of experts.

She quite liked being surrounded by Lord Henry and Lady Victoria's collection of books, though – every novel by George Eliot, Wilkie Collins and Anthony Trollope, and volumes covering subjects as diverse as astrology and zoology.

She was waiting for Simon, wanting to show him something he might be interested in – though she couldn't help wondering if that was an excuse to spend more time with him.

'Is that what I think it is?' he asked as soon as he arrived, frowning at a brown tube on Gretchen's desk.

'That depends on what you think it is,' replied Gretchen, arching an eyebrow.

'It's a wax cylinder, isn't it? The sort they used for recordings in the late 1800s.'

Gretchen grinned, trying to contain her excitement. 'One of my team found it in the loft. They thought it was a water pipe. But if they'd looked again they would have noticed this...'

She turned the cylinder towards Simon. 'The month and



date of the recording have been scratched on to the top. July 1895, and the initials VC.'

'Victoria Chaphurst, of course,' said Simon, the golden flecks in his eyes firing up. 'No wonder you never found her diary or letters. She recorded her thoughts.'

'Don't you think that's so modern?' asked Gretchen. 'This could be Lady Chaphurst's blog. And guess what? I managed to get hold of a phonograph from one of the Conservation Society's music collections, so we can listen to the cylinder. It's over there.'

She offered Simon one side of a green leather Chesterfield and sat down beside him. On a modern coffee table in front of them stood the phonograph.

It was housed in a wooden case, with a raised drum in the middle, on to which Gretchen slid the wax cylinder until it slotted into place. Then she placed the needle arm carefully on the beginning of the cylinder's groove, attached the speaker, then wound the little crank handle to start the drum rotating.

Simon watched in fascination. 'Did it come with instructions?'

Gretchen waved her mobile phone. 'YouTube.'

They both leaned forward to listen and Gretchen felt her leg brush Simon's knee, giving her an unexpected but enjoyable shiver, mixed with the exhilaration of hearing Lady Chaphurst's voice for the first time...

'The garden comes on apace now. Full summer is upon us already, erupting with its graceful colour. The grounds have become something of an obsession for Thomas, my head gardener, but no less for myself. I think perhaps even the distress of losing my husband, almost a year ago, has been tempered a little by such fresh blooms...'

The recording was surprisingly clear. The tinny sound from the speaker and the whirring of the rotating tube even added to the sense of listening to a voice from the past. And Lady Chaphurst's ringing diction was suffused with almost musical notes.

'I was so right to allow Thomas a free hand with his impressionistic ideas for Chaphurst Gardens,' Lady Chaphurst's recording continued. 'This morning, I stood peering down from my chamber window and gasped at the artwork unfolding beneath me – as vibrant as an oil painting. Thomas's palette is a flower bed, his brush a spade.'

Gretchen and Simon briefly locked gazes on hearing words so close to what Simon had spoken during his interview.

'Dear, dear Thomas, with his artistic spirit. Where would I have been this past year without his drawing my heart away from my loss? And what may be these feelings Thomas awakens in me? Are our emotions to bring forth a flowering too?'

'That's one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard,' said Simon hoarsely.

'Truly,' agreed Gretchen, avoiding his eyes. She

wondered if he could possibly realise that he was reawakening something in her. Was this some strange power possessed by all gardeners? She hoped he couldn't see the blush forming on her cheeks or notice the way she was nibbling the corner of her lip.

Struggling to regain control, she reached forward clumsily to lift the needle and switch the machine off – just as Simon was doing likewise. Their fingertips touched in an electric moment of intimacy. Gretchen giggled slightly, her blush deepening.

'Was this the only wax cylinder found?' asked Simon, saving her from further embarrassment. 'I'm dying to hear more.'

'Me too,' murmured Gretchen. 'And yes, it was the only one. I'll get the team searching for more cylinders, though. And if any turn up, I promise not to listen to them without you.'

'That would be wonderful, Gretchen.'

They both rose, and this time it was Simon who accidentally brushed a knee against Gretchen's, and once more she felt transported.

It was a month later and the plasterwork upstairs was completed but the scaffolding was yet to be removed, so Gretchen was still tucked away in the library, surrounded by leather-bound books.

Getting up from her desk, she caught a reflection of herself in an oval, ormolu mirror that had once been Lady Chaphurst's own, and she was pleased to note that the roses had not only been restored to the gardens, but also to her cheeks.

Smiling, she peeked through the stone arches of the library window. There was Simon, right on time, making for the set of semicircular steps leading up to the front of the hall. He must have been instinctively aware of

her watching him, because he turned his face up and gave her his full smile. Then he bounded up the steps, taking them two at a time. When she had phoned him, Gretchen had implored him to be quick.

Three more wax cylinders had been located. Gretchen's deputy, Maud, had searched every inch of Chaphurst Hall and been rewarded by the small treasure trove of cylinders at the back of a storeroom.

Unfortunately, two of the them were damaged beyond all hope, the delicate wax rubbed smooth due to the way they had been carelessly stored. But one remained intact.

Gretchen swung open the library door as Simon was about to knock. She wanted to abandon all propriety and drag him inside, but settled for, 'Hurry up! Lady Chaphurst and I are waiting for you.'

There had been a wonderful change in their relationship recently. They had been on two glorious dates – one at an art exhibition (the Impressionists, of course) and the other to the Chelsea Flower Show.

They had discovered that they had many shared interests – dance, theatre, the arts and

literature. And the mystery of Lady Chaphurst's disappearance from all records, and the restoration of Thomas Finn's garden, had been a common bond between them from the outset.

'This recording was made about a year after the first one,' Gretchen explained about the wax cylinder. 'Unfortunately, we've lost the intervening months. Too damaged to play. Look, April and September.'

She pointed out the dates scratched on to the unplayable cylinders. 'It's so frustrating. And I think these are likely to

She giggled slightly, her blush deepening

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

be the last. Maud has left no stone unturned.'

Without waiting for a response, she pulled Simon down on to the green leather Chesterfield, where she had already set up the phonograph on the coffee table. As she lowered the needle arm and cranked the mechanism, Lady Chaphurst's vocal notes floated out across time, while her voice conveyed both elation and emotional confusion.

'Thomas and I must leave Chaphurst Hall, if we are to marry. But what is the hall anyway, but a pile of elegantly arranged brickwork? Nothing when measured against the deeper roots of true love. I know with all my heart that my late husband only placed a marriage clause in his will to protect me from callous fortune hunters. But Thomas is not that. He begs me to stay here, and for him to leave in order to ease our pain, but never could I allow him to do such a thing.'

Gretchen gasped as Lady Chaphurst continued...

'The hall and the now extraordinary gardens shall pass to the last remaining member of the Chaphursts, a cousin twice removed called Wilbur. He too has attempted to persuade me to remain – and with Thomas too – in the gatehouse lodge, which admittedly I have always admired. But we shall not remain. We have no need of any such kindness.'

Gretchen slipped her hand into Simon's. 'They must have loved each other so much.'

Simon nodded, his eyes expressing growing feelings of a love of his own.

'My only fear,' Lady Chaphurst's recording concluded, 'and it is one that Thomas shares, is that our beloved gardens will now fall into neglect. But we both fervently hope that that will not be the case.'

Gretchen squeezed Simon's hand. 'Lady Chaphurst and



Thomas would be so grateful for everything you've done, Simon.' Then she added softly, 'And they're not the only ones.'

No more wax cylinders came to light, and it was maddening not to know where Victoria Chaphurst and Thomas Finn had ended up. But Gretchen had her own suspicions.

She had come across pictures of three 'impressionistic' gardens in southern France. Each one had been created by an unnamed gardener and dated from the period between 1896 and 1927. Could Victoria and Thomas have begun a new and amazing life together across the Channel? Gretchen hoped so.

But where they were now could be answered. Simon had found them.

On the day he decided to fill the two heart-shaped garden features with roses – ruby red and blush pink – his spade

returned a ringing note as soon as he sent it through the so-long undisturbed soil.

He had knelt to work carefully with a trowel and just below the surface was a sandstone slab etched with 'Here lies Victoria Finn. Born September 1859. Died September 1937. Beloved wife of Thomas.' Simon found a similar slab in the second heart-shaped

enclosure. 'Here lies Thomas Finn. Born October 1863. Died August 1937. Beloved husband of Victoria.'

Gretchen and Simon now stood together, looking at the graves, linked by an arm around each other's waist, pulling each other close.

'This solves the mystery of the two hearts,' Simon said, smiling down on the two interlinked symbols, drawn in bricks and mortar.

'Wilbur, the cousin twice removed, obviously had them made so that Victoria and

Thomas could rest together forever. He must have been very grateful to them.'

'Or loved them both deeply,' said Gretchen.

Simon reached up a hand to wipe the tear from Gretchen's cheek and she turned her body into him as he held her. Then, when she was ready, she turned up her face to receive his loving kiss.

'We should inter the wax cylinders with them,' she said a moment later. 'One each. That would be fitting.'

Simon nodded. 'It's a pity there were no wax cylinders of Thomas. I wonder what he sounded like?'

'Exactly like you, I'm sure of it,' Gretchen told him warmly. 'The same passion. The same innate understanding and appreciation of nature. And...' she whispered, '...an ability to make the roses bloom in any heart.'

The project was over now. However, their loving spirit would continue to bloom – just like the roses.

THE END

Michael Malaghan

'This solves the mystery of the two hearts'

Who's the BOSS HERE?

It was a stand-off – and someone was going to have to give in

There it sat, the enormous white cat, plonked in the middle of the driveway, and right in the way of my car.

'They called it Boss,' my friend Sandra explained from the passenger seat.

I could see why. It looked senior in years, as well as in manner, but not by any means decrepit. It had long hair, blue eyes and a superior expression if, indeed, a cat can have an expression.

Sandra explained that the cat belonged to one of her elderly neighbours but that everyone living in this development of townhouses knew Boss and respected his longevity and his air of owning the place.

Actually, I must have imagined that bit about Boss's expression because he was staring away, over the garden, and not looking in our direction at all.

The difficulty in the situation was that I was driving along a narrow access road, attempting to return my chum to her terraced townhouse after an enjoyable outing to a matinée at the theatre.

There was no room to bypass the feline obstacle as there were parked cars on one side and the shrub-filled strip of garden on the other.

Although I'd been driving for many years and hotly resented any negative comments aimed at women drivers, I wasn't

actually very confident about reversing at the best of times. Worse still, from where I had pulled up to avoid the moggy, it would have been a long and uncomfortably narrow way backwards to a potential turning place. And the drive around the development was one-way – in the direction I was heading. I was completely stuck there, and I certainly wasn't about to risk running Boss over, or even to frighten him if I could avoid it.

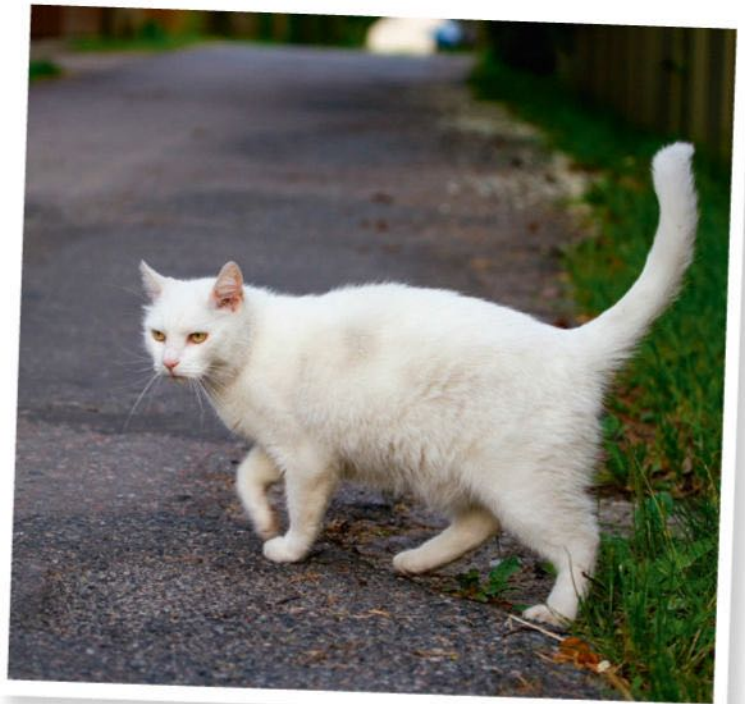
Sandra sat silent and motionless while I tried to think what to do. A great help. She was normally someone I could rely on to cope in any situation, while keeping us both calm. I had often called upon her to help me solve a problem or at least to stop worrying.

Perhaps it was her background in directing over a hundred amateur dramatic productions that gave her an air of being generally in control. This time,

though, she seemed devoid of solutions. So tension hung over the situation.

Well, I have always loved

cats. I didn't currently own one myself but I took every opportunity to make a fuss of friends' pets, which generally seemed to like me. The only time I got a small scratch from a cat was in one of those so-called 'cat cafes', where you think you'll be able to hold and make a fuss of the animals but where, in fact, the creatures



roam on their own terms and many don't want to be bothered by the visitors. That encounter had been the exception and had taken me quite by surprise.

So I felt I could trust my instincts. Slowly and quietly, I got out of my car. I advanced halfway towards Boss, then stopped and made my 'attracting cats' sound, which is a kind of sibilant, rapid 'wuss, wuss, wuss, wuss'.

The cat turned its head and looked straight at me.

So far, so good. Moving carefully forward again, I held one hand out ahead of me and stopped just in front of the cat's face. It sort of sniffed me, then let me stroke it for a while in those very special cat places – under the chin and behind

the ear. All cat lovers will know where I mean.

Then came the miracle. I moved gingerly and carefully to the side of the roadway, gently motioning with my hand for the cat to follow me. And it did.

We reached the side of the drive together, where Boss resumed his sitting position, statuette-like, as if nothing had ever bothered him.

I was then able to clamber back into my vehicle and to drive right up to Sandra's front door.

'Well,' she said, sounding impressed. 'I've heard that your career in senior management was sometimes like herding cats, but I didn't realise you could actually do it!'

THE END

Audrey Mullender

I felt I could trust my instincts



A river runs FREE

White-water rafting in the Rockies – was Suzy brave enough to take the plunge?

Rustling up lunch for herself, Suzy was aware of the irony. Here she was, a respected cookery teacher, surrounded by a library of recipe books on her kitchen shelves, opening up a can of soup. In her married days, she thought, she'd have been extracting a homemade quiche from the oven and whisking up a lemony dressing for the salad leaves just picked from the garden.

And look where that got me, she thought. Now she was free (a better word than 'alone'), and if cream of tomato was what she fancied, that's exactly what she'd have. It wasn't the most obvious symbol of post-divorce liberation. 'Mum,' she could imagine her daughter Elsa saying, 'you need to get out more.'

Elsa wouldn't be dishing out such advice to her father Simon, or Easy Rider, as Suzy now called her ex. These days, he and the girlfriend he'd met at a motorbike rally spent their free time powering through Europe on their exhaust-emitting monsters. She might be lonely at times, but she most certainly did not miss the smelly leathers that used to hang in the porch, nor the revving roar when he disappeared down the road in a cloud of grey smoke.

Their incompatibility had crept up on them over the years. Simon hankered after big wheels and open roads. Suzy loved the natural world, walks by the river or in the woods, noticing wildflowers and birdsong.

'Your problem is that you lack a sense of adventure,' her ex-husband had told her. Suzy didn't know she had 'a problem' and his words still smarted.

Elsa had inherited Simon's wanderlust. All she'd wanted for her 21st birthday was a backpack, and as soon as she'd

saved up enough, she stuffed it full and set off around the world, paying her way by working in a succession of

bars, beach cafes, ski chalets and aboard yachts. She'd come home between trips, but she never stayed long and Suzy missed her terribly.

Last time her daughter had left, Suzy hugged her on the doorstep, saying with a rueful smile, 'Take care of yourself, Itchy-Feet Elsa.'

*'You lack
a sense of
adventure'*

'You too, Stay-at-Home Suzy,' she'd countered.

The parting shot had piqued Suzy. She wanted to feel that sense of freedom and empowerment other divorcees talked about in her online support group, but instead, she felt frustratingly held back by the past. No wonder her daughter thought she lacked gumption.

Now, she went to prune the roses and ponder, which usually lifted her spirits, but her neighbour Angie appeared on the other side of the fence.

'You look like a woman in need of a drink,' she said, 'and I'm not taking no for an answer.'

Over a gin and tonic on Angie's patio, Suzy spilled the beans. 'I know I should be moving on to a new chapter of my life and all that, but Easy Rider was right, I'm not an



'Where on earth?'

'I've got a job in an adventure centre in the Rocky Mountains in Canada. Look!'

Images popped up of foaming rivers, forests and waterfalls. 'Stunning,' said Suzy. 'Maybe I'll book myself in.'

'That'll be the day,' replied her daughter. 'You know you're an old stick-in-the-mud!'

Literally, thought Suzy, looking down at her wellies.

That evening, instead of pulling on her PJs to watch TV, she called up pictures of the Rockies on her laptop. She had never seen scenery like it, the place was clearly a nature lover's paradise. She found Elsa's adventure centre and had to admit, the lodges at Kicking Horse River looked rather cosy.

For the first time in years, she felt a surge of adrenaline. If she didn't take a risk now, she never would. She pulled out her credit card, and 10 minutes later, her Canadian adventure was booked. The time had come for Stay-at-Home Suzy to reboot her life.

On the plane six weeks later, reality hit and she got the wobbles. The last time she'd been abroad was on the back of Simon's bike. Petrified of falling off at every corner, she'd kept her eyes tightly shut so there was no chance to admire the countryside. What if she couldn't cope with Canada either? She'd been in the air nine hours and home, with its comfy sofa, Angie, roses and runner beans, felt a long, long way away.

Elsa was waiting for her in Arrivals, half beaming, half incredulous. 'I can't believe you've actually come all this way,' she said as she heaved her case into the car.

Suzy could barely believe it herself. But as Elsa drove towards the distant mountains, she was transfixed by the changing landscape, the

dense pines and glimpses of peacock-blue lakes.

As they descended into Kicking Horse Valley, the air felt fresher and cooler, then there was the river, flowing fast over rocks.

'White-water rafting's a blast,' Elsa said. 'You'll have to give it a go.'

Steady, thought Suzy. *I'm not Bear Grylls.*

When they arrived, Elsa led her to her neat wooden lodge, which had a colourful blanket on the surprisingly springy mattress.

'I need to get back to work, so I'll leave you to settle in,' she told her. 'There's a safety talk for new arrivals by the campfire in an hour, then it's drinks and dinner.'

Suzy's tummy churned with a mix of excitement and nerves. After she'd unpacked, she showered and changed into her new jeans and fleece jacket, because Elsa had warned her the evenings were cool. She sat on her decking, breathing in the resinous smell of pine needles and watching the huge sky turn pink as the sun started to go down.

She worried she'd be the oldest at the camp by a good 30 years, but found to her relief that people of all ages were taking seats around the fire. When a tall man arrived, their chatter stopped because he commanded attention in his cowboy hat, shorts and boots.

'Welcome to the Rockies,' he said, with a smile that softened his weathered features. 'My name's Cal, I've been a ranger here at Kicking Horse all my life. An early explorer was kicked hard in the chest by a horse here. He was knocked unconscious, but he survived, and the river got its name.'

Suzy paid close attention as Cal ran through fire and flash-flood regulations, plus other potential perils, including landslides, poison ivy and charging elks. She put up her hand. 'Is it true there are rattlesnakes in the Rockies?' she asked.

'Yes, ma'am,' he nodded. 'The sound they make is more like a buzz than a rattle, but you'll be happy to hear they do their best to avoid humans. Sensible creatures, huh? You're more likely to see garter snakes, but they're harmless enough.'

Suzy took his word for it. She liked his twinkling blue eyes and found it charming to be called 'ma'am'.

Elsa arrived with beers for all the guests. 'Did Cal's talk freak you out, Mum?' she asked. 'Ready to check into the nearest hotel yet?'

'Not at all,' she lied, swigging from a beer bottle for the first time in her life.

Dinner was stew, served with hot bread and maple butter.

Afterwards, they toasted marshmallows in the fire and squished them between biscuits with melted

chocolate. 'My first s'more,' she said. 'Delicious!'

Cal made his way over to her, wanting to reassure her about the wildlife, that his job was to keep everyone safe. 'My advice is to relax, enjoy the nature and

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

*'Is it true
there are
rattlesnakes?'*

adventurer. I'd rather make chutney than cross the Zambezi. I don't like the heat. Or snow. Or snakes. Or bugs. Or not sleeping in my own bed.'

Angie patted her arm. 'There's nothing wrong with any of that. Your confidence has taken a battering, that's all.' The kind words, on top of a large G&T, made Suzy's eyes mist over.

A few days later, she was busy in her vegetable patch when her phone rang. It was Elsa on a video call and she was brimming with excitement.

'Guess where I'm going next, Mum,' she said.

Elsa tried to think of somewhere her intrepid daughter hadn't already been.

'Too slow! I'm going to Kicking Horse River!'



peace. I'll bet you've never seen night skies as pure as these before.'

Looking up, Suzy saw layer upon layer of stars against a background as dark as black velvet. As her eyes adjusted, the constellations seemed closer, almost as if she was enveloped among them. Cal was right, she'd never experienced anything quite so beautiful before.

She hadn't expected to sleep in her unfamiliar surroundings, but tiredness caught up with her the moment she'd settled in bed and she didn't stir until morning.

Heading to breakfast, she found Elsa making coffee and chatting to a young man. 'Jake, meet my mum,' she said.

'Mum, this is Jake, Cal's nephew.'

Jake's blue eyes met hers as he shook her hand and she could see the family resemblance. He explained that he ran all the white-water rafting expeditions and, as well as day trips for all ages and stages, there was the chance to go further afield and wild-camp on the riverbank for a night.

'That sounds wonderful for you youngsters,' Suzy told him, 'but I'll be very happy staying put here.'

As she drank her coffee and ate a crumbly muffin, she observed Jake and Elsa laughing and noted a definite spark between them. Her daughter looked so alive, so carefree, Suzy found herself wishing she could wind back the clock and start all over again. Then she gave her head a little shake and told herself to stop being so fanciful.

She spent the next few days acclimatising, drinking in the beauty of the mountains and the river, which meandered gently, then turned into a foaming white fury when it hit

the rocks. She spotted plump, fluffy, squirrel-like marmots sunbathing on the rocks and soft-eyed deer grazing on the slopes.

In the evenings, the others would come back from their rafting adventures, flushed and exhilarated. 'It's the chance of a lifetime,' they'd say.

