

Reader's digest

JUNE 2021

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

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And The Big Apple*

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

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Contents

JUNE 2021

Features

- 14 IT'S A MANN'S WORLD**
Olly Mann shares the wisdom he has gleaned from reaching the infamous middle age

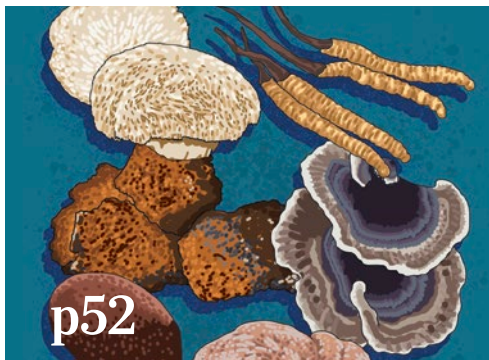
ENTERTAINMENT

- 18 INTERVIEW: SIGOURNEY WEAVER**
The *Alien* star on New York, making films for women and modern-day Hollywood
- 26 "I REMEMBER": ANOUSHKA SHANKAR**
The Grammys star looks back on her childhood, motherhood and growing up with her legendary father, Ravi Shankar

HEALTH

- 34 BLADDER CANCER**
From symptoms and detection to diagnosis and treatment, here's everything you need to know about this treacherous disease
- 52 MEDICINAL MUSHROOMS**
Discover the little-known healing power of reishi, chaga and other shrooms

p28



- 70 INSPIRE SEXUAL BEREAVEMENT**
Tackling the troubling taboo of grieving physical intimacy
- 78 LOCKDOWN WITH MUM**
John Danakas on growing closer to his mum during the pandemic
- 90 TRAVEL PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**
The island full of rural charm and a seafood feast that doesn't end

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Contents

JUNE 2021

In every issue

- 8 Over to You
- 10 See the World Differently

HEALTH

- 42 Advice: Susannah Hickling
- 46 Column: Dr Max Pemberton

INSPIRE

- 68 If I Ruled the World:
Lorelei Mathias

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

- 98 My Great Escape
- 100 Hidden Gems: Athens

MONEY

- 102 Column: Andy Webb

FOOD & DRINK

- 106 A Taste of Home
- 108 World Kitchen: Lithuania

DIY

- 110 Column: Mike Aspinall

ENVIRONMENT

- 112 What can we do
to save our
bees?

p68



p106

FASHION & BEAUTY

- 114 Column: Fashion Tips
From Catherine Summers
- 116 Beauty

ENTERTAINMENT

- 118 June's Cultural Highlights

BOOKS

- 122 June Fiction: James Walton's
Recommended Reads
- 127 Books That Changed
My Life: Axel Scheffler

TECHNOLOGY

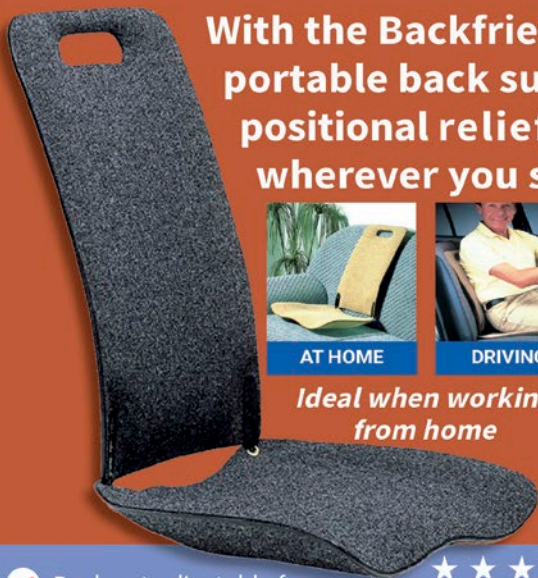
- 128 Column: James O'Malley

FUN & GAMES

- 130 You Couldn't Make It Up
- 133 Word Power
- 136 Brain Teasers
- 140 Laugh!
- 143 Beat the Cartoonist

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It's what we do

In This Issue...



As you're reading this magazine, Britain is preparing for the final step in the easing of COVID lockdown restrictions. Finally, family can be embraced and friends can be reunited—love can resume uninterrupted. It's fitting then, that so many of our stories this month focus on love. On p78, a writer is forced to move in with his elderly mother to care for her during the pandemic, and is amazed to find they share a deeper connection than he ever thought possible. On p86, a former-bookworm is encouraged by a new connection to rediscover her love of the written word—and finds her very own romantic lead along the way. There's also advice on love lost. Our feature on grieving the physical companionship of a partner on p70 facilitates a long-overdue conversation on how grief impacts our sexual selves.