Suzy knew they were right, but as ever, fear of the unknown held her back. What if she fell out of the boat and smashed her head? She was a strong enough swimmer, but the public pool at home was no Kicking Horse River.

She could hear her own excuses, and frustration with herself began to grow. One evening, Jake told her they'd seen an eagle soaring above the boat. 'It's amazing out on the river, Suzy,' he added, 'you should come one day.'

Elsa smiled fondly. 'Mum would freak out. It's just not her thing,' she said.

Something in Suzy snapped. 'How will I know what my *thing* is unless I try it? Please count me in for tomorrow, Jake.'

The following morning, she regretted her impetuous decision the moment she opened her eyes. She sent Angie a text... *About to go white-water rafting! Have I lost my mind?*

Moments later, her phone pinged with a reply. *Good on you, girl! Hang on tight! PS Your runner beans are fine.*

She had a sudden pang of homesickness and noted, to her surprise, that it was the first she'd had since arriving in Canada. There was no time for moping, though, because she was soon due at the riverside.

Cal was preparing the boat with Jake, but stopped to help Suzy strap up her life jacket. Up close, he smelt of an appealing mix of woodsmoke and pine. He belonged to this unspoilt habitat as much as the



river and the rocks. She couldn't imagine him polluting the air with a gas-guzzling motorbike.

'You have a good day now, ma'am,' he said in his deep drawl. 'You're going to be just fine.'

She found his words reassuring as they set off. The water was a pale bluey green, calm and silky. Apart from the soft splashing of Jake's paddles, it was silent and still. The mountains soared above them on either side, and dappled sunlight made the river sparkle. From a large icebox, Jake produced cold beers and she chinked bottles with her fellow rafters who, like her, were smiling with delight.

The river narrowed and Jake announced that they were approaching the first rapids. Suzy gripped the straps with all her might as the boat

plummeted and a wave of snow-white water whooshed in her face. She screamed, then laughed as another wave came, then another.

The river smoothed again and she caught her breath. 'That was fun!' she beamed, amazed that she actually meant it.

It was exhilarating and, tingling from head to toe, Suzy had never felt so alive. Elsa was waiting as they arrived back at the camp. 'Your mum was a pro,' Jake told her. Elsa held up her hand in a high five. 'Proud of you!' she said.

That evening, Suzy shared tales of the day's excitement around the fire, no longer feeling like a bystander.

Cal caught her eye. 'Looks like we'll make a cowgirl of you yet,' he said. 'Wanna come on the next overnighter?' Suzy



would never have dreamt she'd be brave enough, but now...

'Sure,' she heard herself say.

In bed later, she decided this had been one of the best days of her life. Stuff old Easy Rider! Who 'lacked a sense of adventure' now? She was a thrill seeker after all!

She'd always avoided tents in the past, but out here, she was excited to sleep under the stars. If she was honest, she was still afraid of lurking dangers, especially of the slithering sort, but she was confident Cal would protect her. The very thought of that made her stomach flip over.

A nice bunch had assembled for the overnighter and spirits were high as, in turn, the raft glided through the smooth stretches of river, then bounced and spun across the rapids.

The further they travelled, the more rugged the landscape became. Suzy felt as if she were in the very heart of Earth.

'We're approaching the Roller Coaster,' Jake told them. 'These rapids are called that for a reason, so be prepared to get thrown around a little.'

Suzy gulped, but there was no turning back now. The raft rose, then took off as the river seemed to fall away, descending down a sheer cliff. As it met the water again, it bounced violently and Suzy was thrown out. Her head was submerged and her body turned and twisted in the swirling rapids.

'Help!' she tried to scream, only to get a mouthful of water.

Another wave came, pushing her head above water and carrying her towards the boat, which had reached a flat stretch

of river. Cal held out his hand and pulled her back on board. 'You doin' OK?' he asked, brow furrowed in concern.

'I'm...' Suzy stopped to consider how she felt. 'I'm fine,' she realised. The reality of falling in had been far less scary than she'd imagined and hadn't she lived to tell the tale?

Mid-afternoon, they pulled up at their camping spot on the edge of a pine forest. Jake helped her put up her tent, while Cal went fishing, soon returning with two glistening salmon for supper.

'That's the way to do it,' Suzy marvelled. She couldn't imagine him doing anything as dull as pushing a trolley around a supermarket.

She offered to help him prepare the salmon and he seemed impressed by her professional skills, especially when she rustled up a sauce using oil and lemon from their supplies.

He built a fire and while the fish was cooking above it, she went to her tent to find an extra jumper. That's when she heard the buzzing sound.

'Rattlesnakes make more

of a buzz than a rattle,' she remembered Cal saying.

Panicking, she unzipped her tent to find not a snake, but Hal, an insurance broker from Iowa, using an electric razor. Relief made her laugh hysterically.

'I'm so silly, what would Elsa say?' she said to Jake.

'Don't you worry, what happens on camp stays on camp,' he grinned.

After they'd feasted on the salmon, they fell silent, gazing at the shooting stars. Cal pointed out the Milky Way.

'It's like spilt stardust,' Suzy marvelled. His arm brushed hers and she felt its strength under the soft cotton of his faded check shirt. What a day this had been. She was

beginning to feel she never wanted to leave.

But when they returned to base camp, she had to face the fact that her time at Kicking Horse River was coming to an end.

After dinner on the final night, Jake presented medals. Hal was the winner of 'maintaining standards of grooming in the wilderness'. And Suzy was awarded 'most courageous in the face of fear'. Everyone clapped and whooped, and the look on Elsa's face was the best reward of all.

Jake produced a bottle of smoky whisky and over a tot, he and Elsa told Suzy that they planned to go travelling together once the white-water season had ended, then return to the Rockies for the winter skiing.

'Perhaps we'll see you on the slopes,' Jake smiled. Once, she'd have pooh-poohed the idea, but from now on, she was determined not to rule anything out.

In the morning, she was packing the last of her things when she heard a gentle tapping on the door of her

lodge. She opened it to find Cal.

'I just wanted to come and say goodbye to you,

ma'am,' he said. 'But now my nephew's got together with your girl, I hope we'll be seeing each other again.'

He handed her a card, which she tucked in her pocket to read later. Then, throwing caution to the wind, she kissed his cheek. Could that really be a blush spreading across the old cowboy's weather-beaten face?

On the plane, she opened Cal's card... *Kicking Horse is going to miss you, ma'am, it read. Remember, we could use a good salmon cook around here any time you want to come back.*

THE END

Hermione Bradley

**What a day
this had been**

Get me to the CHURCH ON TIME!

Tina had made a promise – and she wasn't going to break it

Already, Tina was out of breath. Her shoes – completely inappropriate for running with their firm leather and small heel – thumped against the pavement as she ran, her skirts billowing behind her. She was aware of the stares from passing motorists, from pedestrians who parted to let her through.

'Racing to the altar?' someone said after her.

'More like running away,' his companion remarked.

She ignored them. She knew how she must look sprinting along, dressed as she was, but she had to get there on time.

Tina wasn't someone who was late. Even when she was simply attending a dental appointment or meeting a friend, she always turned up on time – if not, early. The wedding was set to commence at 11am, and she'd set off an hour before she had to.

But halfway through the journey, her car had stuttered to a halt.

Ken had repeatedly told her it was time to upgrade her 'rust bucket' of a car. He'd even offered to arrange a car to pick her up for the big day.

She'd been too stubborn, had insisted she wanted to drive herself.

'Rosie has never let me down,' she'd said. 'She would never dare do it on such an important occasion.'

'OK,' Ken had replied, shaking his head. 'But the last thing we want is a wedding-day disaster. Get it checked over at least.'

'Her!' she'd replied.

'What?'

'Get *her* checked over.'

He'd laughed then, pulled her into a hug. 'Tina Daley you are truly one of a kind.'

'So they tell me.'

She had met Ken at school when they were in Year Seven, and they'd become great friends. They played instruments in the orchestra – her a violin, him a trumpet. And while they'd both quit their instruments by Year Nine, they remained inseparable.

'Ken and Tina sitting in a tree!' other pupils used to joke, not understanding how two people of the opposite sex could be friends without it being more.

Then Ken had asked Sylvie for a date. Tina had been shocked when he'd told her.

They had planned to go to the cinema themselves that weekend, and she'd been taken aback when he'd said he was now taking Sylvie.

'I really like her, Tina,' he said, full of happiness, not realising he was hurting her with his words.

They'd drifted apart after that. For a while, Ken and Sylvie had been an item, but that had fizzled out during exams when they'd both had to knuckle down.

Tina had imagined that their friendship would pick up where it left off if Ken and Sylvie split. Instead, even when Ken was single again, they didn't connect in the same way. They had both grown in their time

apart and didn't quite know how to fall back into their old pattern.

Then there'd been university – both of them disappearing to opposite ends of the country to study for three years. And she'd almost forgotten him.

It was three years ago when their paths crossed again by chance.

Working in a pretty market town, Tina was helping out on the tombola stand at the

summer fete when a man made a joke about some of the prizes.

Looking up, she saw Ken, and she felt the years falling away.

'Ken!' she gasped, moving around the small table to hug him. 'What are *you* doing here?'

'I've just started as a PE teacher at the local school,' he grinned. 'But I could say the same for you!'

'Moved here a while ago, changed my job,' she said, glancing down at her outfit.

'So I see.' He raised an eyebrow. 'Then again, you always were full of surprises.'

With their childish hang-ups long behind them, they'd fallen into a friendship that felt closer and safer than she'd ever experienced before. To have someone in your life who knew you inside out, who'd been there while you grew up, meant never feeling you had to hide anything.

'So, when's the wedding?' her mum would ask, pointedly, whenever Ken's name came up in conversation.

'Mum!' she'd reply. 'You know Ken and I aren't like that!'

'Well, you could've fooled me.'





'Remember when you took Sylvie to the cinema and ditched me!' she joked one night over a glass of wine.

'Who?' Ken asked.

She looked at him, incredulous. 'You know, Sylvie. Your first girlfriend. You asked her out and suddenly I was out of the picture.'

Ken's face fell. 'Whoops. Sorry. Well, I was an idiot back then, so I guess it's no surprise.'

She laughed. 'Honestly, we were 15. I'm over it.'

'You sure?' Ken joked.

'Somehow I've managed to build my life again, despite it all,' Tina said, dramatically.

But later, when they were walking out into the bitter night air, Ken turned to her. 'I promise that will never happen again.'

'What won't?'

'Letting you down like that. With that girl. Sarah.'

'Sylvie,' she corrected.

'That's the one. Seriously, though, you were the most important person in my life. You still are really important to me. And I won't let you down again.'

She gazed at him, her eyes

shining. 'Are you sure that's not the wine talking?'

He held her gaze. 'It's all me, I promise.'

'Well, that's good to hear. And me too. I won't ever let you down either.'

'Stupid, stupid, stupid!' she muttered to herself now, darting around a corner and surprising a woman with a buggy, who gave a little cry of alarm. 'Sorry!' Tina called as she kept on running.

'Careful!' the woman shouted after her.

But there was no time to be careful. Already people would be finding their seats, organ music would be playing. Ken would be standing in the vestibule with his best man, wondering where she was. She'd made him a promise. If she broke it, she'd never forgive herself.

She had spent ages planning what she'd say – trying to make it the perfect wedding, the perfect day. She'd practised every word in front of the mirror. This morning she'd taken a deep bath, washed and styled her hair. Had put on make-up before slipping into her outfit.

Now, her hair was in disarray, her shoes dusty. She looked far from her best.

But none of that mattered really, did it? Not in the grand scheme of things. Ken had seen her at her worst – through her acne-scattered teens and the years when she'd worn her hair in a corkscrew perm. He wouldn't care whether she looked glamorous or scruffy. He'd just want her to be there.

Finally, she was on the right street. She slowed to a walk, feeling her heart hammer in her chest. Checking her watch, she realised that, by some miracle, she wouldn't be late. Not if she was quick.

Of course, she'd have

preferred to be early. And Ken was probably pacing around in the church, wondering whether she'd make an appearance. But it wasn't the disaster it could have been.

She saw a car draw up to the front of the church. A white Rolls-Royce, decked out with a bow at the front. The back seat was a riot of taffeta – the pink and white of puffed skirts blending together. She recognised one of the bridesmaids and lifted a hand. The girl's eyes widened in surprise – hopefully it was just the fact she'd barely made it on time, rather than her messy appearance – and Tina forced a smile, trying to indicate that everything was OK.

After all – it just about was.

Tina walked quickly to the church's enormous entrance, passing the odd stray relative who hadn't yet made it to their seat. She raced past a surprised usher in the porch and pushed at the enormous half-open inner door. Misjudging the strength of the push, she sent the wooden door racing back towards the stone wall.

The clunk of wood hitting stone reverberated around the high-ceilinged building and face after face turned around to see who it was making such a noise.

And there he was – at the front – looking somehow vulnerable in his grey suit, best man Mark at his side.

Ken turned and their eyes locked. Instantly his face went from concerned to relieved and he held out his arms.

'We are gathered today to celebrate the union of this man and this woman.'

Tina looked around the church, at the rapt faces of the congregation, watching the bride and groom tie the knot. And she smiled.

'Getting married is a lifelong commitment,' she said. 'And not one that anyone should take lightly.' She caught Ken's eye. 'So I'm glad I just about arrived on time.'

The congregation then tittered obligingly.

'Luckily for Ken,' she continued. 'His bride was much more organised than I was. So without further ado, I'd like to ask you, Kenneth Burton, whether you take this woman, Amy Davis, to be your wife.'

Ken looked at her, order of service in her hands. She'd quickly changed into fresh robes and dog collar, and had managed to smooth her hair a little. But she still felt a little jittery from her run and the stress of wondering if she'd make it on time.

Gazing into Ken's eyes she could once again see the boy who'd sat with her in the orchestra, the man who had become her best friend. All the happy years behind them, and the wonderful ones still to come.

'I do,' he said.

She turned to his fiancée, Amy – a woman who'd become an important part of her life too since Ken had introduced them two years ago – and asked her if she took Ken to be her husband...

'I do,' Amy beamed.

Moments later, Tina was pronouncing them husband and wife. And as the church exploded with applause, she felt her heart soar. It wasn't the first time she'd conducted a wedding, but it had been the most important one to date.

It hadn't been the perfect ceremony – she had tripped over her words once or twice – and she certainly hadn't looked her best. But at least she hadn't broken a promise – she made it to the church on time.

THE END

Gillian Harvey

* *Road Trip to the Riviera* by Gillian Harvey (£9.99, Boldwood Books) is out now.

Birth RIGHT

Tragedy was about to take Lottie on a journey of hope and a chance at love

Running along the street, rain-slicked from a recent downpour, Lottie held her skirts high to avoid the mud – and worse – that slithered like slimy black eels into the gutter.

Her heart was racing, and not simply from being out at a time when usually only women of low virtue would dare sally forth. In an upstairs room in the alehouse behind her, her best friend Flora was in labour, and 17-year-old Lottie had been charged with fetching the midwife. Potent feelings of excitement, apprehension and huge responsibility were crashing around inside her.

Approaching the alley, her steps faltered. The cobbled cut-through between the backs of the houses was a known haunt of beggars, footpads and drunks. To enter in daylight was folly, let alone in darkness.

Tamping down her fear, she dashed into the entrance. When a ghostly shape shot out from behind a pile of stinking rubbish, Lottie let out a squeal.

‘Oh, puss, you did give me a start!’ she gasped, laughing weakly as a scrawny grey cat streaked away into the gloom.

Thankfully, all the other night owls must be abed because she emerged safely on to

Hanway Street just as Big Ben, way over in Westminster, struck one. Immediately she was back with Flora, standing among the crowds watching the mighty bell being taken from the foundry in nearby Whitechapel, on a carriage drawn by 16 white horses. That was two years ago, in 1858, and the two girls had clutched one another in excitement as the 7ft 6in monster went by, knowing they were seeing history in the making.

Today, Flora was a girl no longer, but a young woman about to bring new life into

the world. Lottie hastened on.

Mr Jarman, the publican, had told her that Mrs Gittings lived above the

butcher’s shop, though quite how she was supposed to raise her at this time of night hadn’t been explained. She hurried past the shops, eyes darting to left and right. Yes, there was the butcher’s, right across the street. Before she could cross, a horse-drawn hansom trundled past, nag and driver’s heads sunk low as they headed home, weary from their night’s work. Silently urging them on, Lottie darted around the back, relieved to see a notice nailed to the butcher’s shop door...

For Mary Gittings, midwife, please use back stairs.

Lottie ran up the side

passage, mounted the rickety metal staircase and thudded on the door. After a minute, she heard movement inside.

‘All right, I’m here,’ came a voice.

The door opened on a reassuringly stout, rosy-cheeked woman draped in a shawl, who, despite being roused from her slumbers, was still managing a smile.

Lottie quickly explained. ‘I know it’s late but please come!’ she begged.

‘Of course I will. My customers don’t keep daylight hours,’ Mrs Gittings said good-naturedly. ‘Step inside, dear, while I get my things.’

Soon they were heading back the way Lottie had come.

‘How long has she been having contractions?’ the older woman puffed, as they ran along the alley, their footsteps echoing back at them.

‘I don’t know,’ Lottie said honestly. ‘There was a fight in the bar tonight, and Mr Jarman had to break it up. We were still righting the mess when I heard a cry. I went up to the attic and found Flora doubled over, gripping the washstand. Mr Jarman sent me to fetch you.’

‘Jarman, you say? He’s not the father?’ Mrs Gittings queried, as they raced across the street.

‘Not Flora’s, and definitely not the baby’s,’ Lottie said, her voice bubbling with merriment at the very idea. Mr Jarman was old – 50, at least. ‘That’s



Lucas Munro. He’s a ship’s doctor, currently on a merchant vessel sailing the China seas, not due back for a month or more. And he’s not quite Flora’s husband... yet.’

Flinging open the alehouse door, she led the midwife straight upstairs, the treads protesting noisily beneath their button boots.

Before they were even halfway up, Henry Jarman appeared at the top. ‘Mary, thank goodness.’

Mary Gittings gave his arm a playful nudge as she passed.



'Not your speciality then, Henry, birthing babies?'

He gave a wry chuckle. 'Give me a drunk to deal with any day. Do you need anything?'

'Hot water and towels, please. This young lady can stay and help. You, skedaddle.'

'Lottie? Is that OK with you?' Henry asked, solicitous as always.

Lottie nodded vigorously. She may be young but her friend needed her. She wasn't going anywhere.

Looking mightily relieved, Henry made his way downstairs

to do the midwife's bidding.

'You and Mr Jarman know one another?' Lottie asked, following Mrs Gittings to the dresser.

'We walked out for a while, long before the late Mr Gittings came on the scene,' Mary answered, taking a wooden stethoscope from her bag. 'We met on a hop-picking holiday in Kent. Henry was a skilled stilt-walker, vital for gathering the topmost flowers. We all looked up to him.'

She was still chuckling at her own joke when Flora let out a

low groan. The midwife hurried to her side, entirely focused now on her patient. She gently stroked Flora's brow as the pain intensified.

'There, there, lovey, I know it's a lot but it's all perfectly normal. After the feast comes the reckoning, eh? For us women, at least.'

Gradually, the tension in Flora's face eased and she flopped back against the pillows.

'Well done, lass,' Mary soothed. 'I'm just going to take a wee peek and check baby's heartbeat. Just relax now.'

Lottie grasped her friend's hand as the midwife lifted Flora's skirts and examined her. When she straightened, although her face conveyed nothing untoward, Lottie sensed a certain change.

'Is everything all right?'

Mrs Gittings circled the bed to stand by Flora's side. 'Looks like babbie wants to dip a toe in the waters of the world first, rather than facing it head-on.'

Flora frowned, failing to understand.

'Baby is in the breech position, coming feet first,' the midwife explained, this time taking in Lottie too. 'Usually, the head delivers first, paving the way for everything else. But this wee bairn has other ideas. We can do this, though, Flora. Just trust me.'

A tap on the door announced Henry's return, fresh towels over his arm and a steaming pitcher held between his hands. Mary Gittings escorted him to the washstand.

'You away now and put that kettle back on,' she told him. 'We'll need hot sweet tea and lots of it.'

As the door closed behind him, she returned to Flora, calmer now that the contraction had passed.

'How long have you two lasses known one another?'

she asked, for all the world as if they were promenading through Hyde Park rather than attending a birth.

'Three years,' Lottie said. 'I was 14 when I came to work here at the pub, Flora, three years older. It was the first time I'd ever left home and I was missing my family terribly but she took me under her wing and has been like a sister to me ever since.'

'I knew what it felt like,' Flora put in. 'Just like Lottie, I'd lost my pa too. With no wage coming in I had to earn...' Her face contorted as another contraction started to build.

'There, now, nice and steady,' said Mary, ducking back down under her skirts.

Flora's back arched as her baby sought a way into the world. 'You're doing well, Flora. I've got babbie's feet safely in my hands now. Here we go, push.'

Looking back on it, Lottie couldn't have said for how long her friend panted and pushed but finally, as the first pale streaks of dawn lightened the sky, the cry of a newborn, lusty and strong, filled the room.

Flora's cheeks were wet with tears as Mary placed her daughter, wrapped in the soft white shawl Lottie had knitted, into her arms.

Barely able to speak, Lottie went down to fetch Henry. Soon they were chinking their teacups in a toast to Flora and her beautiful baby girl, whom she'd decided to call Daisy. Having satisfied herself that all was well with her patient, and with the infant suckling contentedly at her mother's breast, Mary's midwifery duties were done.

'It's been wonderful to see you again, Mary,' Henry said, slipping a few coins into her palm. 'If you like, we could visit the music hall next week. I hear

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

'Baby is in the breech position'

it's very good.'

Lottie waited, hoping that Mary would agree. Henry's former lady friend had left a year ago, complaining that life with him was dull, though Lottie had always found him fun to be around.

To her delight, the midwife smiled. 'Thank you, Henry. I'd like that very much.'

As their footsteps receded down the stairs, Lottie turned to Flora.

'Lucas is going to be so proud of you, Flora. Just think, you'll soon be married and settled in your new home.'

'Yes, not long now,' Flora said, with an expansive yawn.

'Could you bring the crib closer, please, Lottie? I want to have Daisy near me while I sleep.'

Lottie dragged the wooden crib over to the bed and, with infinite care, placed the baby in it, tucking the covers in around her.

'Rest now, Flora. I'll be right here if you need me.'

Squeezing Flora's hand, she went behind the curtain that divided the loft space and pulled it across. Five minutes later the attic was quiet, all three occupants fast asleep.