Anna



Ravi Shankar, the legendary Indian sitar virtuoso and composer, single-handedly changed the Western popular music landscape in the 1960s, influencing everyone from The Beatles to Jimi Hendrix. I grew up with his music playing in our house and so, the Indian *raga* became an unlikely soundtrack to my childhood. Therefore, it was a huge honour for me to speak to his daughter and long-time music collaborator Anoushka who became a formidable artist in her own right, earning seven Grammy nominations and working with the likes of Herbie Hancock and Mstislav Rostropovich. On p28, she tells me all about growing up between London and Delhi, her peculiar affinity for numbers and, of course, playing alongside her iconic father since the age of seven.

Eva

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Over To You

LETTERS ON THE *April* ISSUE

We pay **£50** for Letter of the Month and **£30** for all others

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Dr Max revealed some surprising facts in his “Life on Civvy Street” article. I never realised that ex-servicemen make up around a quarter of homeless people in the UK. It was upsetting to read about George who, like so many others, having lost the routine and discipline he relies on, has been allowed to fall through the cracks. I was also shocked to discover that over 2,000 former servicemen are currently in prison. I wholeheartedly agree with Dr Max, we seriously need to look at the way in which service personnel are being prepared for civilian life

and make some dramatic improvements. Having served to protect us, society should be doing all that we can to repay our veterans. Whether that’s coaching them to achieve new employment opportunities and a regained “purpose for life’, or providing better specialist support for those suffering from PTSD and other mental health problems. If we don’t act now, more ex-servicemen will, sadly, follow self-destructive paths.

—LUKE ITHURRALDE, *County Durham*



GAMING FOR GOOD

Your article “Meditative Gaming” struck a chord with me. Coronavirus has impacted us all. Stress, anxiety and isolation in an uncertain world have all taken their toll. I’ve found reading has helped me. People want to be absorbed, and that means picking up a book where’s there a story that

will pull them in and hold their attention, so you can forget, for a while, what’s going on in the outside world. But video games too, can play their part. My 24-year-old son’s work contract finished during lockdown, his relationship broke down, and as a result, he has been quiet and miserable, which is very unlike him. When I

hear him on his games playing with pals, his mood changes and I feel it really has helped his mental health. Gaming is definitely an important way of socialising—and the importance of gaming’s social function has become more significant than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

—ALAN JACOBS, *Frodsham*

GRANDMA KNOWS BEST

Your article on folk remedies made fascinating reading for me. It brought back memories of my grandmother, who had “strange ideas” according to some of my relatives, but whose advice was always sought when there were medical problems.

She advocated the use of goat milk for babies when they suffered from eczema, smeared mould cut from cheese on wounds, gave us elderberry wine for coughs or sneezes and something involving marigolds which seemed to help keep spots at bay.

I would reluctantly accept some her medications, complaining about how revolting they tasted but never querying the fact that they worked. I wish now, of course, that I had listened more and asked more questions. I remembered my grandmother when, for years, I rinsed my hair in sage water. Maybe that is why at my very old age I still have hair its original colour! Every day I would have to rub the same leaves in my gums “to strengthen them”. Well, I still have my own teeth! I recall spitting out the cider vinegar drink she recommended my mother give me. Now I quite enjoy a glass, and know it does me good.

Drug companies may try to stop us using folk remedies, saying they don’t work and never have. How odd it is, then, that we still take willow bark from the willow tree of the *Salix* species, aloe vera, honey, liquorice—my grandmother knew them all.

With love and gratitude I remember my grandma and raise a glass of elderberry wine—what else—in her memory.

—MARY ANDERSON, *Dorset*



SUPPORTING SCIENTISTS

With so many online videos out there promoting misinformation about the pandemic, it was refreshing to read Dr Paul McKay’s article on vaccines. It’s shocking that some will quickly dismiss the findings of scientists, but then eagerly accept the word of someone who churns out monetised videos from their bedroom. We’ve clapped for nurses, so maybe we should give a round of applause for scientists. Who knows, if we clap hard enough, maybe even conspiracy theorists will get the message.