It was daylight when Lottie woke, roused by the sound of grizzling. Flora's exertions of the night before must have left her exhausted, sleeping through her baby's whimpers. She swung her legs out of bed and pulled aside the curtain. Two tiny fists were visible above the crib's edge. As she approached she saw Daisy's blue eyes, wide and searching. Smiling, Lottie tiptoed to the bed.

'Flora,' she murmured. 'Baby needs feeding.'

Getting no response, she bent and touched her friend's hand. It was as cold as the grave.

In the days that followed, Lottie wept as many tears for Daisy as for Flora, so terrible was the loss. Henry dealt with his grief by keeping himself busy, visiting Flora's mother Mrs Reed in Surrey (he'd flatly refused to impart such awful news in a letter), and accompanying her to register both birth and death. He helped her with the funeral costs too, confirming Lottie's belief that he was a decent man deserving of some happiness.

Indeed, Daisy's birth aside, the one bright spark in the darkness was Henry's growing closeness to Mary. Having been

exonerated of any blame in Flora's death, blood loss being a not-uncommon cause of post-partum mortality, Mary

had become a regular visitor. She'd found a wet nurse for Daisy and was helping Lottie cope with her new responsibility of caring for the baby until such time as her father should return.

Any hopes that Mrs Reed might want to raise her granddaughter herself had been dashed when Lottie met her at the funeral. Having birthed and raised eight children already, the poor woman's constitution wasn't up to starting all over again. And so, with three younger siblings at home, Lottie's experience with tinies saw her naturally taking on the role.

Perhaps it was inevitable that as time went by and her attachment to Daisy grew, she began to anticipate Lucas' return with something akin to dread.

So when, a month later, Henry suggested she visit the shipping company to see if there was any news, she'd agreed with a heavy heart.

Leaving Daisy with the

wet nurse, she'd donned her best green velvet cape, tied a matching bonnet over her auburn curls, and set off for Hall and Hunter Shipping.

Negotiating the bustling quayside, Lottie attracted many an admiring glance from the brawny stevedores. But used as she was to fending off advances in the alehouse, she reached the red-brick building overlooking the oily waters of the Thames unscathed. Aware that she could well be hastening the end of the time she had left with Daisy, she went inside.

A man with a grizzled grey beard looked up from the ledger he'd been writing in.

'Good morning, miss. Can I help?'

Lottie swallowed down her nerves. 'I'm um, looking for Dr Lucas Munro, the doctor on the *Blue Horizon*. It's due back about now from China.'

'Your sweetheart, is he?' the man asked, with a knowing twinkle.

Lottie shook her head. 'Oh, no. I...' She blinked, as tears threatened to overwhelm her. 'Do you have any news?'

The man stopped his teasing. 'Let me fetch my colleague, Mr Conway. He'll know more.' He went and called through an open door. 'Archie?'

Footsteps sounded and a young man appeared. Dressed in navy britches and a plaid waistcoat, he had a thatch of wavy brown hair and an alert expression.

'Yes, Mr Kemp?'

As if sensing another's presence, he turned. Warm hazel eyes met hers and Lottie felt her heart lurch. The way his gaze lingered suggested that he had felt that tug of attraction too. He came to the counter, walking with a slight limp.

'Yes, Miss, how may I help?'

'Hello, I'm Lottie Stansfield and I'm looking for Dr Lucas Munro. He's on...'

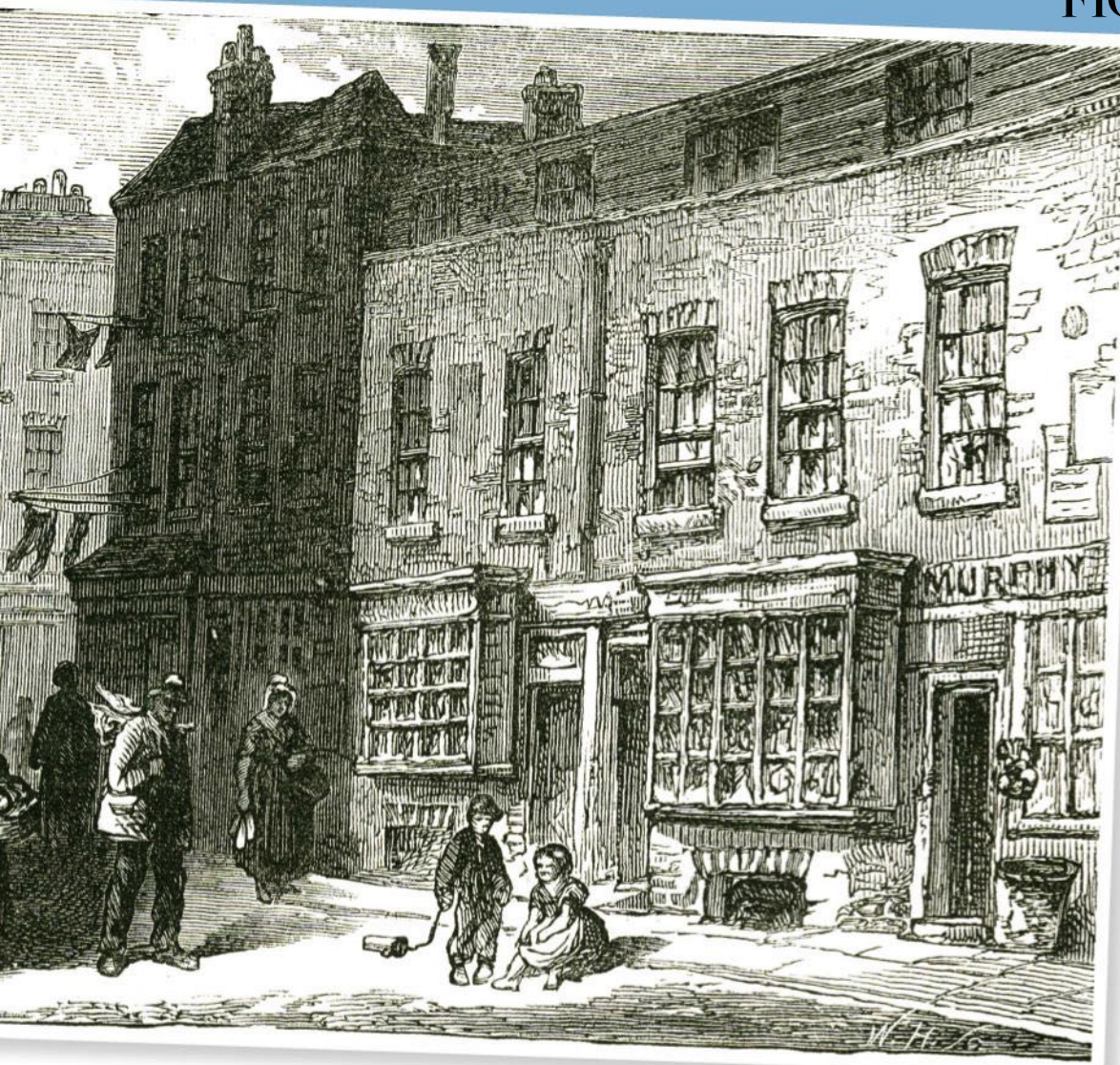


'The *Blue Horizon*,' Archie finished for her, and she sensed there was a reason why the ship's name had come so readily to mind. 'I'm sorry but the ship is overdue. We've been getting reports of bad weather in the region. Terrible storms and gales. The Captain of the *Trojan* left port the same day, and although he made it through, he said it was touch and go. As for the other ship...'

Lottie clutched the counter. First Flora and now Lucas. Was poor Daisy destined to lose both parents to tragedy before she even knew they existed? The ground tilted and she pitched forward.

In a flash, Archie was around the counter and catching her in his arms.

'Let's find her a seat,' he said to the older man. Together, they helped her through to the office he'd just left.



Soon she was perched on a leather swivel chair, sipping tea with a tot of brandy from a heavy brown mug. Hearing the street door open, the other man returned to reception, leaving Archie crouching before her, concern etched on his face.

'How overdue is the ship?'

Lottie asked in a small voice.

'*Trojan* docked three days ago,' Archie told her. 'But that doesn't mean anything. The *Horizon's* Captain is very experienced. He may have chosen a different route, in search of calmer waters. Even now they could be sailing up the Thames. May I ask how you know Dr Munro?'

'He was engaged to a friend of mine. I have some b... some news for him.'

Archie nodded seriously. 'Well, then, if you'd like to leave your address, I can send word

as soon as he returns.'

Lottie set down the empty mug. 'I wouldn't want to put you to any trouble.'

She was surprised to see a blush creep up his neck.

'It would be no trouble at all.'

Close up like this she could see he was younger than she'd thought, perhaps 22 or 23, fresh-faced but with a quiet surety of manner that belied his years. She gave him her address.

'You live in the alehouse?' he asked, sounding surprised.

'Yes,' she confirmed, smiling despite herself. 'Why?'

'Because you seem far too refined to be...' He paused, floundering for the right word.

'A serving wench?' she teased.

'I am not part of the merchandise'

His lips twitched. 'Well, yes.'

'I stand for no nonsense, Mr Conway, believe me, and Mr Jarman is always on hand to explain to anyone who thinks otherwise that I am not part of the merchandise.'

He was a good friend of my late father's, that's how I came to work there. My mother knew I would be looked after.'

'Then I am reassured,' Archie smiled. 'Now, if you are fully recovered?'

He straightened and stood back, allowing Lottie to stand. 'I am, thank you.'

He led the way back to reception, where they shook hands and she took her leave. Walking back along the quay, she realised that for the first time in weeks there was a

spring in her step.

The next few days passed agonisingly slowly, with Lottie turning towards the door every time it opened, only to be disappointed when it wasn't Archie who entered. But finally, just as she was putting Daisy into her perambulator for a walk one morning, she looked up to see Archie in the doorway. His face lit up when he saw her, only to fall again when he noticed the baby.

'Oh, I, er...'

Lottie shook her head. 'It isn't what you think, Mr Conway, but... no, I can't really explain until I've spoken to Dr Munro.'

'Which is why I'm here,' he said. '*Blue Horizon* docked last night. I told Lucas of your visit but he was unable to come straight away as he had a patient to tend to. A crew member was injured during the storm and Lucas went with him to the hospital.'

'That was very conscientious of him,' Lottie said.

'He's a fine and diligent doctor,' Archie asserted. 'If it hadn't been for his skills when I had my accident on board, I would almost certainly have lost my leg.'

'You were once a sailor?' Lottie queried.

'For three years, yes. I've always loved the sea, the vastness and the mystery. But I lost my footing on the rigging in squally weather and fell to the deck.' He shook his head as if to rid himself of an unhappy memory. 'So, if you're free now, I've asked him to be at the office at 10.'

So soon, Lottie thought regretfully. But it had to be done. 'I am. Thank you.'

She pushed the baby carriage out on to the street and they set off for the docks.

The meeting with Lucas was every bit as harrowing as Lottie had feared. Worse even than

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

his agony over losing Flora was the heartbreaking blend of pride and pain she saw on his face as he held his daughter for the first time, knowing that the birth of this beautiful child had been what had robbed him of his beloved.

'What do I do now?' he implored. 'With months spent at sea, I am in no position to raise her myself.'

'Your mother?' Lottie ventured.

'Is staunchly religious,' he said bitterly. 'She would never want anything to do with a child born out of wedlock.'

Lottie hesitated. 'Then I do have another suggestion, Lucas, if you are agreeable. I've loved looking after Daisy these past weeks, so...'

'You'd be willing to continue?' he asked, his voice full of hope.

'She will always be yours, of course, and I'll tell her about you constantly, but yes, until such time as you are able to be there for her, I'd love to carry on.'

The relief on his face matched Lottie's own as she knew she and the baby weren't about to be parted.

'I'll pay you, of course,' he said.

'Whatever you can manage would be helpful,' Lottie murmured.

'And I'll call upon you often, to check all's well,' Archie chipped in. Lottie's cheeks flushed. Any opportunity to see the handsome young man again would be welcome.

'Then I think we should draw up a simple contract stating what we've agreed,' Lucas said, gently laying the baby back in her carriage. 'A safeguard for both of us.'

Lottie nodded to him. 'An excellent idea.'

Strolling in the park with Archie, Daisy jiggling in his arms and cuddling her new birthday dolly, Lottie heaved a contented sigh.

'Can you believe, Archie, that it's been a whole year since



Daisy was born? I hope Flora would have approved of our arrangement.'

'I'm sure she would,' he assured her. 'Lucas sees her as often as he can, and you are everything a mother should be and more.'

He bent and lobbed a pebble into the lake, sending ripples spreading gently to the banks.

'I often think life's like that. One seismic event sending ripples in many directions.

He took a small box from his pocket

Without the awful loss of that night, you and I might never have met.'

'No, and Henry wouldn't have been reunited with his Mary,' Lottie agreed.

The couple's wedding the previous week had been a day of great joy and Lottie thought she'd never seen Henry happier.

Shifting Daisy to his left arm, Archie took a small box from his pocket, lifting the lid with a deft

flick of his thumb to reveal the ring inside.

'Lottie, my dearest, I've loved you from the very first moment we met. Will you do me the great honour of marrying me?'

Lottie squealed and threw her arms around him. 'Yes, Archie. Yes, I will!'

As they kissed, Daisy gurgling delightedly between them, the sun broke through the clouds, bathing them in its warmth. Lottie had her answer. Flora most *definitely* approved too.

THE END

Christine Sutton

QUEEN of the mountains

It was their special celebration,
and Joan had high expectations

There were flecks of rain in the air as the elderly couple stood on the beach gazing at the distant mountains.

Joan and Harry had always loved north-west Wales. In their younger days, the mountains had been their playground. Alas, age had caught up with them. It had been several years since they had last conquered any of the peaks.

Joan sighed.

'What's wrong?' Harry asked.

A sad smile flitted across his wife's face. 'I was just thinking back to our honeymoon and how much walking we did that week.'

Harry smiled. 'Can you believe it was nearly 50 years ago?'

'No, not really,' Joan replied.

'Talking of which,' Harry said.

'I was wondering how you'd like to celebrate our anniversary.'

'Do you know what I'd love?'

Harry shook his head.

'I'd love to celebrate at the top of a mountain with all of our friends and family.'

'Shame those days are over,' Harry murmured, although as he uttered the words a plan started to form in his mind.

In the weeks leading up to their golden anniversary, Harry began to act in a manner that Joan could only describe as suspicious. He took to making

surreptitious phone calls at odd times and browsing online, an activity he generally avoided.

'What exactly are you up to?'

Joan asked one day.

'I'm planning a surprise anniversary party for you,' Harry replied.

Joan laughed. 'Not much of a surprise! You've just gone and told me!'

'Ah, but I didn't reveal where we'll be going,' Harry countered.

'You don't need to tell me,'

Joan said. 'I can guess.'

'Go ahead, clever clogs.'

'Eryri.'

Harry looked puzzled.

'Where?'

'It's the Welsh name for Snowdonia. I think it's rather beautiful. So, am I right?'

'Of course,' Harry said.

'There's no keeping secrets from you, is there?'

When the weekend of their anniversary finally arrived, Joan and Harry headed off to Wales. As they approached the town of Llanberis, Joan felt a slight pang as she looked up at the majestic mountain peaks. How she would love to wind back the clock to the days when she and her husband were fit enough to conquer them.

After checking into their favourite hotel, they enjoyed a sumptuous evening meal in the hotel restaurant.

'So, what do you fancy doing this evening?' Joan asked.

'I suggest an early night,'

Harry said. 'We have a busy day tomorrow.'

Joan eyed him suspiciously.

'Doing what?'

A faint smile played across Harry's lips. 'You'll find out soon enough.'

The following morning they rose early. After a hearty breakfast, Harry led Joan

down to Llanberis train station.

'It's not quite the same as walking to the peak, but I thought we could take a ride in the train to the summit of Snowdon,' he said.

'That's a lovely idea,'

Joan enthused.

The journey on the sturdy little mountain train was undertaken in bright sunshine. The views over the magnificent Welsh landscape were glorious.

When the train reached its destination, the passengers disembarked. Joan kissed Harry and thanked him for such a memorable gift.

'Ah, that's only part of the surprise,' Harry said.

'What do you mean?'

'Come with me, I'll show you.'

Taking hold of Joan's arm, Harry guided his wife to a vantage point just shy of the

summit. The spot marked the intersection of several tracks.

'Now,' Harry said, 'take a look back down the Llanberis track.'

Curious, Joan did so. Initially, she couldn't spot anything of note. However, as a large party of walkers approached, she recognised various members of their family smiling and waving.

Harry then pointed towards the mighty Crib Goch, as their

grandchildren had decided to take a more dramatic route to the summit.

The surprise was completed when the next train arrived. Several of Joan and Harry's friends were on board.

Harry turned to his wife.

'When you told me how you'd love to spend our anniversary at the top of a mountain with all of our friends and family, I thought that the cafe at the Snowdon summit would be perfect.'

Delighted, Joan flung her arms around her husband's neck and kissed him.

'That makes me feel like the Queen of the mountains!' she declared.

'You always have been, in my eyes,' Harry replied. 'And you always will be.'

THE END

Tony Haynes

'What exactly are you up to?'

The signs OF LOVE

An uncanny experience left Orla stunned – what did it mean?

Sunlight streamed through the bedroom window as Orla took a deep breath and opened the wardrobe door. It was time.

Hard to believe two years had already passed since she'd lost Patrick. But it wouldn't be easy, going through his clothes and folding them neatly into carrier bags ready for the charity shop, despite knowing it was what he'd wanted.

Their long marriage had been full of joy and laughter. They'd met in Dublin and married young, moving to Yorkshire when Patrick was offered his dream job in wildlife conservation. The kindest man she'd ever met, Patrick was a glass-half-full person, radiating positive energy that made people feel good. Consequently, he was much-loved by his many friends and family. Everyone he encountered, including the nurses and hospice staff, were touched by his brave, generous heart.

Orla felt a comforting hand on her shoulder.

'I know how hard this is, Mum, but I can help if you like,' offered her 20-year-old daughter Betsy, home from university for the summer.

'Thanks, sweetheart,' replied Orla. 'It feels disloyal somehow, giving your dad's clothes away.'

'I get that,' said Betsy. 'But he'd have hated the thought of his stuff not being used

or enjoyed, so you mustn't feel guilty.'

Orla sighed. 'You're right, but it still makes my heart ache. Your dad insisted I live life to the full after he'd gone and I'm trying. I signed up for the community choir yesterday.'

'That's great, Mum! And are you still enjoying the yoga class you joined last month?'

'I am,' admitted Orla. 'Everyone is friendly, and Gabe, our teacher, seems nice.'

'Dad would approve of you making new friends,' said Betsy. She hesitated before continuing... 'Have you given any more thought to online dating? He wanted you to find love again.'

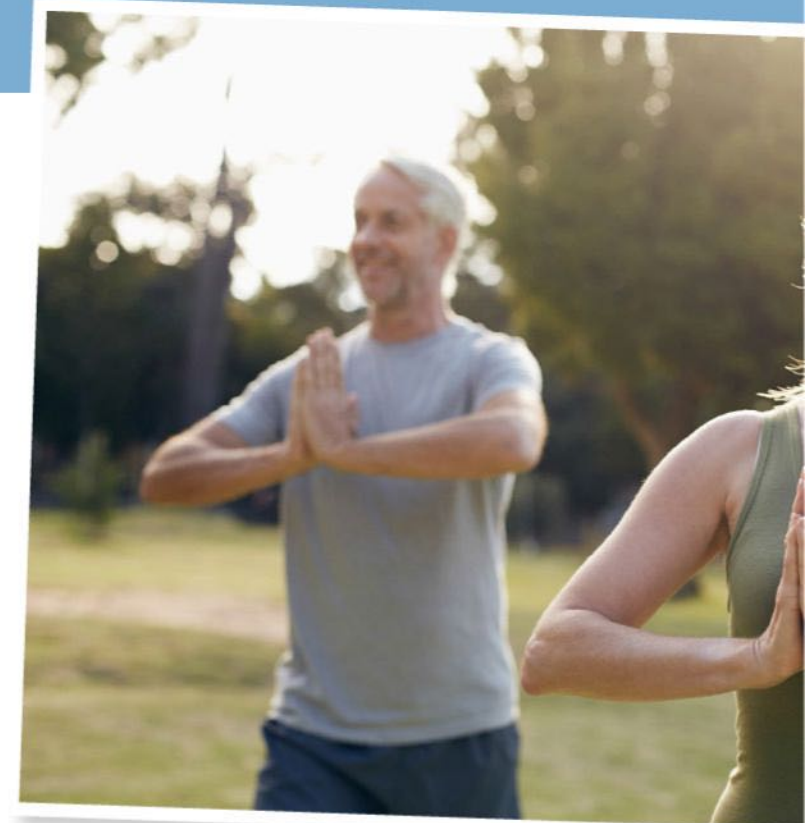
'I know, pet. I'm just not sure it's the right time yet. Perhaps when it is, Patrick will find a way to send me a sign. But there will never be anyone like your father. I miss him so much.'

'We both do.' Betsy gave her a hug, and Orla was grateful she and her daughter had always been close.

She forced a smile. 'Right, where do we start?' she said purposefully, taking hangers out of the wardrobe and laying them across the bed. 'Your dad was always so dapper and stylish.'

Betsy grinned. 'He was pretty cool!'

'This vintage 70s jacket was his favourite. So very Patrick,' observed Orla, fondly stroking the faded stone-washed denim, turning it over to reveal an



intricately embroidered design across the back in emerald green and gold of the Celtic Tree of Life. The roots reaching into the earth, branches extending towards the sky, reminded Orla of Patrick's passionate zest for all forms of life.

'This symbol represents harmony and rebirth,' she murmured. 'The interconnectedness of all living things.'

'It really is a statement jacket,' smiled Betsy. 'I've never seen another like it.'

'One of a kind,' replied Orla. 'Like Patrick.'

Two weeks later, something happened which shook Orla to the core. She was walking home on a bright afternoon after a trip to the hairdresser. Betsy had convinced her to try a different style from her usual shoulder-length bob, and Orla couldn't help grinning as she visualised her daughter's reaction to the new purple-dyed pixie cut.

She was considering getting a tattoo next when she became conscious of a figure in the

distance up ahead. Was she imagining it, or seeing a ghost? Her gaze was drawn to the distinctive jacket the person was wearing.

Heart thumping, legs shaking, Orla was compelled to follow the man, crossing the busy road into the park. The Tree of Life symbol was clearly visible as she drew closer.

Orla hesitated, the knot in her stomach tightening, wanting to call Patrick's name. Bathed in sunlight, the walker stopped by the lake, with Orla inches away, her breathing getting faster.

Reaching out, she touched the man lightly on the shoulder.

He turned abruptly to face her. 'Oh, it's you! Goodness, you made me jump.'

'That makes two of us,' Orla responded, frozen to the spot as she was confronted by the familiar blue eyes and silver-fox hair.

Suddenly embarrassed, she said, 'Hello, Gabe.'

Of course it wasn't Patrick, she chided herself. How could it have been? But she was trembling.

'Are you OK, Orla?' Gabe

**Was she
seeing a
ghost?**



sounded concerned. 'You're as white as a sheet.'

'For a moment I thought you were someone else. Foolish, really,' she mumbled. 'It was the jacket you're wearing.'

'Funky, isn't it? I got it second-hand. I can't resist 70s fashion, and the Celtic Tree of Life embroidery speaks to my heart and values,' Gabe paused. 'Hey, sure you're all right?'

'I'm fine. Just a hot flush,' Orla joked in a faux-casual tone.

'In that case, will you let me buy you an ice cream from the park cafe? It might cool you down a bit,' offered Gabe, his smile a welcoming ray of sunshine. 'The strawberry flavour is delicious.'

Adjusting to the shock of seeing a stranger – although Gabe was hardly a stranger – wearing Patrick's jacket, Orla reflected that, although he wore it differently, he wore it well. It suited him. She heard herself saying, 'Thanks, Gabe, that's a kind thought. Strawberry ice cream sounds perfect.'

'Excellent! Your hair looks fab, by the way.'

Orla blushed. 'I just had it done, still getting used to it. Quite a big change for me.'

'In my experience, change often leads us towards fresh adventures,' said Gabe. 'Even if, at the time, it feels like a big, scary risk. Leaving a secure civil service career to retrain as a yoga teacher was a major change for me, on so many levels, but I'm glad I took a leap of faith. I love how my new life is turning out.'

When Orla got home later, Betsy took one look at her and said, 'Is everything OK, Mum? You seem preoccupied. Has something happened?'

'Kind of,' replied Orla.

Over iced tea, Orla told Betsy about her encounter with Gabe. 'It felt strange seeing him in Patrick's jacket. Really spooked me.'

'I can imagine,' said Betsy. 'Gabe must have got it from the charity shop where we donated Dad's clothes.'

'That's what I thought. But I didn't mention it to Gabe, in case it sounded weird.'

Orla took a sip of tea. 'You'll probably think I'm being silly, but maybe this encounter was the signal I was waiting for, Patrick's way of telling me it's time to move on...'

Betsy smiled. 'Sounds like you and Gabe made a connection.'

Orla blushed. 'He seems thoughtful and considerate. Easy to talk to.'

'Well, he's clearly made an impression,' replied Betsy. 'So what do you know about him? Apart from the fact he teaches yoga, which is pretty cool.'

'He told me his parents moved here from Cork when he was a child. Recently, he bought and renovated a bungalow overlooking the river, where he lives with his Norwegian Forest cat, Steve.'

'Cute. Likes animals. That's a good sign. So when you see Gabe at yoga class next week, invite him out for a drink.'

'Honestly, Betsy, what are you like?' But there was a flutter in Orla's tummy she

hadn't experienced in a very long time indeed.

On a balmy Saturday evening, a month later, Orla was getting ready to go out when the doorbell rang.

'Would you get that, Betsy, love. It will be Gabe. He's picking me up for our date.'

'Another date?' teased Betsy. 'Where this time?'

'We're trying a salsa class. Bit of an adventure.'

Slipping into heels, Orla heard the door open and listened to Betsy inviting Gabe inside while saying to him, 'This might sound cheesy, but I'm so glad the universe brought you and Mum together.'

'Me, too,' agreed Gabe. 'Speaking of which...'

Orla made her grand entrance, giving a playful twirl in a stunning fiery-red dress. 'What do you think?'

'You look gorgeous,' admired Gabe.

'I bought the dress from that charity shop. The one where you got the Tree of Life jacket,' said Orla.

Gabe looked confused. 'You've lost me there, Orla. I bought the jacket online from a vintage clothes market. It's a limited-edition design. Something that special doesn't come up often but luckily there are still a few left in the world.'

Orla felt her stomach flip. If Gabe wasn't wearing Patrick's jacket that day, then it wasn't a signal from beyond the grave after all. Flustered, she dashed from the room, leaving Gabe bemused.

Betsy went after her.

'I'm such a fool,' said Orla. 'I truly believed Gabe was wearing Patrick's actual jacket. The fact it fitted him so well convinced me it was a sign Patrick approved of my new relationship. I realise Gabe's not to blame, that I just made the wrong assumption, but I feel tricked.' She sighed.

'The very foundation of our relationship is built on a lie.'

'Why on earth would you think that?' Betsy was aghast. 'Gabe's a terrific guy, with a big heart. He's a limited edition, like the jacket. Like Dad. Who'd be delighted you'd met someone like Gabe, who clearly adores you the way he did.'

'But I was just kidding myself it was a sign from Patrick when it clearly wasn't,' protested Orla.

'Wasn't it? Think about it, Mum. The very moment you left the hairdresser, you spotted the jacket, which led you to

follow the wearer to the park, resulting in you seeing Gabe in a new light away from the yoga class.

Coincidence? Fate? It might never have happened if you'd left the hairdresser 30 seconds earlier or later.'

'I suppose you have a point,' Orla admitted, considering Betsy's words.

'Besides, does it really matter?' continued Betsy. 'The important thing is you and Gabe found each other and care about each other and I haven't seen you this happy in ages. I bet Dad is looking down right now and smiling.'

'Oh, Betsy. How are you so wise beyond your years?'

Orla threw her arms around her daughter, a sob catching in her throat, but they were joyful tears. She would never forget Patrick, who was truly one of a kind. But so was Gabe.

When they finished hugging, Betsy said, 'You look fab, Mum, and so does Gabe. It's a beautiful summer evening, so just go out together and enjoy yourselves.'

'Everything OK?' asked Gabe, wandering into the kitchen looking puzzled.

'Perfect,' replied Orla, taking his hand in hers. 'Just perfect.'

THE END

Jane Ayres

***I'm glad
I took a leap
of faith'***



The perfect PRESENT

What do you give the little girl who has everything?

A single mum to a young son and daughter, Maisie worked hard at her job as a supervisor in a superstore. She was one of their most popular members of staff, always cheerful and upbeat. Her mother would often help out with the children, meeting them from school and giving them their tea when Maisie was working. But money was tight and although her parents helped out a little financially, they didn't have money to throw around either.

The trouble was that a lot of Maisie's friends – people she had been to school with and grown up with – were now well off. They nearly all had expensive cars, while Maisie used the bus or cycled when the weather was fine. They could afford designer clothes, meals out and rounds of drinks at the pub. Maisie, however, couldn't afford such things. All her money went on food and

clothes for her children and paying the bills.

Then one day her friend Patsy asked her to come to the birthday party she was holding for her three-year-old, Flora. Patsy wouldn't accept any excuses.

Maisie knew a nice present would be expected, and wondered what on earth she could give a child who seemed to have everything. Patsy's husband earned a good salary, so there was always plenty of money to go around.

They jetted off on several foreign holidays a year, while Maisie and her children went to a boarding house on the south coast for a week in the summer.

That night, Maisie lay awake tossing and turning. Even if she pretended to be ill on the day, she would still be expected to give a present.

Then she had a brainwave. She would find a large, empty

box and fill it with layers of small, wrapped presents. Crayons, sheets of stickers, a whistle, a plastic duck for the bath – nothing that would cost more than a few pounds but each layer a surprise. She already had a large, decorative gift box left over from something her aunt had given her the previous Christmas, so all she needed was a pack of tissue paper and a few inexpensive items. She knew Flora was an imaginative child and hoped she would find it fun delving into each layer.

In her lunch hour, Maisie scoured the shelves of the toy shop, trying to find the cheapest gifts possible, but also things that would delight a small child.

That evening, with the children in bed, she got quite excited, wrapping each tiny thing and placing it in the box.

Finally, she found a length of ribbon – again carefully stored

*She tried to
stop tears
flowing*

and freshly ironed from a previous present – and tied it in a big bow on top.

The day of the birthday tea came and Maisie arrived at Patsy's house clutching the box and feeling happy and excited.

Her good mood, however, didn't last. Patsy's friends were all well off and dressed in the latest fashion, as were their children. Presents were handed over – a doll's house complete with exquisite mini furniture, a solid silver charm bracelet, a complete set of Beatrix Potter books in a beautiful little bookcase – all gift-wrapped in store and looking very expensive.

Maisie slowly handed over her box of presents and Patsy smiled gratefully.

'It's not much...' Maisie began.

'I'm sure Flora will love it,' Patsy smiled.

They had tea, with Maisie sitting silently, listening to stories of holidays in the Caribbean, days at the local spa, nights out at the theatre...

She felt like crying. This was not her world and probably never would be. She sat with her head bowed, trying to stop tears flowing.

Then Patsy nudged her. 'Maisie, look what Flora's doing,' she said, pointing at her daughter.

Maisie raised her head. The child was sitting there, the picture of contentment, ignoring the expensive presents around her but lovingly opening all the little trinkets in her box and admiring each one in turn.

She then climbed inside the large box, laughing with glee.

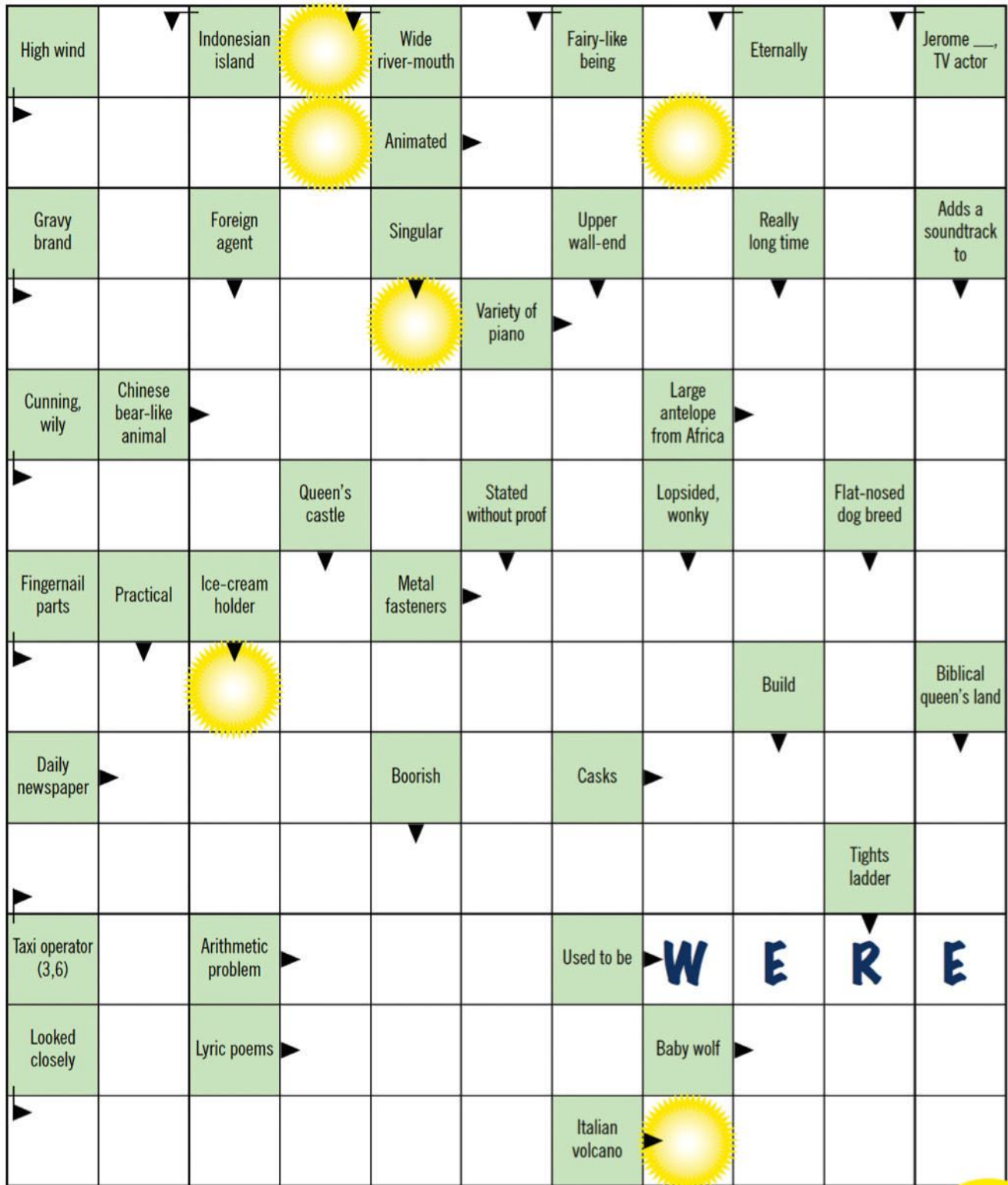
'I is going on an adventure in my boat,' she giggled, beaming at her mother and Maisie.

'There you are!' Patsy said. 'Flora's having such fun in that box, thinking it will whisk her away somewhere exciting. I knew you'd get it just right, Maisie. That really is the perfect present.'

THE END

Penny Pecorelli

Puzzle *TIME*



Fill me in

Solve the puzzle by following the arrows and writing in your answers. Then read down the letters in the shaded squares to find the answer.
Clue: To give all or most of one's time or resources to (a person or activity).

You'll find the answers on page 60

Circle time

While most countries have official mottos that use words like 'unity' and 'peace', which country's motto is the single word 'Rain'?

Fit the words into the grid, then read down the letters in the shaded circles for the answer.



3 LETTERS

ADO
ART
AWE
BUN
EAR
GOA

GASP
NEED
NEXT
OKRA
RIND
STAG
UNDO

ASSAY
GAPED
SEWER
TONGA
TUDOR
TUNER
WEARY

7 LETTERS

ENGLAND

10 LETTERS

NEW ZEALAND

4 LETTERS

ALES
DEAL

5 LETTERS

ABODE
ADDER

6 LETTERS

SWEDEN

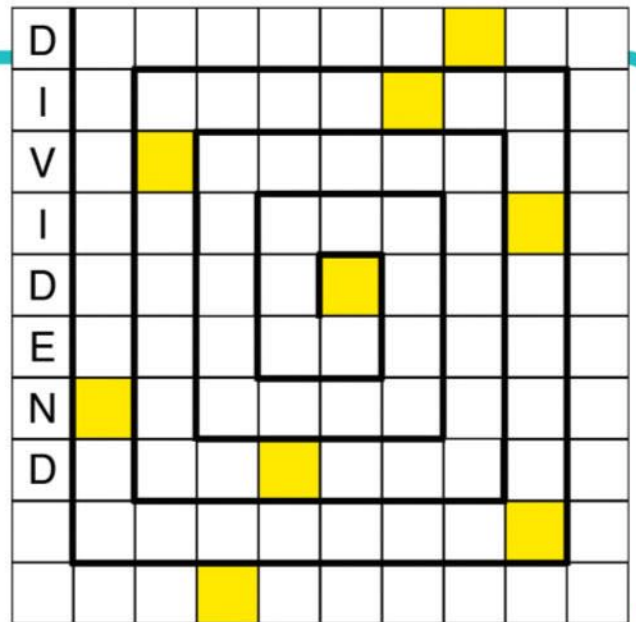
SPIRAL XWORD

A doodle in the shape of an arch is said to indicate what about the person who drew it?

The answer to each clue (apart from the first) begins with the last letter of the preceding answer. The shaded squares will spell out the answer.

**YOU CAN
WORK IT OUT...**

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Shareholder's payout (8) | 11 Heroic poem (4) |
| 2 Make a choice (6) | 12 Funfair sweet treat (10) |
| 3 Initial period (5, 4) | 13 Small onion variety (7) |
| 4 Dirty look (5) | 14 Frighten badly (7) |
| 5 Corrupt (4, 6) | 15 Distance (7) |
| 6 Hikers' stopover (5, 6) | |
| 7 Profitable (9) | |
| 8 Trade boycott (7) | |
| 9 Too dear (10) | |
| 10 Trick, cheat (4) | |



C R N A W O R E B
Y E B A Y H R K J
P D C W C O S U M
R L J U M E N A L
E A I A R I D I E
S T C I P P M A K
S Y N E O E S A R
S T R Y L L O H D
C H E S T N U T I

Wordsearch

Kew Gardens' Millennium Seed Bank now includes seeds from which type of dwarf tree?

The answer is the one missing from the grid.

ALDER
ASH
BAY
BIRCH
CEDAR
CHESTNUT
CYPRESS
ELM

HOLLY
JUNIPER
LIME
OAK
ROWAN
SPRUCE
SYCAMORE

**YOU CAN
WORK IT OUT...**

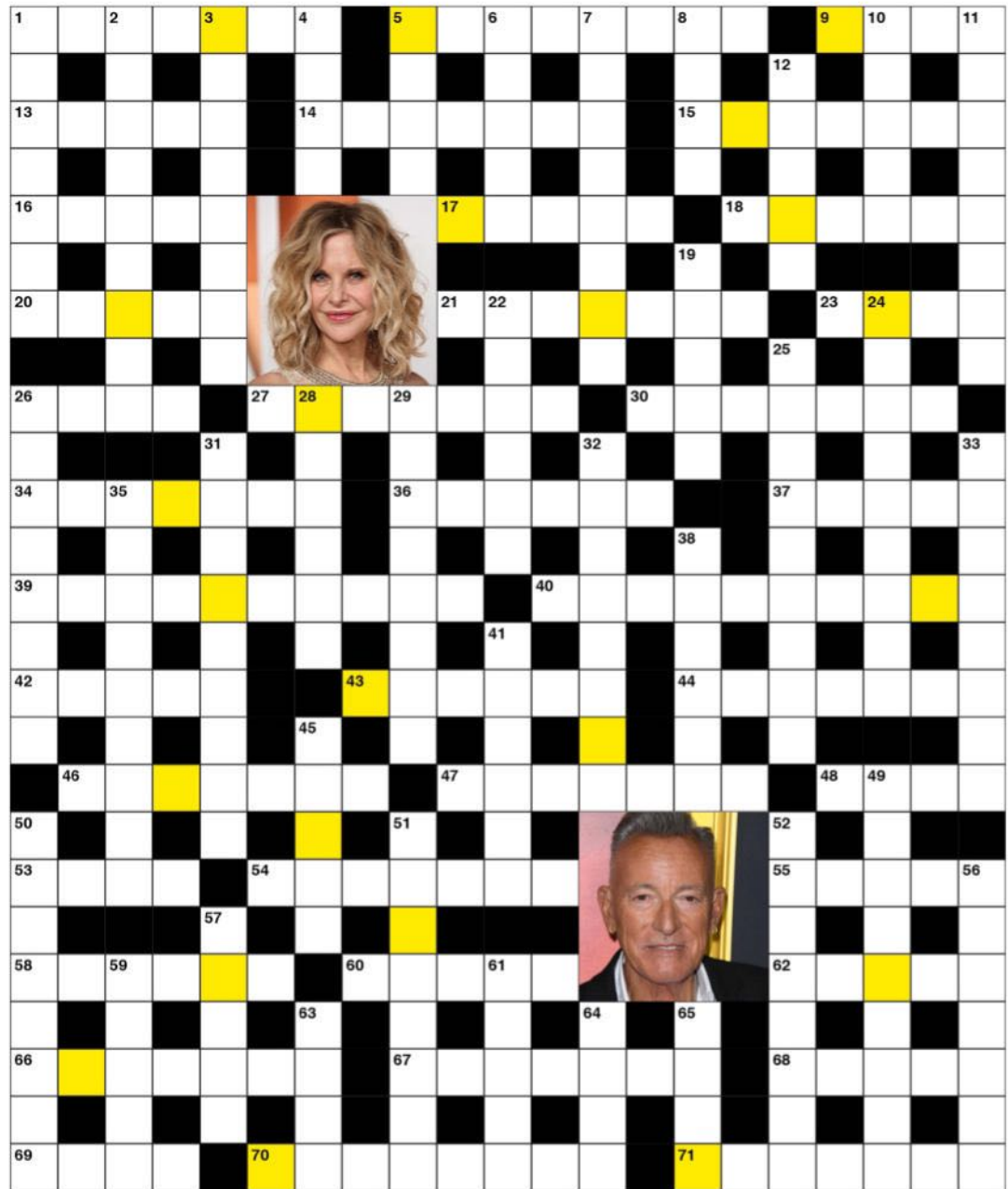
What links *Sleepless in Seattle* actor Meg Ryan and rock superstar Bruce Springsteen?

To find out, solve the crossword, then read down the shaded squares to find the four-word answer.