—DAVID BENNETT,
Staffordshire

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A woman in a blue top is seen from the side, looking at a display of colorful, patterned tapestries or murals. The scene is set outdoors, with lush green foliage and trees in the background. In the foreground, there are various plants, including purple and green leaves and small yellow flowers. A large, colorful mural with geometric patterns in shades of blue, red, and white is visible in the lower right corner. The overall atmosphere is vibrant and artistic.

SEE THE WORLD...
turn the page →

...DIFFERENTLY

Toronto's Kensington Market has always been famous for its local art scene, but when a now-dormant activist group called "Streets are for People" created their first car-planter in 2006, they couldn't have imagined that the idea would become a city landmark and an international tourist attraction. Fifteen years, a few replacement cars, several parking spaces, innumerable discussions with local officials and a handful of paint jobs later, the "Kensington Market Garden Car" now not only has city approval but also a parking permit!



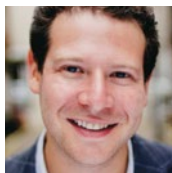


Mid-Life-What?

As he approaches middle age, Olly Mann ponders the randomness of life, ageing and sports cars

HOW DID YOUR mid-life crisis arrive? An affair with the milkman? A Lamborghini? A three-week bender in Las Vegas? I haven't done any of these things—although I've only just turned 40, so who knows, perhaps they're yet to come.

I didn't think I was bothered about looking youthful, or ticking off my bucket-list, or sowing my wild euphemisms. As a kid, I actively wanted to be middle-aged: the diary I kept when I was 13 records my school computer password as "I6Want7To8Grow6Up." Indeed,



Olly Mann presents *Four Thought* for BBC Radio 4, and the award-winning podcasts *The Modern Mann* and *Answer Me This!*

I remember aspiring to be 40: it seemed the perfect age to be! Old enough to have achieved financial independence, young enough to remain physically fit. Old enough to be excused from nightclubs, young enough that my politics would not yet have turned full Fascist.

But now I'm here... I don't know... the "half-way" thing is playing on my mind a bit. My dad died at 70. His dad died at 62. So, being optimistic, I've reached the half-way point. All the food I've ever eaten, all the sunsets I've ever seen, all the live gigs I've ever attended, all the laughs I've ever laughed... I've eaten up about half of my allowance. That's sobering.

Does this troubling thought process explain why I've suddenly taken up outdoor swimming? Perhaps there is no other justification. I mean, I've always

WELCOME TO



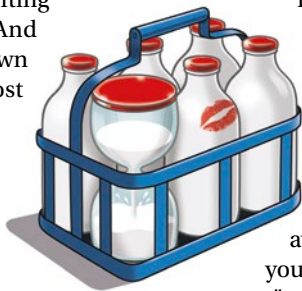
MID-LIFE



enjoyed fresh air, and shifting my body through water. And the experience of lockdown was enough to propel most of us into almost any activity outside the confines of our own homes. But, let's be honest: Britain is not a practical country to pursue such an activity. And yet, for the past three Wednesdays, I've been up at the crack of dawn, driving to my local (allegedly "heated") lido and taking the plunge—and receiving such an intense punch to the lungs from the extremity of the temperature that I then spend all morning shivering.

Inspired by this new-found passion for al fresco exercise, I even applied to be a member of a "Country Club." Absurd! The full Alan Partridge! But then they said that, because of COVID, this year's swimming sessions (in their actually heated outdoor pool) are to be pre-booked in small sessions of six swimmers at a time. That rather ruined the Mar-a-Lago vibes for me, so I decided against signing up.

But still. I was apparently prepared to part with serious cash to join an establishment with its own Bridge club, dress code and coat of arms. Is any further evidence of a mid-life crisis required? If so, consider this: I've just launched a daily podcast series, and, in the teeth of a global



recession, I've stumped up to hire an edit producer and two co-hosts.

This new show (which is called *The Retrospectors*, by the way, and is—ahem—available now, wherever you get your podcasts) has an "on this day in history" format. So, if you were to download our episode on June 1, you'd hear us chatting in detail about a quirky historical event that occurred on a previous June 1 (specifically, in this case, the first citation of the Heimlich Manoeuvre, in *Emergency Medicine* on June, 1974).

The process of researching the programme has exposed me to some fascinating pub-quiz fodder. Did you know, for example, that the party game "Twister" only became a bestseller after Eva Gabor played it with Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show*? Or that the musical *Cats* had no script when rehearsals began? Or that the first Oxford-Cambridge boat race was initiated to settle a bet? I didn't, and it's been fun to learn.