ACROSS

- 1 Boldness, bluster (7)
 5 Specific order (8)
 9 Slow horse's pace (4)
 13 Belief, trust (5)
 14 High swing in a 38 Down (7)
 15 Cold-blooded animal (7)
 16 Holiday from the forces (5)
 17 Baton-passing race (5)
 18 Dogs, fighters or underwear (6)
 20 Place to park a car at home (5)
 21 College (7)
 23 Pre-revolution Russian ruler (4)
 26 Ice-cream cornet (4)
 27 Puzzle letters in a 44 Across 5 Across (7)
 30 Long-necked animal (7)
 34 Ship which sank in 1912 (7)
 36 Start again (6)
 37 Stage or screen performer (5)
 39 Leader of a 38 Down (10)
 40 Carefully located (10)
 42 Spools (5)
 43 Pour wine into a serving bottle (6)
 44 Disordered, in a huge mess (7)
 46 Number in a Rugby Union side (7)
 47 A bit silly (7)
 48 Mark of an old wound (4)
 53 Tiny insect once in a type of 38 Down (4)
 54 Employee of an airline or on a cruise liner (7)
 55 Equine beast (5)
 58 Name of eight English kings (6)
 60 Ballroom dance in triple time (5)
 62 Result of an addition (5)
 66 Fast big cat (7)
 67 Disregarded (7)
 68 Forges (5)
 69 Word that can follow building, camp or web (4)
 70 Move to another country (8)
 71 Ages, ripens (7)

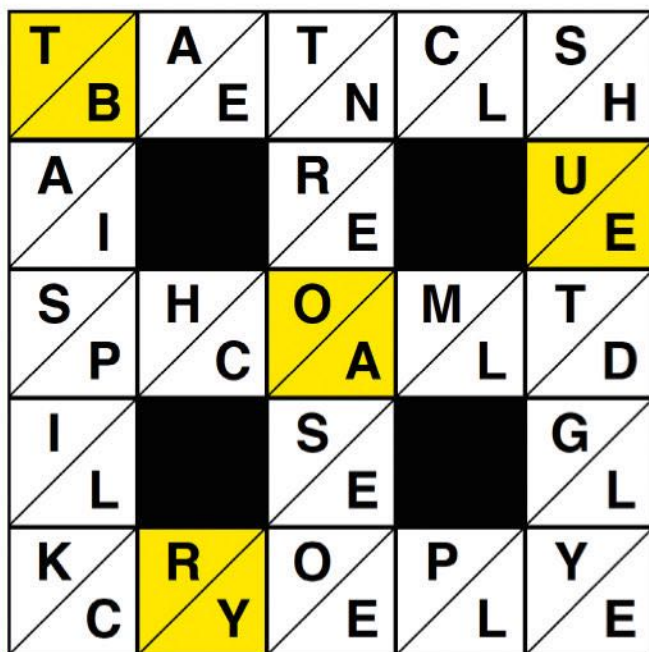
Big crossword



DOWN

- 1 Perplexed (7)
 2 Cartoon film (9)
 3 Managed to get done (8)
 4 Solemn vow (4)
 5 Unwanted 19 Down (4)
 6 Wait in line (5)
 7 Green jewels (8)
 8 Treat an illness successfully (4)
 10 Increase (5)
 11 Government finance department (8)
 12 Ladle (5)
 19 Personal communication via computer (5)
 22 Crude, vulgar, unrefined (6)
 24 14 Across user's protection in a 38 Down (6,3)
 25 Excessively enthusiastic (9)
 26 Food suppliers at events (8)
 28 Most pleasant (6)
 29 Horticulturist (8)
 31 Hostility and bitterness (9)
 32 Undying (8)
 33 Movie money man (8)
 35 Small sweet orange (9)
 38 Big Top entertainment (6)
 41 Work hard (6)
 45 _ cash, money for minor purchases (5)
 49 Janitor (9)
 50 Crimes (8)
 51 Using bad language, or taking a 4 Down (8)
 52 Face picture for police identification (8)
 56 Joins army (7)
 57 Thick soup (5)
 59 Cereal ground into flour (5)
 61 Polynesian island nation (5)
 63 Close friend (4)
 64 On the house (4)
 65 Round Dutch cheese (4)

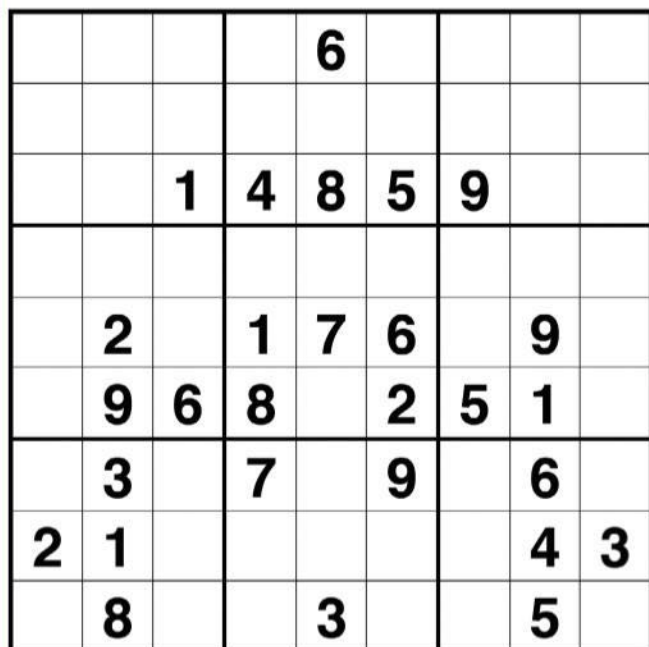
HALF AND HALF



What broke into a house in Colorado and escaped by smashing through a wall?

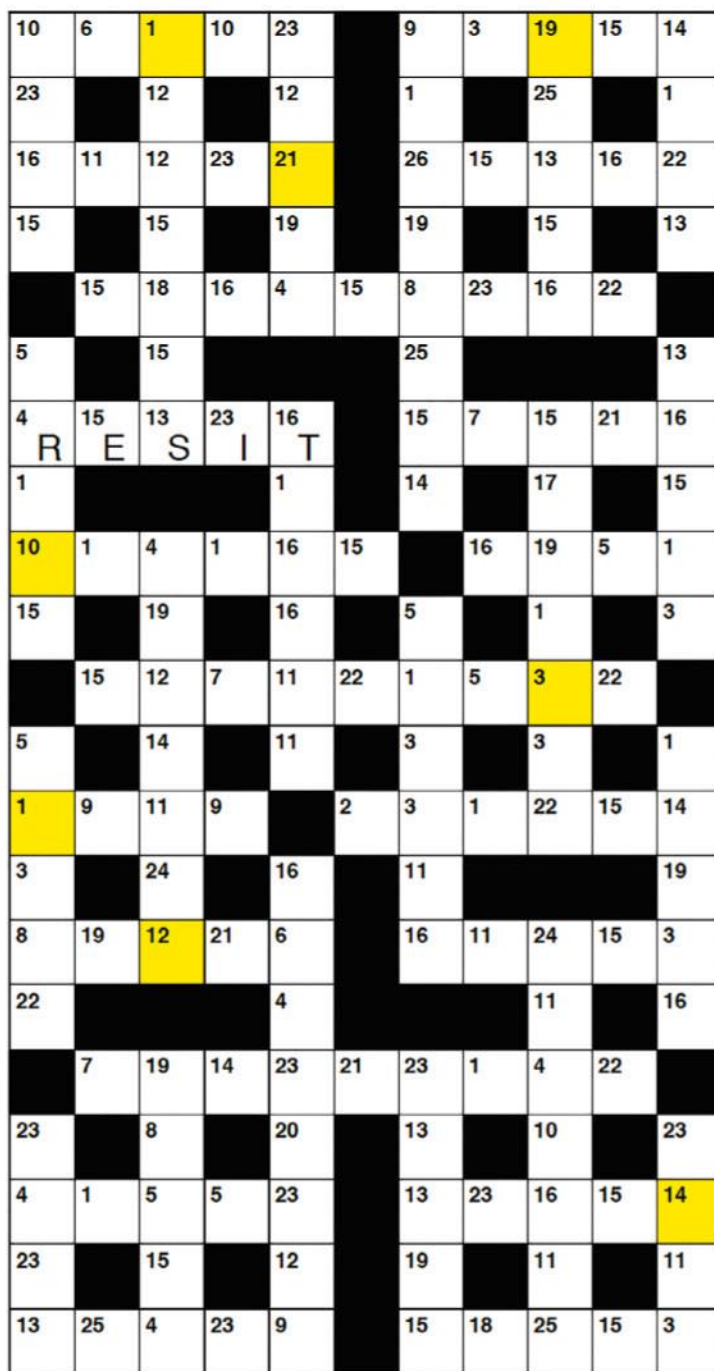
Cross out a letter in each square to get a grid filled with words. The uncrossed-out letters in the shaded squares give the answer.

SUDOKU



To solve this puzzle, fill in the grid so that each 3 x 3 box, each row and each column contains the numbers 1-9.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Code cracker

What is *Doctor Who* star Jodie Whittaker's middle name?

To find out, solve the puzzle... Fill in the grid.

Each letter of the alphabet is represented by a number from 1 to 26. The shaded squares will spell out the answer.

We've given you five letters to start you off.

Arrow word

Land measure		Mumbai's country		Stone-worker		Pot cover	Clever humour	Reflected shout	Facial disguise	Escaped Cereal crop	
							Nourished	Move on all fours			
Public disgrace		Afternoon meal		Sieve				Chess piece	Female pronoun		
				Dedicated poem				Ridiculed	Applaud		
								Digit			
Abomi-nable snowman	Make money					Genetic material			Relieves	Baton passing race	Conceals
			Martial art	Prayer ending	Unspoken		Dig up		E		
By way of	Possess	Indone-sian Island					Uncle Sam	Primate	A		Devoured
						Dices			S	Young man	
Doctor's deputy		Invent						Fill with joy	E	L	A
Midday						Pastry puddings			S	Word of assent	

The first armoured car for use by a US president was a second-hand bulletproof Cadillac previously been owned by whom?

Solve the puzzle by following the arrows and writing in your answers. Then read down the letters in the shaded squares to find the answer.

MINI CROSSWORD

Complete the grid, then the shaded words will spell out another word.

1	2	3	4
5			
6			
7			

ACROSS

- 1 Converse using words (4)
5 Element, symbol Fe (4)
6 Pleasant (4)
7 Receive, accept (4)

DOWN

- 1 Large glass of beer (4)
2 Solo in an opera (4)
3 Large stone (4)
4 Knobbly leg joint (4)

SKINNY ONE

The smell of what can release 'theta waves' in the brain that trigger relaxation and have a calming effect?

Add a letter anywhere in each of the boxed-off words to fit the clue, eg, Clean hard = SOUR + C = SCOUR. Write the added letter in the space provided. Then read down the added letters to spell out the one-word answer.

CLEAN HARD UNTIED WEAR AWAY
NUMBER KINGDOM
DODGE ISLAND
PROCLAMATION PONG

SOUR
TREE
AVID
EDIT
LOSE
REAM
MALT
SINK
RODE

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

You'll find the answers on page 60

NUMBER JIG

Statisticians have calculated that the average woman will spend
how many days of her life dealing with her hair?

Fit these numbers into the grid. One number doesn't fit.
This is the answer.

3 DIGITS

154
193
219
277
346
365
~~491~~
493
532
578
583
624
651

4 DIGITS

1642
2084
3126
4340
5155
6614
7473
8139
9488

29865

37896
43185
53862
68607
73654
86162
86341
94203

6 DIGITS

250917
375326
522514

632700

883182

7 DIGITS

1562851
3196165
4936486
9726733

8 DIGITS

30259045

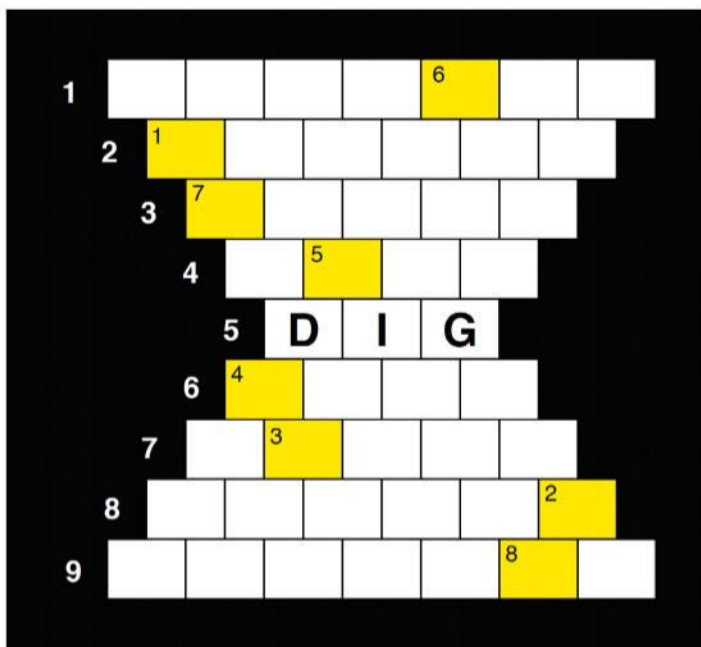
Brick trick

In which European capital city is there a museum
dedicated to inventor Nikola Tesla?

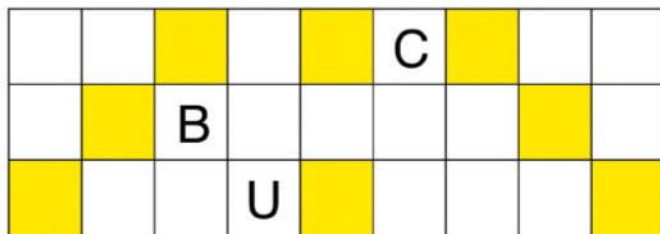
To find out, solve the puzzle... Enter the answers to
the clues in the grid. Every word is an anagram of its
neighbours, plus or minus a letter. Read the shaded squares
in number order for the answer.

- 1 Army unit
- 2 Card game
- 3 Dreary song
- 4 Matrix
- 5 Excavate

- 6 Embellish
- 7 Move smoothly
- 8 Encircle
- 9 Toasted



THREE IN A ROW



In 2019, archaeologists worked with climbing specialists
to record a rare example of what Roman work
in a Cumbrian quarry?

Make three nine-letter words using all of the three-letter
sections below and enter them in the grid as the starter
letters indicate. Then make an anagram of the letters in
the shaded squares to find the answer.

TED
UFF

ING
IAN

INF
LIB

LIC
REB

RAR

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

* There are more puzzles to tackle on pages 86-88

P	C	D	G	K	W	Q	C	D	U	G	C	D	S	S	C
P	R	U	I	S	A	F	Y	C	D	R	G	I	N	E	L
E	S	T	E	E	L	M	A	G	N	O	L	I	A	S	A
D	M	E	A	S	O	R	F	N	I	E	L	U	B	N	I
Y	I	A	M	H	T	I	M	S	T	T	A	M	O	A	R
N	L	N	S	A	V	E	O	C	U	I	D	R	W	P	E
N	L	T	I	E	H	A	B	B	E	L	N	G	L	R	F
H	I	N	S	K	O	T	R	T	I	A	E	E	S	E	O
O	N	J	O	H	N	T	R	A	V	O	L	T	A	T	Y
J	E	W	E	R	I	H	S	E	K	O	R	B	M	E	P
H	R	N	Y	U	E	Q	U	A	T	O	R	E	C	P	D

The big quiz

The answers to all these general knowledge questions – except one – are in the grid in various directions. Work out which answer is missing. This is your answer. Answers are in alphabetical order in each section.

THE SILVER SCREEN:

HAIR

1 In the 2007 film version of the musical *Hairspray*, which actor received a Golden Globe nomination for playing the part of Edna Turnblad? (4,8)

2 Which Hollywood actor played the title role in the 1990 film *Edward Scissorhands*, about a man with blades for hands who styles women's hair and topiary? (6,4)

3 In which 1989 film, which also starred Julia Roberts, did Dolly Parton play Louisiana hairdresser Truvy Jones? (5,9)

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

HEAD

4 Which famous holiday camp company opened a centre in Minehead in 1962, which still bears the name of the original company? (7)

5 The rocky headland of Strumble Head is on the coast of which Welsh county? (12)

6 Which river flows through the town of Maidenhead in the English county of Berkshire? (6)

CAP

7 The line of latitude known as the Tropic of Capricorn lies south of which imaginary line that circles the Earth? (7)

8 Peter Capaldi took over from which actor as the star of the TV series *Doctor Who*? (4,5)

9 Evil pirate Captain Hook appears in which pantomime? (5,3)

HAT

10 Who wrote the children's story *The Cat in the Hat*? (2,5)

11 What was the name of Anne Hathaway's bonnet-wearing character in the 2012 film *Les Misérables*? (7)

12 What name is given to a person who makes hats? (8)

CROWN

13 Crown green is a form of which leisure activity? (5)

14 Who played Queen Elizabeth II in the first two series of *The Crown* and was replaced by Olivia Colman in the third series? (6,3)

15 How many shillings were there in an old British crown? (4)

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

You'll find the answers on page 60

Solutions

FILL ME IN
Answer:
DEVOTE



CIRCLE TIME
Answer:
BOTSWANA



SPIRAL XWORD
Answer:
SECRETIVE



WORDSEARCH
Answer:
BIRCH

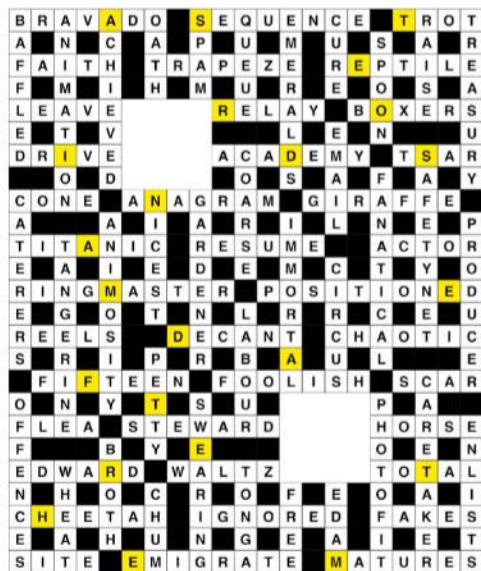


CODE CRACKER
Answer:
AUCKLAND



BIG CROSSWORD

Answer: ASTEROIDS NAMED AFTER THEM



HALF AND HALF

Answer:

BEAR



SUDOKU



ARROW WORD

Answer: AL CAPONE

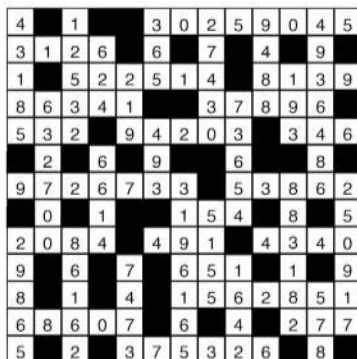


MINI CROSSWORD

Answer: LICE

NUMBER JIG

Answer: 583

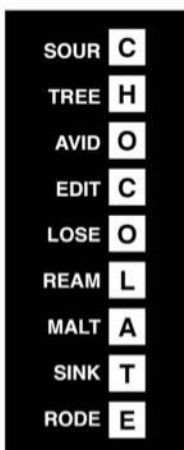


THREE IN A ROW

Answer: GRAFFITI



SKINNY ONE
Answer:
CHOCOLATE



BRICK TRICK

Answer: BELGRADE



THE BIG QUIZ

Answer: DR SEUSS



Bird BRAINS

How well do you know
our feathered friends?



1 How far can owls turn their heads?

- A 90°
- B 180°
- C 270°
- D 360°

2 Which bird lays eggs in other birds' nests?

- A Cuckoo
- B Sparrow
- C Robin
- D Pigeon

3 What's the fastest bird on earth?

- A Common swift
- B Peregrine falcon
- C Wandering albatross
- D Golden eagle

4 Shakespeare referred to birds in *The Winter's Tale* that would steal hanging laundry and rags to line their untidy, stick-built nests. What were they?

- A Seagulls
- B Hooded crows
- C Red kites
- D Pigeons

5 The aerodynamic shape of which bird's beak inspired Japanese high-speed bullet trains?

- A Snipe
- B Spoonbill
- C Kingfisher
- D Oystercatcher

6 One of the following birds can't fly – but which is it?

- A Penguin
- B Hummingbird
- C Swan
- D Parrot

7 Which bird is loved for its beautiful and complex nocturnal singing?

- A Song thrush
- B Robin
- C Nightingale
- D Emu

8 How many eyelids do most birds have per eye?

- A One
- B Two
- C Three
- D Four

9 Which of the following facts about ducks is false?

- A Goosander males have dark green heads
- B The common eider is a diving duck
- C The garganey is a dabbling duck
- D Male mallards quack



10 Which of the following is the subject of *H is for Hawk*, the book by Helen Macdonald that was released as a film last year?

- A Goshawk
- B Harrier
- C Sparrowhawk
- D Buzzard



Continued overleaf

QUIZ



11 What is a group of crows called?

- A A colony
- B A flock
- C A gaggle
- D A murder

12 Do you know the smallest bird species in the world?

- A Bee hummingbird
- B House sparrow
- C Zebra finch
- D Winter wren

13 Which of the following is famous for having a large pouch for catching fish?

- A Grey heron
- B Cormorant
- C Pelican
- D Herring gull

14 Many migratory birds navigate by using...

- A A sense of smell
- B Magnetic fields
- C Acute hearing
- D Whiskers

15 Where do skylarks build their nests?

- A Under the eaves in rural buildings
- B On the ground
- C In dense bushes
- D On trees

16 Which bird lays the largest egg?

- A Ostrich
- B Emu
- C Canada goose
- D Mute swan

17 What type of owl was Hedwig in the Harry Potter books?

- A Barn owl
- B Snowy owl
- C Little owl
- D Tawny owl

18 Which bird can fly backwards?

- A Hummingbird
- B House sparrow
- C Barn swallow
- D Kingfisher

19 Which bird is famous for its long, curved, sickle-shaped beak?

- A Ibis
- B Woodpecker
- C House sparrow
- D Golden eagle

20 What is the correct name for a baby swan?

- A Chick
- B Hinny
- C Singlet
- D Cygnet



ANSWERS
 1C 2A 3B (Peregrine birds have that sweeps third eyelid) 7C 8C (Most a translucent eye) 9D 10A sleeping, and protect the 240mph) 4C 5C 6A
 dive at over falcons can an upper and horizontally 17B 18A 19A
 11D 12A 13C 14B 15B 16A
 20D to clean and



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GEORGE HOME

Mocha and blue box-pleat frill bedding set, from £12, neutral stripe cushion, £12 for two, T-shaped wood side table, £38, and yellow checkerboard trinket tray, £5, all George Home; other items, stylist's own



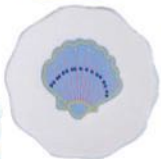
Blue lobster knitted cushion, £10



Natural rattan table lamp, £16



Blue squiggle flower super-soft throw, £5.50



Wavy Island trinket dishes, £6 for three



Blue bobbin bedside table, £45



Cream-glazed ceramic planter, £6





Palm Tree jacquard bedding set, from £45, and Bodil woven cushion, £40, both Very; other items, stylist's own

VERY



Wooden tray, £40



Elemental Green Ring canvas, £20



Elemental tufted cushion, £24



Stoneware bud vases, £25 for three



Amber large sideboard, £229



Green ceramic revive planter, £25



Rechargeable lamp, £59, Coastal broderie bedding set, from £80, embroidered grid bolster cushion, £40, and patchwork bedspread, £150, all M&S

M&S



Ceramic urn base table lamp, £69



Geometric cushion cover, £10



Coastal shell tea-light holder, £7.50



Hand-painted tumblers, £12 for two



Quilted bedspread with linen, from £45



Floral Woodblock bedding set, from £30

TEATIME *treats*

Three easy bakes to whip up this weekend

**PER
SERVING**
(for 16) 439 cal,
27g fat, 17g sat
fat, 43g carbs



COOK'S TIP
Make this gluten-free by swapping
the biscuits for a gluten-free variety.

Chocolate tiffin

A no-bake classic with a hit of fiery crystallised ginger.

MAKES 12-16 squares

**READY IN 20 mins,
plus chilling**

- * 400g dark chocolate, chopped
- * 125g unsalted butter
- * 4tbsp golden syrup
- * 200g shortbread biscuits, roughly crushed
- * 100g crystallised ginger
- * 100g whole almonds, toasted and roughly chopped
- * 50g cocoa powder, sifted
- * 2tsp ground cinnamon

FOR THE TOPPING

- * 250g milk chocolate, chopped
- * 50g white chocolate, chopped

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20cm square cake tin, lined

1 Melt the dark chocolate, butter and golden syrup in a medium-sized bowl set over a pan of gently simmering

water (not letting the bowl touch the water). Stir until the chocolate has melted.

2 Off the heat, fold in all the remaining ingredients. Spoon into the tin, pressing the mixture into the base and sides, and smooth the top. Cool and then chill for at least 1 hr.

3 For the topping, melt the milk chocolate using the method above. Remove the tiffin from the fridge and spread the melted chocolate over the surface of the tiffin.

4 Melt the white chocolate using the same method. Using a spoon or a small piping bag, drizzle over the top of the milk chocolate. Drag a cocktail stick through the drizzle to create a marble effect. Cool until set, then cut into squares.

Raspberry and coconut slice

A retro favourite, combining buttery pastry, sweet jam and a crumbly coconut top.

MAKES 12 squares

PREP 20 mins

COOK 35 mins

FOR THE BASE

- * 100g unsalted butter
- * 200g self-raising flour
- * 50g caster sugar
- * 2 medium free-range egg yolks
- * Zest and juice 1 lime

FOR THE TOPPING

- * 150g raspberry jam
- * 3 medium free-range egg whites
- * 100g caster sugar
- * Zest 1 lime
- * 125g desiccated coconut
- * Icing sugar, to dust

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20x20cm baking tin, lined with baking paper

- 1** Heat the oven to 160C Fan/Gas 4. Put the ingredients for the base in a food processor and whizz until the mixture forms a soft dough.
- 2** Press evenly into the base of the tin, then spread the raspberry jam on top.
- 3** For the topping, find a clean bowl and whisk the egg whites to form soft peaks. Fold in the sugar, lime zest and coconut. Spread on top of the jam layer.
- 4** Bake for 35 mins, until the topping is golden. Allow to cool in the tin, dust with icing sugar and cut into squares.

COOK'S TIP
You can warm the jam slightly
before spreading to make it easier
to cover the base evenly.

**PER
SERVING**
276 cal, 14.5g
fat, 10g sat fat,
35g carbs



**PER
SERVING**

221 cals, 11g fat,
5g sat fat,
26g carbs

COOK'S TIP

Cooking the filling on the hob ensures a perfectly set finish every time. If you have a digital thermometer, cook the lemon mixture to 70-75C.

Lemon squares

Buttery shortbread meets silky lemon curd – perfect for pudding or an afternoon pick-me-up.

MAKES 16 squares **PREP 20 mins**

COOK 35-40 mins, plus chilling

FOR THE BASE

- * 100g plain flour
- * 60g icing sugar
- * 30g desiccated coconut
- * Finely grated zest 1 lemon
- * 100g cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes

FOR THE TOPPING

- * 270g caster sugar
- * 8 medium free-range eggs, plus 4 yolks
- * 200ml lemon juice (about 6 lemons), plus the finely grated zest of 2

- * Icing sugar, to finish (optional)

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20cm square loose-bottom tin, the bottom and sides lined

1 Heat the oven to 160C Fan/Gas 4. For the base, in a food processor, whizz the flour, icing sugar, desiccated coconut, zest and butter, to form a crumbly dough. Tip the mixture into the lined tin and press into an even layer. Bake for 25-30 mins, until lightly golden.

2 Meanwhile, in a saucepan, mix the sugar, eggs, yolks, zest and a pinch

of salt, then whisk in the lemon juice.

3 Cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly, for about 10-15 mins, until the mixture thickens to the consistency of custard (see tip).

4 Strain the curd through a fine sieve over the cooked base. Smooth out the surface, cover with foil; bake for 10 mins.

5 Remove the foil and allow to cool to room temperature. Place in the fridge to chill for at least 4 hrs or overnight before removing from the tin and cutting into squares. Dust with icing sugar, if using, and serve.

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Donkey RIDING

Looking for a new way to keep fit, Jen had a bright idea

I like to look after myself. Apart from the odd cheeky bag of smoky bacon crisps, I eat healthily. I do at least three exercise classes a week – yoga, Pilates and tai chi – at a local fitness centre. Recently, Cheryl, the owner of the centre, announced she was selling up and moving to Italy.

'Jen, look at this!' says my friend Chrissie.

We've arrived for our Thursday morning body sculpting session. A giant pink neon sign has appeared above the entrance to the centre. Sweat and Giggles, it says.

'I've changed the name. Isn't it great? I'm Lisa, the new owner.'

A woman wearing a pair of skintight jeans and red high-heeled shoes opens the door to let us in. Her long black hair looks like it has been ironed. We are used to seeing Cheryl in her blue leotard with her hair in a chignon.

'You'll want to buy the new branded kit.'

Lisa points to a headless mannequin dressed in a fluorescent green sweatshirt and matching pants adorned with huge sparkly logos.

'Sorry, I've not brought my purse with me,' I say.

'Me neither,' adds Chrissie.

Lisa looks furious. We hurry inside and leave her to ambush the others as they arrive.

As soon as we are all assembled in the exercise studio, Lisa yells, 'Let's get started!'

A giant newly installed TV on the wall bursts into life and an instructor begins to shriek from the screen.

'Off you go!' shouts Lisa.

Then off she goes, leaving us to try to follow the strenuous workout video.

'What happened to body sculpting?' wheezes Chrissie.

I stop to catch my breath. 'More like body burnout!'

I look out of the window. Lisa is sitting on a white plastic garden chair, holding a mug

and vaping. On her lap is a packet of chocolate biscuits.

'See you all next time,' she laughs as we leave.

'I'm never going back,' says Chrissie as we head to the nearest cafe.

'Me neither. I can think of much nicer ways to spend my free time...'

My beach hut has always been my safe haven – it's my happy place. I sit in the doorway on an old director's chair that once belonged to my parents. The kettle boils on the Primus stove. I make a pot of strong coffee. I take



a sip and stare at the sand and the sea beyond.

Fred is herding his donkeys. He's provided rides along the coast for years. The sight of them cheers me a little. I need that. I'm still upset about the fitness centre. I'm determined to stick to my principles and not return there, but I want to keep trim. Only, there aren't many options in this small seaside town.

I pour myself another cup of coffee and watch the beach life. The donkeys have started a walk. They have colourful blankets on their backs. Bells tinkle on their harnesses. The children squeal with delight as they move along the seashore.

Paul, who leads them, wears a straw trilby and khaki shorts. His legs are tanned the colour of toffee.

As I watch them, I feel calmer.

Soon, it's time for the donkeys to have a rest and eat their lunch. I grab a brown paper bag and head over to them.

'They love their carrots,' says Fred. He's sitting on an old stool with his leg resting on an upturned bucket.

'Are you OK?' I ask.

'No. I tripped over a saddle and hurt my ankle. I won't be able to offer so many rides with only Paul working the sand. The doc says it will take all summer to heal. No one wants a job leading donkeys.'

I give each animal a carrot. My favourite is Jasper. He's got a white coat, perky ears and a knowing look on his gentle face.

Then I have an idea...

It's a month later, and Chrissie tells me that Sweat and Giggles has lost all its customers. There's a rumour that Cheryl might return because she's bored in Italy. I'm not bothered. I'm too busy walking donkeys on the beach.

I've even bought a new pair of shorts. My legs are the colour of Paul's. Fred says we make a lovely couple.

THE END

Barbara Compton

Visit the Aomori region
for its fascinating sights,
culture and scenery

Japanese GEM

The Aomori region of Japan features traditional crafts, ancient history and diverse landscapes

Most travellers to Japan don't make it past the famed 'golden route' stops: Tokyo, Hakone, Osaka and Kyoto. But beyond these well-trodden destinations, the country has many quiet corners to discover. Head to the north of the mainland Honshu island to the Aomori prefecture, and you'll find plenty of fascinating sights, culture and scenery – but few tourists. It's just a three-hour ride from Tokyo by bullet train, too, making it an easy add-on to any classic tour.

Land of coast and peaks

Stretching from Japan's rugged west coast to the Pacific Ocean in the east, Aomori is one of only a few prefectures to be almost entirely surrounded by water. Rocky cliffscapes and beaches, both great for avid walkers, segue inland to rice fields and manicured orchards (the prefecture is famous in Japan for its apple production).

Soaring Mount Iwaki, a symmetrical-looking stratovolcano rising 1,625m, is nicknamed the northern Fuji for its striking resemblance to Japan's most famous peak. To its south-east, large crater lake Towada is fringed by a moss-covered ancient gorge dotted with waterfalls. In short, whatever type of landscape you're seeking, you'll find it in Aomori.



Experience traditional
dance at the Nebuta
Festival in Aomori City

Traditional craftwork

From northerly Aomori City – famed for its massive summer Nebuta Festival – to the fishing port of Hachinoe and the old samurai centre of Hirosaki, Aomori also has plenty of fascinating cultural centres.

In the latter, visit the Kogin Institute (tsugaru-kogin.jp/en), which celebrates, preserves and produces kogin-zashi, a kind of sashiko, or traditional needlework. The craft originated in the Edo period, when peasants would weave embroidered designs onto linen to provide extra warmth and protection during harsh winters. Today, women from the local community still produce elaborate designs on pieces of fabric, and you can watch them at work or try it for yourself.

Other local craftworks abound too, for example,

mottled Tsugaru Nuri (lacquerware), pottery glazed with applewood ash and glassware. You can see how they are produced by local artisans at the Tsugaru-han Neputa-mura Village, next to the samurai-built Hirosaki Castle and its surrounding botanical gardens. Or, if you find yourself in Aomori City, go on a tour of the waterside Nebuta Museum (nebuta.jp/warasse/foreign/english.html) and learn how massive paper floats are constructed each year for the annual August festival.

Finally, get stuck into the music scene. Aomori, and Hirosaki in particular, are centres for the traditional banjo-like instrument shamisen, and a number of local restaurants offer nightly free performances alongside your dinner and drinks. Ask at your hotel accommodation for recommendations.



The craft of kogin-zashi
originated in Aomori



Ultra-fresh seafood

Surrounded by the coast, Aomori has some spectacular seafood. Aomori City features the Gyosai Center, where you can make your own DIY sushi rice bowl by selecting different toppings like prawns or raw tuna from vendors. It's a cross between a lively fish market and a collection of street-food stalls.

Hachinohe is a large fishing hub, and its old port area is cluttered with small, traditional bars run primarily by elderly fishwives. Visiting them on a tour with a local guide (via Inside Japan Tours, details below) makes for a wonderfully entertaining (and delicious) evening out and a unique cultural experience far from the tourist trail.

Historic remnants

Aomori has been inhabited for around 5,000 years, and there are a number of fascinating prehistoric sites dating back to the Jomon era of 4,000 BC. At UNESCO World Heritage Site Sannai-Maruyama (sannaimaruyama.pref.aomori.jp/english), you can see remnants (and reconstructions)

from a village once thought to include around 700 buildings.

The aforementioned Hirosaki Castle is one of the few original Japanese castles left standing, and was first built by Tsugaru samurai clan members in the 17th century. Tour its structure and see the nearby moat, then bed down at a historic ryokan operated by a samurai descendant. Ishiba Ryokan (ishibaryokan.com/english.html) has traditional tatami mat rooms with antiques and futon beds, plus elaborate breakfasts.

BOOK IT

- * British Airways (ba.com) flies from London to Tokyo.
- * The Aomori prefecture can be reached by Shinkansen bullet train from Tokyo. The journey takes around three hours.
- * Inside Japan Tours (insidejapantours.com) has an 11-night Japan's Undiscovered North itinerary from £3,190 per person, including domestic transport, accommodation, some guiding and some meals.

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- * Flat-weave storage baskets
- * DecoArt acrylic paint in White Sponge

1 On a protected surface, spray the reverse of your stencil with the repositionable spray adhesive. Leave for a

few minutes until the adhesive feels tacky. Position your stencil on the front of your basket, so that it's central.

2 Gently sponge the white acrylic paint through the stencil, taking care not to sponge underneath. Carefully remove the stencil and allow to dry.

3 Reuse the stencil for the second basket, repeating the same process.



EASY EATING *from your plot!*

Dot your garden with low-maintenance edible plants for seasonal picking



Useful borders

Remember the pleasures of blackberrying as a child? Looping edible plants through flower beds is a fun way to forage right from your back door. These plants are attractive enough to earn a place in a flower border, yet bring an adventurous note to the kitchen. They're also a great way of showing children where food really comes from (other than the supermarket!).

First steps

Be guided by what you enjoy eating, and which plants suit your space and growing conditions. Here's an example of how a patch of edibles can look:

1 Start with a small fruit tree, say an apple or a quince



Start with an apple tree



Steam shoots of hosta

(*Cydonia oblonga*), or even a soft fruit bush grown as a standard. If space is tight, you could opt for a variety you can grow in a container or as a single stem or cordon.

2 Leave the soil clear for 15-20cm around the trunk. Then underplant with punchy-smelling edibles that deter pests and pull in pollinators. Try wild garlic, chives, thyme and nasturtium.

Eat weeds

Don't consign all weeds to the compost bin. Some make vitamin-packed taste bombs. We're talking hairy bittercress



Dandelion leaves for salads

(mild and peppery), Jack-by-the-hedge (aka garlic mustard) or cleavers – infuse overnight in cold water and drink as a spring tonic. Young dandelion leaves and their honeyed flowers have been used in salads since medieval times; serve with wild strawberries, marigold and primrose petals.

Begonia petals add a citrusy taste



SURPRISE TRIES

Garden plants you may already be growing but haven't yet tried:

- * **Hosta** – spring shoots can be steamed, like asparagus.
- * **Tuberous and wax begonia** – scatter salads with crunchy, citrusy flower petals*.
- * **Society garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*)** – leaves and flowers have a subtle garlic flavour that doesn't linger on the breath.
- * **Magnolia** – young petals taste of ginger and clove; use raw, pickled or dried as a tea.

WORDS: CHRIS MORLEY. PHOTOS: GETTY. *BEGONIA LEAVES AND STEMS CONTAIN OXALIC ACID, WHICH SHOULD BE AVOIDED WITH CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS – EG, KIDNEY STONES



Redcurrant
(*Ribes rubrum*)

Juicy fruits

Fruit bushes crop well in an open flower border, against a fence or in capacious pots.

★ **Redcurrant** (*Ribes rubrum*) grows happily in shade, but sun-ripened fruits will be sweeter. 'Junifer' (H1.5m) is ready to pick in June.

★ **Gooseberry** (*Ribes uva-crispa*) copes in partial shade and is available as a cordon or

double cordon. 'Invicta' (H1.5m) or red-skinned 'Martlet' (H1.2m) are harvestable in June/July.

★ **Elderberry** (*Sambucus*, up to H6m) is a decorative shrub/small tree with lacy green or burgundy-black foliage. Pick frothy spring flowers to infuse creams, custards and make fizzy 'champagne'; cook the black summer berries for jams and cordials.



Elderberry
flowers and
berries are full of
luscious flavour

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9/10cm. Flowers: Apr-May. Height: 50cm
- 15 **Narcissus Canaliculatus**
8/10cm. Flowers: March-Apr. Height: 10cm
- 15 **Crocus Mix**
5/7cm. Flowers: Feb-Mar. Height: 20cm
- 30 **Muscari**
6/7cm. Flowers: Apr-May. Height: 20cm

- 90 **Allium 'Moly'**
4/5cm Flowers: May-Jun. Height: 50cm
 - 50 **Allium 'Drumsticks'**
4/5cm. Flowers: July-August. Height: 90cm
 - 90 **Ipheion**
4/5cm. Flowers: March - May Height 25cm
- Please note, we may need to substitute due to stock levels. Item: 630050

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- 2 Should any hardy plants fail to thrive thereafter, we'll replace free of charge. You just pay the P&P.



Peter McDermott,
Head Gardener

peter



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gardens for everyone



ALL SHOOK UP

Jane made a promise to her pal – but would she be able to keep it?

1967

'What are you reading?' Jane asked as she walked into her friend's bedroom, stepping carefully over piles of tie-dyed clothes in cheery shades of orange and yellow, towers of precariously balanced romance books and the lead to a lava lamp which sat on a desk. Having made it through the assault course, she flopped onto the unmade bed.

Pearl was lying on her stomach on a pink rug, wearing her new black bell-bottoms. Swinging her legs back and forth, Jane could see her feet clad in odd socks. She hated mornings, and after having fallen out of bed at the sound of the alarm clock, would've pulled on the nearest thing to hand. 'Life's too short to find matching socks' was her mantra.

'Reading *Melody Maker*,' she muttered, her brow furrowed while she furiously flipped the

dog-eared magazine pages.

Jane knew that look – her best friend was on a mission. Jane's stomach flipped with excitement and trepidation. She always seemed to get roped into Pearl's schemes, which were undoubtedly fun but tended to land the duo in hot water.

'Got it!' Pearl rolled over and shoved the magazine in Jane's face. 'It says here that Elvis is coming to Britain.'

Jane skimmed the story in Pearl's favourite magazine. 'And that's... exciting?'

'Of course it's exciting,' Pearl snapped, snatching the magazine back. 'Elvis is the King of rock and roll.'

'If you say so,' Jane said, tracing the orange flowers on the yellow bedspread.

'Honestly!' Pearl tutted, hugging the copy of *Melody*

Maker to her chest. 'Have you been living under a rock for the past year?'

No, she hadn't. The problem was she didn't know many of Elvis' songs, and she couldn't really join in when her friends chatted about him at school.

Her mother didn't think rock and roll was 'proper' music and always turned the radio off whenever an offending tune

came on. 'You want to be listening to some classical music instead,' she'd insist, adjusting the

dials to find Radio 3. She had changed her tune slightly when Elvis released an album of gospel songs, but not enough to yield and buy a record player.

A few weeks ago, Pearl had hatched a plan to see an Elvis film at the cinema. She had saved every penny from her

Saturday job at the local baker's to afford the tickets.

'I've got them!' Pearl had squealed down the phone one night, so loudly that Jane had to hold the receiver away from her ear. She had to hand it to Pearl. When she set her mind to something, she invariably achieved it. Her determination was one of the many reasons why they were friends. Another was that Pearl got to take home broken biscuits from the baker's, which they devoured while doing their homework.

'Shall we go and see it next week?' Pearl asked.

Jane wanted to go, but there was no way her mum would let her.

'Don't worry about your mum,' Pearl added, as if reading Jane's mind. 'You have to come and see the film with me. It's *Double Trouble*.'

'Is it about twins?'

'No idea. Who cares, it's an Elvis film! I wish there were

two of him, how dreamy!’

Pearl was just getting into her stride when the pips had cut in.

‘My money’s about to run out!’ Jane said hurriedly. ‘We’ll have to talk about it tomorrow.’

Hanging up the receiver, she turned to see a queue of disgruntled people waiting for their turn in the phone box. She grabbed her bag and dashed out, cheeks burning red as she scooted up the road and away from their frowns.

‘Here,’ Pearl said, pushing a paper bag into Jane’s hand the following week, ‘stuff that into your coat pocket.’

Jane shot her a suspicious look. ‘Why, what is it?’

‘Broken biscuits,’ Jane whispered, smiling like a Cheshire cat. ‘We can eat them inside the cinema, seeing as we can’t afford their posh sweets.’

Jane looked up and down the street and over her shoulder before pushing the biscuits into her pocket.

‘Don’t look so worried, it’s only biscuits,’ Pearl giggled, smoothing down her hot-pink mini shift dress. ‘You won’t be arrested, even if the staff find them. Right, let’s go!’

They had almost made it into the foyer of The Castle Cinema when Pearl juddered to a halt. ‘Wait!’ she ordered, before unzipping her bag and rooting around. ‘Can’t get in without these.’ She winked, holding two tickets aloft.

‘That was amazing!’ Pearl clapped, dancing down the cinema steps. ‘I love Elvis even more now, and I didn’t think that was possible.’

Jane had to admit she’d had a ball as well. The claret-red carpet inside the foyer, the excitement of being shown to their seats by the glamorous usherette with a megawatt smile and torch to light the way, the excited chatter of fellow filmgoers. It had all been brilliant.

The only fly in the ointment was their rather ill-thought-out plan. Each of them had told their parents they were doing their homework at the other’s house, which would have been fine had it not been for the fact they’d been spotted by Jane’s next-door neighbour, Mrs Ellis, who was at the same screening.

The next day, Jane’s mum happened to be putting out washing at the same time as Mrs Ellis, which was when her neighbour innocently remarked how much the girls seemed to have enjoyed the film.

Jane had just got back from school and was dumping her satchel on the kitchen table, when she saw the duo deep in conversation. She suspected, by the way her mum was furiously stuffing pegs into her apron, that the game was up, and that she was just a little bit annoyed at having been kept in the dark about their cinema-going escapades.

Deciding it best not to hang around, she had shot out the front door before her mum could get through the back one. This time, she really was going to do her homework at Pearl’s. And while she was at it, she would tell her friend how rubbish she was at formulating plans to fool their parents.

Now, as they lounged in Pearl’s bedroom, her friend’s singing bought Jane back into the present.

‘Come and dance,’ Pearl smiled, pulling Jane up by the hand and twirling her around the room while crooning to one of Elvis’ hits. ‘Who do you thank when you have such luck? I’m in love. I’m all shook up!’

A few minutes later they collapsed on the floor, laughing.

‘If he does visit the UK,’ Pearl said breathlessly, ‘will you come to the concert with me?’

Jane rolled onto her back

and stared up at the ceiling, keen to keep her best friend in suspense for a few minutes more. ‘Of course I will, silly,’ she said eventually, giving a big smile.

Pearl squealed, bounced to her feet and put another record on in celebration.

‘I can’t believe this is really happening!’ Pearl squeaked while searching for her seat in the darkened room.

Jane didn’t reply. She was too busy concentrating on not tripping over and falling into the laps of the seated members of the audience.

Having finally located their seats, Pearl reached out to grab Jane’s hand. ‘We’re really here,’ she whispered. ‘We’re going to see Elvis!’

Pearl had been in a state of great excitement for weeks.

She’d been on the phone to all her family and friends, and when she ran out of people she knew,

she took to telling complete strangers instead.

‘I’m going to see Elvis next week. It’s a dream come true,’ she informed a woman sitting next to her on the bus.

The woman smiled politely as her son tugged at her sleeve. ‘Mum, who’s Elvis?’

Pearl looked horrified, but before she could say anything, Jane leant forward. ‘You’ll have to excuse my friend. She’s just a bit giddy at the thought of seeing her pin-up.’