But the big takeaway lesson has surprised me, and it's this: no matter what subject we investigate, no matter the historical era concerned, you can bet that behind-the-scenes of the story there will be a significant person whose contribution went undervalued, overlooked and

unrepresented in their lifetimes.

For instance, the earliest known demonstration of microwave cookery was at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933—but the researcher who developed it was laid off during the Depression, and the microwave was then "discovered" decades later. Or there's the case of Harvey Ball, the graphic designer who came up with the Smiley face that has adorned countless T-shirts and emojis since the 1960s, and is now licensed for millions of dollars per year: he never trademarked his drawing. Or, how about the models for the biggest-selling pin-up of all time (Athena's

landmark man-and-baby poster, "L'Enfant")? The man received £100 for his troubles, the baby £32.

Life's rewards can come to people randomly, and, equally, the lottery of ill-health can strike at any time. These are things I already knew in my heart, of course, but having them hammered home, through the echo of history, in my daily work, has been quite impactful. It's making me feel more grateful for what I have: my health, my house, my wife, and my kids.

Just such an epiphany, I guess, is the ultimate destination of many people's mid-life crises. And I haven't even had to buy a sports car. ■

Lucky Charms

Analysing the jewellery, hair and lip colour of every female Oscar winner since 1930, jewellery specialists Steven Stone reveal the luckiest styles to wear on the big night

Diamond drop earrings are the luckiest accessory overall, with almost half of winners wearing them

Sixty-seven per cent of winners do not wear a necklace, including Julia Roberts, Hilary Swank and Laura Dern, making this the most unpopular piece of jewellery

Nude lip shades win Hollywood smiles, with just 35 per cent wearing red lipstick and three per cent opting for pink

Pearl necklaces are favoured over diamonds, thanks to winners in the 1930s, 40s and 50s who opted for elegant strings rather than large statement pieces

Most leading ladies wear their hair down, rather than up. Since the very first Academy Awards, 61 per cent of winners have worn their hair down, or in a half-up, half-down style

Sigourney Weaver

“It’s One Of The Greatest Times To Be In The World”

By Anna Walker

Throughout her illustrious career, seven-time Golden Globe nominee Sigourney Weaver has redefined what it means to play a hero

IT’S HARD TO imagine any actor more equipped to handle a global pandemic than Sigourney Weaver. Over a career spanning five decades, she’s battled parasitic aliens (*Alien*), survived demonic possession (*Ghostbusters*), come face-to-face with serial killers (*Copycat*) and even fought off poachers (*Gorillas in the Mist*).

I’m hardly surprised then, when she shares that her past few months have been spent not cautiously relaxing at home like the rest of us, but thrashing around in water tanks, while filming action scenes for the hotly anticipated *Avatar* sequel.

“I like workman jobs, you know,” Weaver, who turned 71 in October, explains. “I like knowing how to do things. The only time [I’m a] ‘movie star’ is on the red carpet, or at the Oscars. The rest of the time I’m running around in sweaty clothes like everybody else, working very hard in all kinds of conditions doing my best—and I love it.”

When she’s not been in the tank, much of Weaver’s quarantine has been spent surrounded by nature. “I’m going to go to the New York Botanical Garden, which I’m a trustee of, on Friday to see the cherry blossoms. I feel like one of the things



Playing literary agent Margaret alongside Margaret Qualley in *My New York Year*



that happened during quarantine was that we all went outside and could watch each season unfold. The only safe place we could be was outdoors in nature, and that has created a wonderful connection. It's going to change things, I think—I hope—in the way that we see our natural world.”

WEAVER'S LATEST FILM, *My New York Year*, has offered the actor a break from the high-intensity films that made her name. “It was such a different, gentle, peculiar movie,” she explains, “but with wonderful

characters. It's really an homage to writers and to the part of ourselves that dreams to be an artist.”

Weaver plays Margaret, the head of a high-profile New York literary agency, counting the enigmatic JD Salinger, author of *Catcher In the Rye*, among its clientele. Though her performance has much in common with Meryl Streep's turn as the ultimate tough boss, Miranda Priestly, in *The Devil Wears Prada*—not least in the fashion stakes—it's a unique performance, with a vulnerable softness underlying Margaret's tough exterior.