Jane had been pleased to discover the show included dinner. She was just trying to remember what she’d ordered and wondering if she had time to nip to the loo, when a spotlight sliced through the darkness, picking out a silhouette on the stage.

At the same time, a voice boomed, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, please put your

hands together and welcome, all the way from the US of A, the one, the only, Mr Elvis Preeessssley!’

Pearl almost passed out as the man spun around and burst into song. ‘You ain’t nothin’ but a hound dog, cryin’ all the time...’

‘It’s great, isn’t it?’ Pearl gasped during the interval.

‘The food’s good, I’ll give them that,’ Jane said, dabbing her mouth with her napkin. ‘I wonder what’s for dessert?’ She peered at Pearl’s plate and noticed with disgust that she’d left half her food.

‘Wastrel,’ she muttered, learning over and scooping up the last of the fries.

‘Oh, I’m too excited to eat,’ Pearl said, fanning her flushed face with her programme.

When the second half commenced, Elvis walked over to Pearl, took her hand and sang, ‘Love me tender.’

She couldn’t stop smiling and giggling. Her blue eyes sparkled, and cheeks flushed as she fiddled with her hair. When he kissed her hand, Jane thought Pearl was either going to explode or faint on the spot. Luckily, she did neither.

Jane looked on and smiled, happy that her friend was having such a fabulous time.

Yes, they had only made it to the Chinese restaurant on the high street, and their Elvis had come from Manchester not Memphis, but none of that seemed to matter to Pearl, who was in her element. Finally, she’d met her idol.

Sadly, the real Mr Presley never did perform on British soil. But when Jane had seen the poster for the Elvis tribute show during her weekly shop, she knew her best friend would love it. After all, Jane had agreed to go and see Elvis with Pearl if the opportunity ever arose, so she’d kept her promise. Albeit 40 years on from when she’d first made it.

THE END

Holly Crawford



TV to get excited about



Sleek & STYLISH

Knit a neat ribbed top
with a stand-up collar

**TESTED
BY US**
so they work
for you

Instructions
overleaf

MEASUREMENTS

To fit bust 81 (86) (91) (97) (102) (107)cm/32 (34) (36) (38) (40) (42)in.

Actual measurements, slightly stretched 88.5 (94) (100) (105.5) (111) (117)cm/34¾ (37) (39½) (41½) (43¾) (46)in.

Length to shoulder 51 (52) (53) (54) (55) (56)cm/20 (20½) (21) (21¼) (21¾) (22)in.

Side seam All sizes 29cm/11½in.

Sleeve length All sizes 3cm/1¼in.

MATERIALS

2 (3) (3) (3) (4) (4) 100g (330m) balls of Patons 100% Cotton 4ply in Denim (1697)*. Pair of 3.25mm (No. 10) knitting needles; pair each of 2.75mm (No. 12) and 3.25mm (No. 10) circular needles; removable stitch markers; stitch holders; row counter.

Yarn is available from theknittingnetwork.co.uk.

TENSION

28 stitches and 36 rows to 10x10cm, over pattern slightly stretched, using 3.25mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

Dec, decrease; **inc**, increase by working twice into the same st; **k**, knit; **k1b**, k1 through back of st; **p**, purl; **p1b**, p1 through back of st; **st(s)**, stitch(es).

NOTES

Yarn amounts are based on average requirements and are approximate. Instructions are given for small size. Where they vary, work figures in round brackets for larger sizes. Figures in square brackets are worked as stated after 2nd bracket.

BACK

With 3.25mm needles, cast on 100 (108) (116) (124) (132) (140) sts. **1st row (right side):** K1, [k1b] twice, *p2, [k1b] twice; repeat from * to last st, k1.

2nd row: K1, [p1b] twice, *k2, [p1b] twice; repeat from * to last st, k1.

Last 2 rows form twisted rib pattern.

Pattern until work measures 7cm

from beginning, ending with a wrong side row.

Shape sides: Taking extra sts into pattern as they occur, inc 1 st at each end of next row, and 11 following 6th rows – 124 (132) (140) (148) (156) (164) sts.

Continue straight in pattern until work measures 29cm from beginning, ending with a wrong side row.

Shape for cap sleeves:

Maintaining pattern, inc 1 st

at each end of next 8 rows – 140 (148) (156) (164) (172) (180) sts.

Mark each end of last row with removable st markers.**

Continue in pattern, counting the rows from this point, until work measures 20 (21) (22) (23) (24) (25)cm from markers, ending with a wrong side row.

Shape shoulders: Cast off loosely 4 (4) (5) (5) (5) (6) sts at beginning of next 14 rows, then 6 (7) (5) (7) (8) (6) sts at beginning of following 2 rows and finally, 6 (8) (6) (7) (9) (7) sts at beginning of next 2 rows – 60 (62) (64) (66) (68) (70) sts. Place these sts on a holder.

FRONT

Work as given for Back to **. Continue in pattern until work measures 14 rows fewer than back to shoulder shaping, ending with a wrong side row.

Divide for neck: Next row:

Pattern 48 (51) (54) (57) (60) (63), turn and work on these sts only for left front neck.

Left front neck: Dec 1 st at neck edge on next 5 rows, then on 3 following alternate rows – 40

(43) (46) (49) (52) (55) sts. Pattern 2 rows.

Shape shoulder: Cast off loosely 4 (4) (5) (5) (5) (6) sts at beginning of next row and 6 following alternate rows, then 6 (7) (5) (7) (8) (6) sts at beginning of next alternate row – 6 (8) (6) (7) (9) (7) sts. Pattern 1 row. Cast off.

Right front neck: With right side facing, place centre 44 (46) (48) (50) (52) (54) sts on a holder, rejoin yarn to remaining sts and pattern to end – 48 (51) (54) (57) (60) (63) sts. Dec 1 st at neck edge on next 5 rows, then on 3 following alternate rows – 40 (43) (46) (49) (52) (55) sts. Pattern 3 rows.

Shape shoulder: Cast off loosely 4 (4) (5) (5) (5) (6) sts at beginning of next row and 6 following alternate rows, then 6 (7) (5) (7) (8) (6) sts at beginning of next alternate row – 6 (8) (6) (7) (9) (7) sts. Pattern 1 row. Cast off.

COLLAR

Join shoulder seams. With right side facing and with 2.75mm circular needle, rejoin yarn to right shoulder seam and k across 60 (62) (64) (66) (68) (70) sts from back neck holder, pick up and k25 sts down left front neck, k across 44 (46) (48) (50) (52) (54) sts from Front holder, and finally, pick up and k25 sts up right front neck and join to work in the round – 154 (158) (162) (166) (170) (174) sts. Work 8 rounds in k1, p1 rib. Change to 3.25mm circular needle. Continue in rib until collar measures 7cm. Cast off loosely in rib.

TO MAKE UP

Join side seams to markers, then join small sleeve seams.

***If you have any queries about this pattern, please contact knitting and crochet editor Sarah at sarah.neal@futurenet.com**



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Echoes in THE WIND

Laurel was leaving her past behind –
but could she ever truly escape?

THE STORY SO FAR

On a 'break' from her handsome, but narcissistic boyfriend Nate, Laurel is spending the summer island-hopping in Greece. Her first stop is the beautiful island of Hydra. Laurel falls in love with the place, even though thoughts of Nate back home occasionally intrude. A traditional race for the local men results in the winner – Dimitri – flirting with Laurel. But the last thing she needs is a man to mess up her plans, so she decides to move on. The night before she leaves, her new friend Maria, a part-time psychic, reads her fortune, conjuring up a handsome man in Laurel's future who sounds disturbingly like Nate. Laurel's adventure continues, but how might her true destiny be revealed? And does it include Nate?

After the reading, Laurel slept fitfully, but when she woke with the rising sun, her head had cleared. Just as well, she thought, given she had a boat to catch.

After stuffing all her things into her backpack, she set off, giving the blue front door a fond farewell pat. This had been her first Greek home and she wondered if she'd find such a happy place again.

In the harbour, as she walked towards the ferry to Athens, she saw a group of familiar faces. Maria and her family!

'We wanted to wave you off,' Maria smiled, pulling her into a warm hug. 'I told you Hydra was going to love you. Now go and enjoy all the experiences that await you. And always, always follow your heart.'

'I will,' Laurel promised, stepping on to the gangplank. 'I'm going to miss you all so much!'

She went to stand on the deck and, just as the honking horn signalled the ship's departure, a moped roared up to the quayside.

It was Dimitri! He cupped his hands and shouted, 'Yassas, Laurel! Goodbye! Next time, I will win you as well as the race!'

Laughing and crying all at once, she waved until the ferry pulled out into the open sea.

The port of Piraeus in Athens was mayhem, just as it had been when Laurel had first arrived. It was nearing midday and the heat was intense, so she made her way through the jostling crowd and found a cool cafe so she could think straight over a glass of iced water.

So much for her fantasy of sauntering along until she found her next boat to paradise, she realised. This place was a steaming hub of industry, and what she needed was some serious planning – and a strong Wi-Fi connection!

On her phone, she scrolled through a long, alphabetical list of islands, which all looked as blissful as each other, with names that mostly ended in 'os'

– Andros, Chios, Delos, Ios, Kos...

How could she choose?

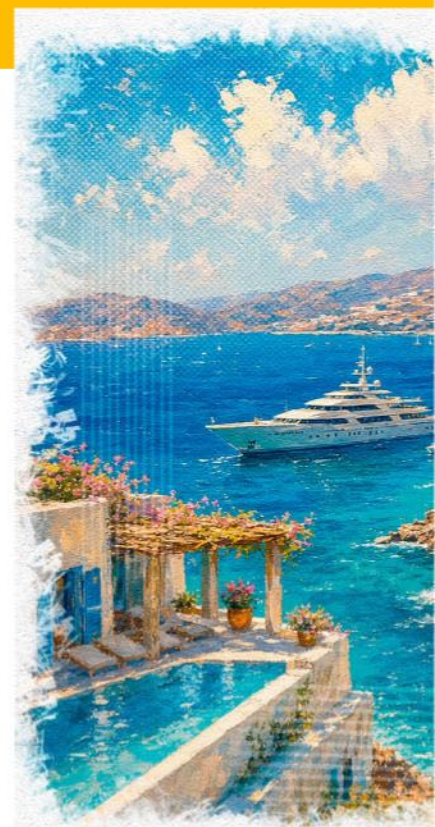
Her mother Hestia popped into her head.

At the airport,

along with a book about Greek myths, she'd given Laurel a necklace, telling her the charm was of the goddess Hecate, who protected and helped travellers when they were at a crossroads. Laurel clutched it now, hoping for inspiration.

A deeply tanned blonde woman at the next table was finishing her iced coffee and after she'd left, Laurel noticed a flyer that must have dropped

*'Always,
always
follow your
heart'*



out of her bag... Visit Santorini, the jewel of the Cyclades, it read. Volcano views, blue-domed churches, white-washed villages...

That was good enough for Laurel, who immediately booked a ticket and accommodation for the night.

'Good one, Mum,' she thought. Or perhaps it was actually Hecate she should be thanking...

As the ferry chugged towards Santorini, Laurel sat with a beer, watching the setting sun cast every shade of pink, orange and red over shadowy islands in the distance. They looked dreamy, mysterious, timeless... No wonder so many romantic legends had been born here.

Only, everything felt less dreamlike when she arrived at her hotel in the city of Fira. It throbbed with music, tourists jostling for position on jam-packed streets, and doormen trying to pull diners into their restaurants and bars.

It was too much after a full day of travelling, so Laurel bought a cheese and spinach pastry, ate it on her tiny balcony and crashed out on the bed.



She had read that the best time to see the sights was before the cruise ships arrived in the morning. So she got up early and went to explore, climbing until she could see the famous Caldera, a deep basin in the Aegean Sea that had been formed 3,600 years earlier by a giant volcanic eruption. The volcano itself had been dormant since 1950, she was relieved to discover, but it certainly made its enormous presence felt, and she wasn't tempted to go swimming in the hot springs beneath.

Within a couple of hours, hoards of cruise passengers filled every inch of the narrow cobbled streets. And who could blame them? The place was stunning.

But Laurel knew that, for her, one night was enough.

Outside a shop, there was a map of the Greek islands. As if pinning the tail on the donkey, she closed her eyes and pointed her finger, which landed on Paros.

A nearby travel agency confirmed there was a direct boat that afternoon and she decided that would be her next stop. For a day, a week,

a month, who knew? She was beginning to get the hang of this island-hopping lark.

For the first time since leaving Hydra, her thoughts turned to Nate. She wondered what he would make of her new-found spontaneity and came to the conclusion that he would probably mock it, because he liked to be the one in control.

The memory was deflating, so she banished it and hopped on the next bus to the ferry port.

Laurel loved Paros from the moment she stepped off the boat. It was humming rather than heaving, and a mix of locals and tourists were enjoying drinks in the evening sunshine.

Little boats were returning from the more remote beaches, discharging sun-soaked passengers carrying parasols and snorkelling masks.

Taking a walk to acclimatise herself, she followed her nose to the oldest part of town, drinking in the bleached paving and wooden doors painted in pretty pastels. On one, there

was a makeshift sign that read *Room to let*.

When she knocked, she heard slow footsteps and an elderly woman in a pinny appeared. When Laurel pointed to the sign on the door, the woman led her up a white stone staircase to a light, airy room overlooking a courtyard.

Laurel nodded vigorously to say she would like to stay and the woman beamed, then scuttled off, returning with tea and a plate of biscuits.

Pointing at them, she said, '*Meli!*'

Laurel shrugged, wishing she understood.

'*Eleni!*' the lady called, and a pretty child appeared.

As the elderly woman rattled away in Greek, little Eleni started to giggle.

'*Meli!*' the girl repeated.

When Laurel still looked confused, Eleni flapped her arms, making a buzzing noise. 'A bee!' Laurel cried. 'Honey!'

They all laughed then and Laurel shared the honey biscuits, which were crumbly and fresh. She guessed the woman was Eleni's grandmother and wondered if it was just the two of them living

there until she heard a moped draw up and the girl excitedly calling, 'Mama!'

Later, Mama invited Laurel to join them in the courtyard and they sat chatting over a glass of local rosé.

Mama – whose name was Katerina – was mercifully fluent in English, which she put down to working in the family business, Bar Feggari.

'It's on the clifftop,' she said. 'Feggari means moon, so obviously it's open until late. My husband Theodore is the manager. Come, I'll show you!'

Thinking the famous Greek hospitality should never be underestimated, Laurel hopped on the back of Katerina's

moped. They whizzed up a steep hill and, before long, arrived at a large terrace overlooking the Aegean and neighbouring islands, where lights were already twinkling.

It was breathtaking, and Katerina smiled, seeing her delight as she took it all in. When she introduced Laurel to Theodore, he was charming, but seemed stressed.

'A big group has booked in tomorrow night,' he said. 'They're VIPs from one of the large yachts, but I'm short-staffed.'

Laurel sympathised. 'I know what it's like. I work in hospitality back in the UK. Well, I did...'

Theodore raised a bushy brow. 'Perhaps you would be able to help me out for a few days while they're here? In exchange for your rent?'

Laurel, who'd been hoping to pick up some work, held out her hand to shake his at once. 'It's a deal.'

When she messaged her mum later with an update, Hestia replied at once. *Fabulous! I knew Hecate would guide you!*

Whether she had her mum's lucky charm or her own finger's random choice to thank, Laurel went to bed happy that night. Solo travelling could be lonely at times and it felt good to be with a family, especially one as nice as this.

She fell asleep to the sound of distant music and the warm breeze rustling the leaves of the olive tree beneath her shuttered window.

Theodore gave her a lift to work in his battered Jeep the following afternoon. The other staff were already running around as they prepared to open, but stopped to welcome Laurel and show her the ropes.

The barman was delighted to discover she could make cocktails, thanks to her training at The Nook. The little hotel, Nate's flat... her old life seemed

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

*She closed
her eyes,
pointed
her finger*

light years away. But there was no time to dwell on that because she had glasses to polish, menus and wine lists to familiarise herself with.

The bar was a popular spot to watch the sun go down, and as soon as the fiery heat began to lessen, people started to arrive.

As Laurel carried trays of drinks, olives and salted nuts to the tables, she saw the sky flame orange, until the sun gave way to the moon, which shone on the water like a silvery river.

How Hestia would adore it here, Laurel thought. She loved the night sky, even had a sign on her boho 'she shed' that said, *Moon magic in progress*.

When the early crowd drifted away to the tavernas that lined the bay below the cliff, they were replaced by post-dinner drinkers and partygoers gearing up for the clubs on the far side of the island.

The DJ upped the tempo of the music, ice rattled in the cocktail shakers and the laughter grew louder. The atmosphere was brilliant and despite the hard work, Laurel was enjoying every minute.

When a long line of black cars with darkened windows pulled up, there was a new frisson.

'Here come the yacht brigade,' Laurel's Australian colleague Lindy murmured in her ear.

Expensive scents wafted in the air as the VIPs swished to their reserved tables in elegant linens and silks. Theodore had told the waiting staff to treat them as they would any other customer and, in turn, they were friendly and polite as they ordered their margaritas and daiquiris.

One of the men seemed familiar to Laurel, and when she placed his drink beside him, she realised why. It was Cal Wexler, once a huge Hollywood star! He was smaller than she'd imagined when she'd watched his movies, and despite a considerable amount of plastic

surgery, looked much older close up.

She didn't want to seem starstruck, but couldn't help mentioning it to Theodore as they were driving home at 3am.

'Cal's a nice guy,' he said. 'He's been coming to Paros for years and likes it so much, he has bought his own little island nearby.'

Laurel was blown away, especially as Cal and his gang came back to Bar Feggari every evening.

'No one gawks at them here,' the barman told her. 'Last year, Theodore caught a press photographer taking pictures and chucked his camera over the cliff!'

One afternoon before the bar opened, Laurel was sweeping pine needles from the terrace when a car pulled up and Cal emerged. 'Any chance of a beer?' he asked in the low drawl that had made him multimillions.

'Of course,' Laurel said, playing it as cool as she could. He might not be that tall, but his presence was immense.

'So long as you don't mind

me sweeping!'

As she carried on with her work, she was surprised to find Cal wanted to chat. He told her the 'yachtie' crowd had sailed to Mykonos and he couldn't help feeling relieved, because he found it exhausting trying to keep up with them.

'The problem with Los Angeles is that ageing's not allowed,' he said. 'You can't imagine how nice it is to come to Greece and see wrinkles!'

He was so funny and easy to talk to, Laurel found herself telling him that what he was saying reminded her of the legend of Selene and Endymion, which she'd read in her mum's books of myths.

'Selene is the moon goddess, who falls in love with beautiful Endymion, a mere mortal. She

asks Zeus to grant Endymion eternal youth, but the price is he can never wake up. She visits him every night, loving him as he lies in everlasting sleep. Quite the metaphor, isn't it?'

'I love it!' Cal exclaimed. 'I think I can feel a movie coming on!'

After he'd left, Theodore confirmed what she'd feared. Now the yacht crowd had left, he didn't need her any more. He thanked her for saving the day and said she was welcome to stay on at the house until she'd worked out her plans.

Plans. Laurel hadn't given any thought to her next move. Perhaps she could find another job and stay put. She asked her mum what she thought and received an instant text back.

Darling, move on! The whole point of island-hopping is to hop!

When she got back to the house, Katerina was in the courtyard, chopping aubergines. Thrilled to see

Laurel home before her bedtime, Eleni leapt into her arms. The thought of saying goodbye to the little girl was just too sad.

Over the next days, Laurel asked around for work, but there was no joy. She considered other islands, but how could anywhere match the magical time she'd had on Hydra and Paros?

She was sharing bread and jam with Eleni one morning when Theodore came to join them. 'Cal came looking for you yesterday,' he said. 'He asked me to give you his private number, said he had news.'

News? What on earth?

Calling someone she'd actually paid to see in the cinema felt unreal, but after a couple of rings, Cal picked up.



His world-famous voice was bubbling with enthusiasm.

'Laurel, I'm so glad you called! Listen to this. I told a director pal of mine about Selene and Endymion, and he thinks it's a brilliant allegory for a modern-day movie about beauty. He said he was going to call it *If Looks Could Kill!*'

'That's crazy!' she gasped.

'Isn't it?' Cal agreed. But that wasn't all. He wanted to offer her a job on his island and if she accepted, he'd send a speedboat to collect her the following day. 'Please say yes,' he urged.

Laurel laughed. 'How could I say no?'

Theodore and Katerina, who'd been eavesdropping, were beaming with excitement. Only little Ellen looked a bit crestfallen.

'I don't want you to leave,' she whimpered.

Laurel pulled her on to her lap, promising she would visit often.

'You will always be welcome,' Katerina promised. 'We are your Paros family.'

Barely able to believe how wonderfully everything was falling into place, Laurel practically floated up to her room to start packing. She was folding the last of her sundresses when her phone beeped. When she saw the screen, her knees nearly gave way. It was a message from Nate.

Was her past about to pull her back from her future?

TO BE CONTINUED
Christabel Smith



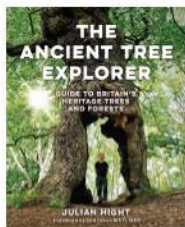
Great reads

Zoe West shares her picks for the week

The Ancient Tree Explorer

by Julian Hight
(£18.99, PB, Wild Things Publishing)

A tree becomes ancient when it has reached the last phase of its life, but this can last hundreds of years. During that time, it offers an incredibly valuable and biodiverse habitat. An ancient oak, for example, supports 2,300 species of insects, birds, fungi, bats and other creatures. In his book, Julian Hight identifies all the UK's remaining ancient trees and forests, from majestic churchyard yews to magical Cornish rainforests. A fascinating guide to our natural treasures.



The Unselected Journals of Emma M. Lion

by Beth Brower
(£9.99, PB, Bloomsbury)

A delightfully witty and charming historical novel, this story sparkles with clever humour, memorable characters and an irresistibly quirky heroine. Emma's sharp observations and self-deprecating journal entries make every page entertaining, while the eccentric residents of St Crispian's add warmth and whimsy. Fans of Sybil Van Antwerp from *The Correspondent* will be thrilled to spend more time in this wonderfully imagined world. A laugh-out-loud read with plenty of heart and personality.