“FANS PUT US ON A PEDESTAL, BUT REALLY OUR JOB IS TO FEEL CONNECTED”

Much of *My New York Year* is centred around the importance of mentors in shaping our destiny, and Margaret’s influence on the film’s young heroine, Joanna (Margaret Qualley) provides some of its most interesting moments. Asked who her own mentors have been, Weaver jumps at the chance to share stories of her friendship with the legendary American acting couple, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn. “I spent a lot of time with them and took vacations with them. To this day, I’ll say to myself: *What would Jessie do?* I was immeasurably empowered

by their humour and their way of looking at jobs. They were so down to earth and practical. I loved their way of looking at life, which was to have a full outdoor life as well as working in theatres and in front of the camera. They were both amazing swimmers and snorkelers and went on all kinds of little expeditions. So, of course, as great as they were, I saw them as ordinary humans.

Fans may want to put us on a pedestal, but really our job and our delight is to feel connected. I feel very connected to women. I think my audience is a woman who has



In her iconic role,
as *Alien's* Ripley

escaped for a couple of hours and goes to a matinee and just wants to be taken out of herself—I always feel like the work I’m doing is for her.”

BORN IN NEW YORK IN 1949, Sigourney Weaver was immersed in the world of showbiz from her earliest days. Her father, former NBC president Sylvester “Pat” Weaver, pioneered the chat show format, while her English mother, Elizabeth Inglis, was an actor, featuring in Hitchcock’s early films

and alongside Bette Davis in *The Letter* (1940).

As a native of the Big Apple, filming for *My New York Year* offered Weaver a sense of nostalgia. Her character called to mind, “these great dames I remember in New York growing up. They lived to the nines—always flamboyant, beautifully dressed and out drinking with the boys. It was a different city then. It was a New York dedicated to the arts and literature—we never talked about money, we never talked about



With Ridley Scott on the set of *Alien*, 1979

“AFTER *ALIEN*, IT WAS LIKE I WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE A FLAMETHROWER IN MY PURSE OR SOMETHING”

THOUGH WEAVER HAD ALREADY BEGUN to build a reputation in theatre, it was being cast in Ridley Scott’s sci-fi horror masterpiece, *Alien*, (the audition for which left Scott feeling as though he was “out for dinner with Mummy” as Weaver’s already impressive 5,11 height was accentuated by what she describes as her “hooker boots”) that tipped her into global star status. But despite falling in love with the script, Weaver could never have imagined the impact her turn as Ripley (the pioneering heroine who finds herself the lone survivor of a space-bound parasitic alien attack) would have on the world.

“I’m so glad that Ripley’s had that staying power,” she muses, on the film’s remarkable longevity. “In those days, films would always have a scene where the girl in the skirt is doing something heroic and then she’ll break down. Well, Walter Hill and David Giler never wrote Ripley like that. These were guys, like Ridley, who loved women and were with strong women, so it was natural to them to create a character

success. It was about whether you could have a conversation or not. To me, [the film is] an ode to that time.

What I loved most about growing up in New York was that the grown-ups were very occupied with themselves. It wasn’t an era where they were helicoptering—the city was ours. Growing up in cities breeds a certain amount of caginess and resourcefulness.

I remember a friend of mine was riding a horse in Central Park, and this little boy started throwing rocks at him. He cantered up to the boy, who stood up and said, ‘Get your w*****g horse off my grass,’ she laughs. “That’s a New York kid.”

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like her. Ripley has to go from being a by-the-book young lieutenant to throwing the book out the window and just improvising her way through things, which is life, and it sends the message that you can do it, no matter what it is.

In those days, if you could imagine, there weren't sequels. So, we did this little movie in England that we thought was going to be terrific and scary and, ground-breaking in terms of the cinematography, and what Ripley was doing—but we never expected to do another one until James Cameron wrote it. When I went into [casting] meetings after *Alien*, it was a wonderful thing. It was almost like I was expected to have a flamethrower in my purse or something," she laughs.



Despite the huge popularity of the franchise, Weaver has always evaded being type-cast, a feat she attributes to her love of the stage. "I wanted to do theatre, but I wasn't very encouraged at Yale Drama School [where she enrolled after changing her mind about a PhD at Stanford, the university where she'd achieved her BA in English]. My dream was to find a repertory company—an ensemble where you could play the maid one week and the queen the other. I loved the variety of that work.

Starring in *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988) and *Ghostbusters* (1984)



AF ARCHIVE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

I try to construct that in my career. I love doing small parts, I love doing big parts. I love jumping from one genre to the next. I've just been able to somehow do that—I was never worried about being typecast."

WHEN I ASK WHETHER there are roles she's still dying to get her teeth into, Weaver becomes coy—the answer to that, she suggests, will lie in "the two I'm going to play next, which I can't talk about yet. One [of her next movies] shoots in England and I'm

"IT'S SUCH AN EXCITING TIME—ALL OF THESE NEURONS IN CULTURE ARE FIRING TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE"

so excited. Sometimes I do think I'd like to do a play, some big old chestnut like *Racine* or *Corneille*, but then I'm just too busy doing things that feel relevant—especially for what's happening for women right now. It's such an exciting time. All of these neurons in culture are firing to become more inclusive—I feel like it's one of the greatest times to be in the world and I'm grateful that I get to be part of it."

In true Ripley style, the difficulty of surviving a global pandemic has done nothing to dampen Weaver's sense of purpose. If anything, she's emerging more determined to create than ever. "I think we've had layers of our skin removed in all of this, you know," she explains, "with all this tragic unnecessary loss of life around us and so much hardship. I feel like now we have no skin left, and so [culture is] just pouring into us, and enriching our lives and broadening our perspective, and it makes me very hopeful and joyful." ■

My *New York Year* is in cinemas across the UK from May 21. Read our review on p118





Anoushka Shankar

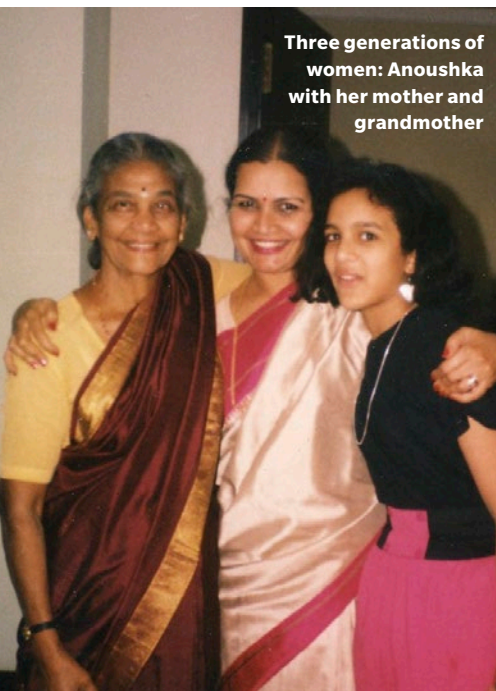
I REMEMBER...

Anoushka Shankar (39) is a seven-time Grammy Award-nominated British-Indian sitarist, composer and producer who has worked with everyone from Lenny Kravitz to Herbie Hancock. She is the daughter of the legendary sitar virtuoso, Ravi Shankar

A CHILDHOOD SPENT BETWEEN LONDON AND DELHI. Before I was seven, I lived in Willesden Green with my mum and I went to a state school around the corner from our home. I have a lot of memories of spending time in the bank where my mum worked. They were really lovely with her. She used to be able to bring me with her, and they'd all sort of watch me in the back and let me play until she finished work. My parents

got married when I was seven, and that's when my dad moved in with us, and we simultaneously moved in with him in Delhi.

MY GRANDMOTHER PASSED AWAY WHEN I WAS 16. I was really close to her as a kid but then didn't get an adulthood with her. She was a really wise and wonderful woman who was an amazing singer. She would visit us in London and I have



Three generations of women: Anoushka with her mother and grandmother

lots of memories of singing with her in the mornings before I'd go to school. It was just beautiful Tamil Indian songs from the South Indian classical tradition. She was really knowledgeable about music.

I HAD A BIT OF AN OCD TENDENCY WITH NUMBERS.

I was obsessed with numbers that I later realised were part of the binary code. I just loved even numbers like two, and then four, and then if four was great, eight would be better, and then if eight was good, sixteen would

be better. I used to walk around saying these numbers up to the thousands. But the problem was that I used to then start walking and chewing in those numbers, so it got pretty mental. I had to wean myself off it because you couldn't walk in 16-beat cycles without being really weird. A lot of it I still do subconsciously, to be honest. I still prefer to chew or walk in even numbers, but it's not something that takes up space in my brain anymore.