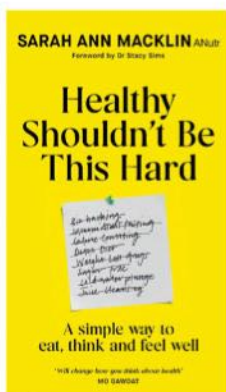
Woman's Weekly
LOVES



Healthy Shouldn't Be This Hard

by Sarah Ann Macklin
(£18.99, HB, Transworld)

Challenging the modern wellness culture by shifting the focus from strict diets to mindset, Sarah Ann Macklin highlights how we are bombarded daily with advice on what we 'should' be doing, which can create stress that ultimately harms our health. Bringing together nutrition science and psychology, the book promotes self-compassion as key to lasting change. Practical and refreshing, it encourages a balanced, guilt-free relationship with food and wellbeing.



Solace House

by Will Maclean
(£20, HB, Atlantic Books)

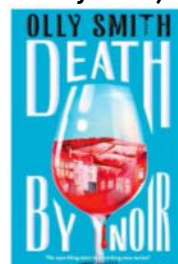
In this hugely atmospheric page-turner, student Alex takes a summer job clearing piles of junk from the Gothic house occupied by now-deceased hoarder Edwin Flayne, when he and his team of fellow students find Edwin's journals. As they uncover the story of his mother's disappearance, and instructions on reaching a parallel world, intrigue spirals into obsession. For all the students' sparkling banter and an undercurrent of romantic yearning, *Solace House* is thrillingly creepy, unsettling and irresistibly compelling.



Death by Noir

by Olly Smith
(£20, HB, John Murray Press)

From the wine expert and TV personality Olly Smith, this is a fascinating mystery steeped in community, tradition – and wine. When Barclay Flint, the owner of a wine shop in a Sussex town, deploys his wine detection skills to investigate the death of a vineyard-owning friend, he becomes the prime suspect. The eccentric cast, rich sense of place and engaging exploration of viticulture give the story a distinctive charm, balancing intrigue with warmth. While the wine-focused details add depth, personality and lots of enjoyment.



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IN THE
SHOPS

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Email zoe.west@futurenet.com or drop us a post @zoeannwest

Puzzle TIME

Wordwise

You have 15 minutes to find as many words as possible using the letters in the grid. Each word must contain four or more letters, one of which must be the central square. No proper nouns, plurals or foreign words are allowed. There is one nine-letter word in the grid, for which the clue is: **Strongly desiring.**

N N E
G G H
R U I

Average = 8 More than 16 = well done

Crossword

Try the easy or cryptic clues, then rearrange the letters in the shaded squares for the answer. **CLUE: Limited food portion following method, showing this? (10)**

EASY CLUES

Across

- 7 Cold vegetable dish (5)
- 8 Deep respect (9)
- 10 Seasoned sausage (6)
- 11 Devote (8)
- 12 Site (8)
- 13 Air bed (4)
- 15 Meet by chance (3,4)
- 17 Tittered (7)
- 20 Pursue (4)
- 22 Mixed drink (8)
- 25 Team game (8)
- 26 Monarch's residence (6)
- 27 Puzzling (9)
- 28 Breaks (5)

Down

- 1 List (9)
- 2 Greek squid dish (8)
- 3 Berkshire town (7)
- 4 Indian city (3,5)
- 5 Writing instrument (6)
- 6 Type of angle (5)
- 9 Flightless bird (4)
- 14 Optical instrument (9)

- 16 Portable meal (8)
- 18 Be compatible (3,5)
- 19 Public praise (7)
- 21 Verve (6)
- 23 Deal with situation successfully (4)
- 24 Wet (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

- 7 Miserable, eating a large portion of health food (5)
- 8 Always attending RE and new church, giving worship (9)
- 10 I am, sadly, returning sausage (6)
- 11 Roll dice in time to commit (8)
- 12 Spot big cat embracing old cat (8)
- 13 Told to remain hidden in inflatable mattress (4)
- 15 Collide with and quarrel with Tom endlessly (3,4)

- 17 Concert goer initially went ahead and laughed (7)
- 20 Search for and identify King (4)
- 22 Change tack, overcome by wind in Manhattan? (8)
- 25 Babe's thrashed everybody in this sport? (8)
- 26 Position outside a royal residence (6)
- 27 Mysterious and strange giant mice (9)
- 28 Photographs bridges from the east (5)

Down

- 16 set out to win a record – and another? (9)
- 2 Portion of authentic a la marinara seafood (8)
- 3 Studying at university here, perhaps? (7)
- 4 Lied when travelling to Asian capital (3,5)

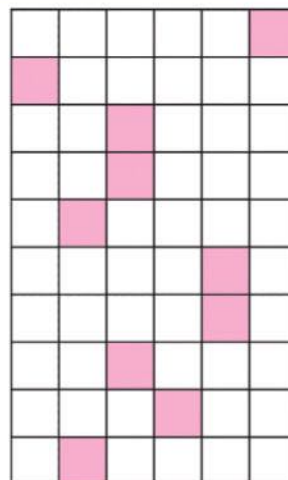
LINKWORDS

Fit 10 words into the grid so that each links with the end of the word on its left and the beginning of the one on the right. Then unscramble the letters in the shaded squares to make a word.

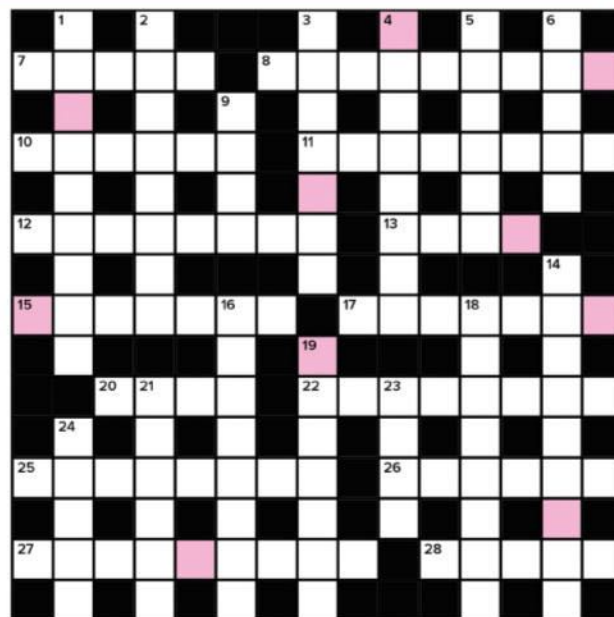
CLUE: TNT, nitroglycerine etc.

SECONDARY

FOOD
BED
STONE
NEW
ROAST
KITCHEN
LEG
SCAR
INDEX



GATES
POST
OVER
UP
PEOPLE
PARTY
BIRDS
MOON
PAPER
TIPS



- 5 Writer, 49, ushered in by coppers briefly (6)
- 6 Sharp incision in A&E (5)
- 9 Fruit essential, announced Women's Institute (4)
- 14 Terribly precise about operation with viewing equipment (9)
- 16 Oppositely, give present at restaurant (8)
- 18 Bond unlimited metals

- into medal (3,5)
- 19 Even bits of farcical goal result in praise (7)
- 21 Men turning grey having lost a bit of mirth and liveliness (6)
- 23 Manage company with physical training (4)
- 24 Clever to take out brolly, initially, when it's like this? (5)

Jumbo puzzle

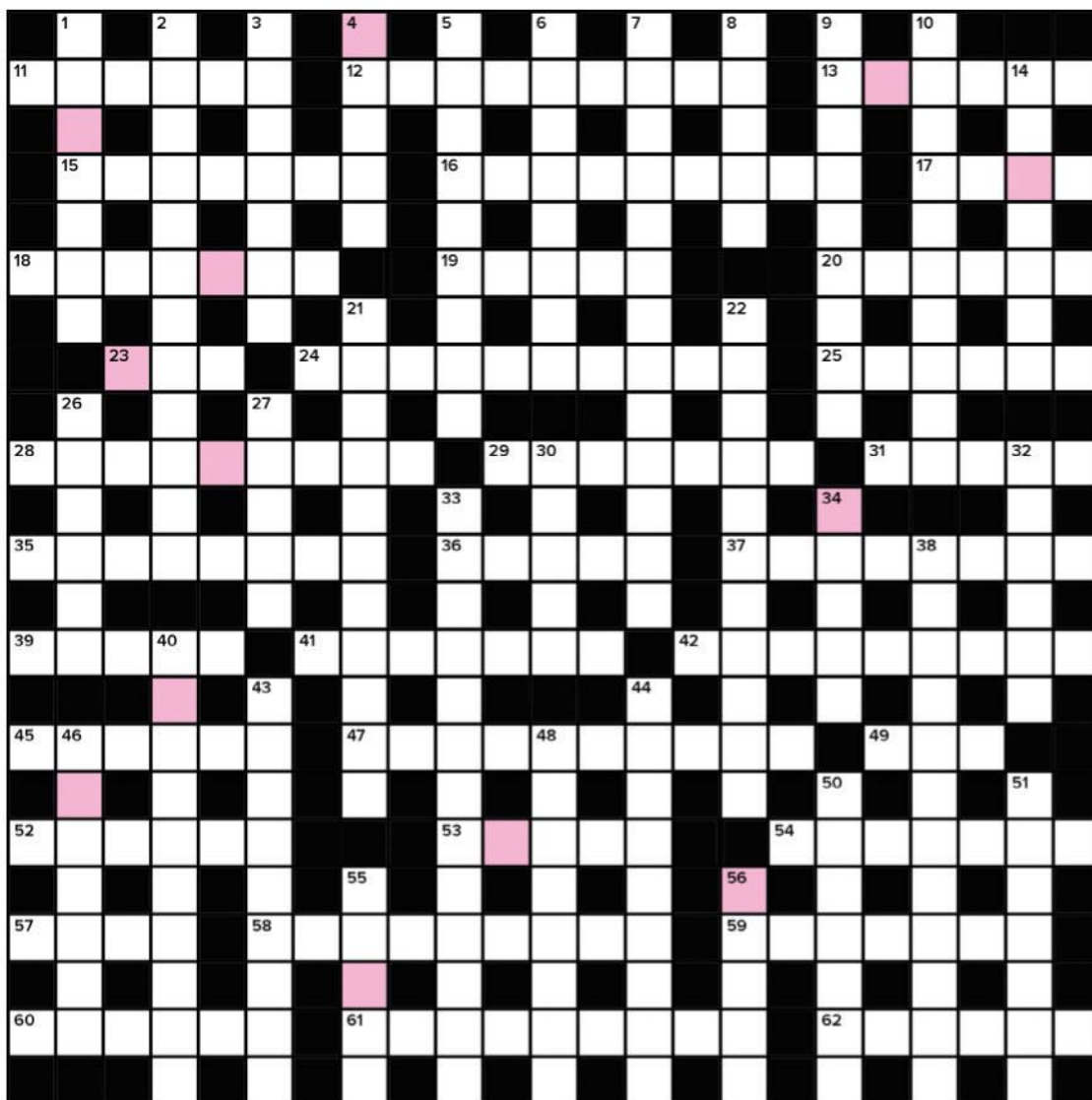
Read down the letters in the shaded squares to spell out a dairy product (7,6)

ACROSS

- 11 Trouble (6)
12 Lake used for storing water (9)
13 Swung back and forth (6)
15 Painters (7)
16 False (9)
17 Performs on stage (4)
18 Chic (7)
19 Book of maps (5)
20 Lifted (6)
23 Interruption in continuity (3)
24 Choices (10)
25 Snow leopards (6)
28 Assembly (9)
29 Slow and steady (7)
31 Snooker ball colour (5)
35 Response (8)
36 Edible bulb (5)
37 Propelled (8)
39 Frozen dew (5)
41 Flower (7)
42 Aide (9)
45 Goes in (6)
47 U-boats (10)
49 Married woman's title (3)
52 Baby's toy (6)
53 Depart (5)
54 Restricted (7)
57 Fruit (4)
58 Medical care (9)
59 Small glass spheres (7)
60 Verse of a poem (6)
61 Bony frameworks (9)
62 Hardly ever (6)

DOWN

- 1 Completely (7)
2 In vivid detail (12)
3 Rubbing out (7)
4 Traverse (5)
5 Guessed (9)
6 Jewellery item (8)
7 Writing letters (13)



- 8 Command (5)
9 Yardstick (9)
10 Happening from time to time (10)
14 Excessive (7)
21 Making no sense (11)
22 Founded (11)
26 Profession (6)
27 Weak and delicate (5)
30 Safari animal, in short (5)
32 Frees from dirt (6)
33 Options (13)
34 Block-shaped (5)
38 Butterfly or moth larvae (12)
40 Giving protection (10)
43 Necessary (9)
44 Bearing (9)
46 Least remote (7)
48 Stirred (8)
50 Collection of books (7)
51 Boats (7)
55 Web-footed birds (5)
56 Break violently (5)

**YOU CAN
WORK IT OUT...**

*** Find the puzzle answers on the horoscopes page.**



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Puzzle TIME

Arrow word

The Forge Mill Needle Museum can be found in which UK town?

Solve the puzzle by following the arrows and writing in your answers. Then read down the letters in the shaded squares to find the answer.

YOUR ANSWER:

Edible fish	Correct	Positive answer	Gave money to	Change the colour of	Novel, A Tale of _ Cities	_Wan Kenobi, Jedi	And the rest (abbr)	Rip	Singer, _ Garfunkel
Mineral source		Thick piece of wood	However Barbie's boyfriend			Greek letter			
Have an aversion to				Author Craggy hill		Chamber			
Traffic light colour	Poem			Also Exertion	T	O	Kids' book, The _ in the Hat		
Part of the foot	Get older	Hero of The Matrix		O	Have the same opinion		Devour	Get a goal	Microbes
		Running contest	Type of metal	Sets up	R				Wreck
Facts and figures	Sorrow Fate or destiny				Utilise	Area of land			
Trans-parent				Belonging to us		Period of military duty			
		Parts of a meal					Edge of a cup		
Doctor _ TV show	At that time			Golf peg		Part of a camera			

WORDSEARCH

Actor William H Macy originally auditioned to voice which character in *Family Guy*? The answer is the one missing from the grid.

YOUR ANSWER:

E	R	E	T	R	A	C	A	R
R	U	I	E	I	N	N	O	B
I	R	W	T	S	J	Y	E	L
M	S	E	N	A	I	D	O	M
G	I	T	T	A	C	R	J	E
A	O	S	N	E	E	Z	H	G
U	L	N	U	T	P	G	I	C
Q	O	K	T	C	F	T	O	M
D	N	A	L	E	V	E	L	C

BONNIE
BRIAN
CARTER
CHRIS
CLEVELAND

DIANE
DONNA
JOE
LOIS
LORETTA

MEG
PETER
QUAGMIRE
STEWIE
TOM

Mini crossword

1		2		3
		4	5	
6				
		7		

The shaded boxes spell out a word.

ACROSS

- 1 Intended (5)
- 4 Item used by a rower (3)
- 6 Young woman (4)
- 7 Moose (3)

DOWN

- 1 Tropical fruit (5)
- 2 Cherish (5)
- 3 Black sticky substance (3)
- 5 Whole amount (3)



Your stars

For 5-11 August with Bracha Goldsmith
yourastrologysigns.com

ARIES 21 MAR – 20 APR

It's vital to speak up for what really matters to you. Don't back down just to keep the peace.

TAURUS 21 APR – 21 MAY

Whatever you've been avoiding needs to be faced now. Take a bold step in the right direction. You can do it!

GEMINI 22 MAY – 21 JUN

This is the perfect time to start a new project. You'll find doors opening in unexpected places.

CANCER 22 JUN – 23 JUL

Keep moving on all levels – physical, mental, emotional. Deep breathing and plenty of fresh air in nature will do you good.

LEO 24 JUL – 23 AUG

Your social life gets a new injection of excitement and activity. Opportunities abound to meet and connect with inspiring people.

VIRGO 24 AUG – 23 SEP

Your work may be going through a transformational period. Pursue your highest ambitions relentlessly. All your hard work will pay off.

LIBRA 24 SEP – 23 OCT

You may feel pulled in several different directions. Set clear priorities and you'll know where to focus your energy.

SCORPIO 24 OCT – 22 NOV

Gratitude and appreciation are your keywords now. Make it a habit to give thanks for the many gifts you already have.

SAGITTARIUS 23 NOV – 21 DEC

This is a wonderful time to begin or deepen your exercise regime. You know exactly what's needed. Make a start today!

CAPRICORN 22 DEC – 20 JAN

Resist the temptation to compare yourself to others. Your journey is unique to you. Face your challenges bravely – you will succeed.

AQUARIUS 21 JAN – 19 FEB

This week, do your best to slow down a little. Benefit from taking time to relax, recover and revitalise.

PISCES 20 FEB – 20 MAR

All relationships are opportunities for growth and learning. Face different encounters with an attitude of kindness and you'll be amazed at the result.

PUZZLE ANSWERS



ARROW WORD Answer: REDDITCH



MINI XWORD Answer: MARK



WORDSEARCH Answer: BRIAN

Answer: HUNGERING

urge, urging.

neigh, 'nigh, rehung, reign, ring, ruling, rung, unhinge,

gurn, gurning, hinge, huge, hugger, hung, hunger,

gigue, gifter, gift, grin, grunge, gunge, gunner,

WORDWISE

Answer: EXPLOSIVES

DINNER, GARDEN, WAXING, TISSUE, FINGER.

LINKWORDS

Answer: MODERATION

23 Cope 24 Rainy

9 Kiwi 14 Periscope 16 Takeaway 18 Get along 19 Acclaim 21 Energy

Down: 1 Catalogue 2 Calamari 3 Reading 4 New Delhi 5 Pencil 6 Acute

27 Enigmatic 28 Snaps

15 Run into 17 Giggled 20 Seek 22 Cocktail 25 Baseball 26 Palace

Across: 7 Salad 8 Reverence 10 Salami 11 Dedicate 12 Location 13 Lilo

CROSSWORD

Answer: COTTAGE CHEESE

51 Vessels 55 Geese 56 Smash

43 Essential 44 Direction 46 Nearest 48 Awakened 50 Library

32 Cleans 33 Possibilities 34 Cubic 38 Caterpillars 40 Sheltering

14 Extreme 21 Meaningless 22 Established 26 Career 27 Trail 30 Rhino

6 Bracelet 7 Corresponding 8 Order 9 Criterion 10 Occasional

Down: 1 Totally 2 Photographic 3 Erasing 4 Cross 5 Estimated

60 Stanza 61 Skeletons 62 Rarely

52 Rattle 53 Leave 54 Limited 57 Pear 58 Treatment 59 Marbles

39 Frost 41 Blossom 42 Assistant 45 Enters 47 Submarines 49 Mrs

28 Guttering 29 Gradual 31 Black 35 Reaction 36 Onion 37 Launched

18 Elegant 19 Atlas 20 Raised 23 Gap 24 Selections 25 Ounces

Across: 11 Bother 12 Reservoir 13 Rocked 15 Artists 16 Incorrect 17 Acts

JUMBO PUZZLE

IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE



HOW TO SLOW THE
SIGNS OF AGEING

BRITAIN'S AMAZING
ANCIENT TREES



GORGEOUS FRUITY
PUD RECIPES



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A bit of a BLOOMER

My pal Wendy receives some unwanted advice



“You join me this week on the terrace at my friend Wendy’s house, where I am drinking coffee and admiring the garden.

And I know what you’re thinking.

You’re almost certainly musing that I seem to enjoy a rather sedentary lifestyle. ‘Not again,’ you are probably complaining. ‘Does this woman do anything other than sit in the sunshine and drink coffee? That’s when she’s not sitting in The Nice Little Place In The High Street and scoffing cake.

‘Honestly, if you are what you eat, then this Rosemary character must be Black Forest gateau on legs.’

In truth, I lead an active life.

I am a martyr to household chores. I am on my feet for hours on end at the charity shop. It is thanks to me that the changing rooms at the rugby club smell of Mr Sheen rather than, say, Deep Heat and cheap aftershave.

By the way, no man of my acquaintance actually admits to wearing aftershave, but when the veterans team have been training, the changing rooms smell so heavily of Old Spice that – if it were an aircraft cabin – oxygen masks would descend from the overhead lockers.

How do I know it’s Old Spice? Because somebody left a bottle behind one day and I took a sniff. I dabbed a little bit on my wrist and people were squinting at me suspiciously for hours afterwards.

Anyway, back to Wendy’s terrace.

Wendy has rather a nice garden. There is lawn that descends to a ha-ha (what the rest of us common folk would call a ditch). On the other side of the ha-ha

is a wild area that leads to an orchard.

On the right-hand side of the lawn there is a new border, which is obviously a work in progress.

‘Do you like the new border?’ asked Wendy. ‘It was my idea. I thought the lawn was looking rather square and brutalist.’

‘Brutalist? Isn’t that normally a word for concrete housing?’

‘You can have brutalist gardens,’ said Wendy. ‘I read it in a glossy magazine.

So I thought I would soften the edges.’

We strolled over to have a look.

‘I managed to buy a lot of the plants from a charity plant stall just down the road,’ she explained. ‘Those hostas were just £3 each.’

I have often noticed that it’s the posh and the wealthy who have the greatest eye for a bargain. Wendy is a case in point. She is the only one of my friends who lives in an actual manor house, but when I recently complimented her on a navy blue midi dress – not her usual hippy style – she smiled, and replied, ‘Vinted.’ I thought she said ‘minted’ at first, and assumed that she was bragging about the cost. She had to explain that she was a regular customer of this second-hand – sorry, pre-loved – clothing site.

But back to the garden. ‘They’re doing well, aren’t they?’ I said, pointing in the vague direction of the hostas, ‘but I thought they preferred shady conditions.’

Despite the glorious sunshine, a distinct frost seemed suddenly to descend.

‘Don’t you start,’ said Wendy.

‘What do you mean? What did I say?’

Oh dear. It seems that Wendy has been

receiving a lot of unwanted gardening advice, most of which has not been entirely helpful.

‘I looked up the best conditions, you know, best soil and sun and all that, and originally I put them here,’ she explained.

‘And then my friend Fiona came to visit and virtually exploded. “Oh no,” she said, “If you keep them here they’ll probably die. They’d do much better over there in the shade of that oak tree. And while you’re shifting them, you should dig up those agapanthus. Completely the wrong conditions for them. They will never grow there.”’

‘They look all right to me,’ I said.

‘Well, quite. Anyway, I dug up all the hostas and moved them into the shade. And then my friend Annie came to visit. “What on earth do you think you’re doing with those hostas?” Annie said. “It’s far too dark and shady over there.”’

‘Anyway, to cut a long story short, I realised that amateur gardeners are like builders and dog owners. It’s their way, or the highway. So I dug up the poor hostas again, and put them back here, where I like them. And they’re doing fine,’ concluded Wendy.

Before we returned to the coffee table, I took a closer look at the agapanthus. I didn’t like to mention that they were actually alliums.

”

Rosie XX

ILLUSTRATION: JOY GOSNEY



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