THE MOMENT MY FIRST SITAR CAME HOME

I was about seven. Kids' sitars are not so common; you have to ask for them to get made. So, my dad had asked for one to be made for me at about half the size of a normal sitar. I remember seeing it for the first time and feeling excited and nervous because suddenly the concept that I might start to play was a bit more real. It was like, "Oh, here it is. Now we start."

THE DUALITY BETWEEN DAD AND GURU.

To an extent, my dad and I fell into dynamics quite easily. The Indian classical tradition has so much atmosphere, custom and culture associated with it that I would approach music lessons in the way that I was taught—which was with a lot of reverence and respect, whereas, when we weren't doing music together, it was a lot more informal, casual and

affectionate. It was something that we naturally grew into; when we were eating meals or when we were watching TV, it was all just very cuddly and cosy. And if I had a different opinion to his, I could share it and we would have healthy arguments or debates. But then, in the music room, it was a little bit more like he was my guru, and we were having a lesson and I was there to just learn. There were definite different nuances to the relationship.

I DID MY FIRST GIG WAS WHEN I WAS 13, and it was the first time I remember that feeling of your heart beating out of your chest, and being really shocked by it—I thought something was wrong with me. It was right before I walked out on stage in front of 2,500 people. It was for my dad's 75th birthday celebration, so the context was that all his students were playing. As his youngest student, I was there as a part of it. It wasn't like we planned a big debut or anything like that, but from there I just kept on going.

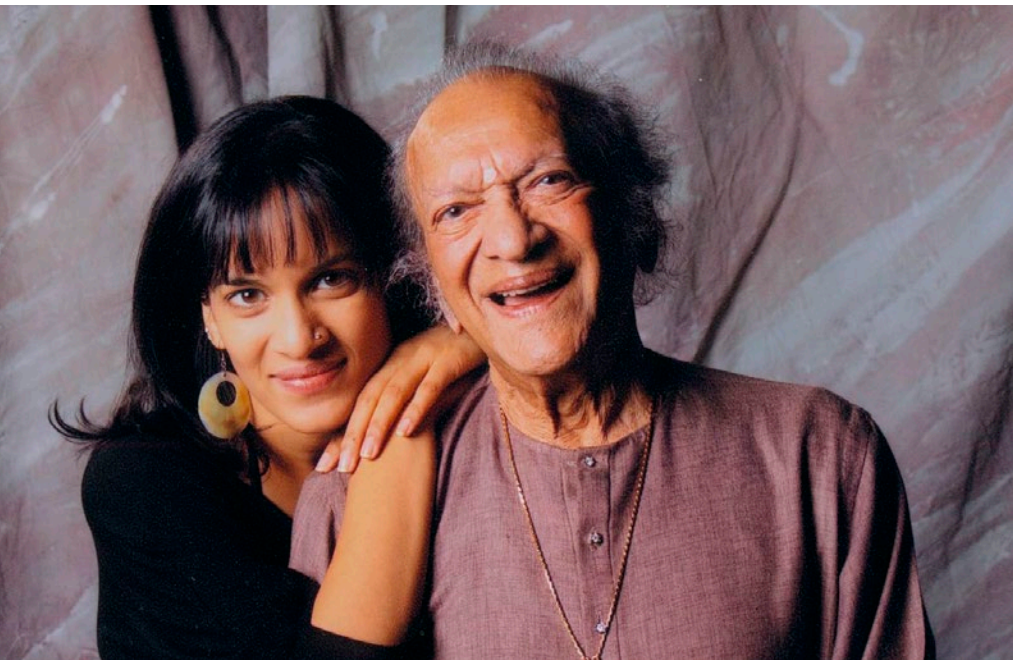
THE MUSICAL CONNECTION WITH MY DAD. He and I were incredibly close, but it was a different kind of closeness. I think my mum and I had that very primal mother-child closeness where it's about her smell, her body and her food, but with my dad, it's hard to explain it. We had this deep artistic connection—



As a teenager
in the 1990s

we spent years journeying together, making and writing music together. I was part of his ensemble, part of his band, and so, we spent decades having hours on end of just playing together. So, there's this other kind of nuanced closeness that I don't have with too many people. Just a deep, soul-to-soul expression.

AS A TEENAGER IN THE 1990S, I was experimenting with a lot of duality in different aspects of my life. On one side, I would be super involved in the Indian classical



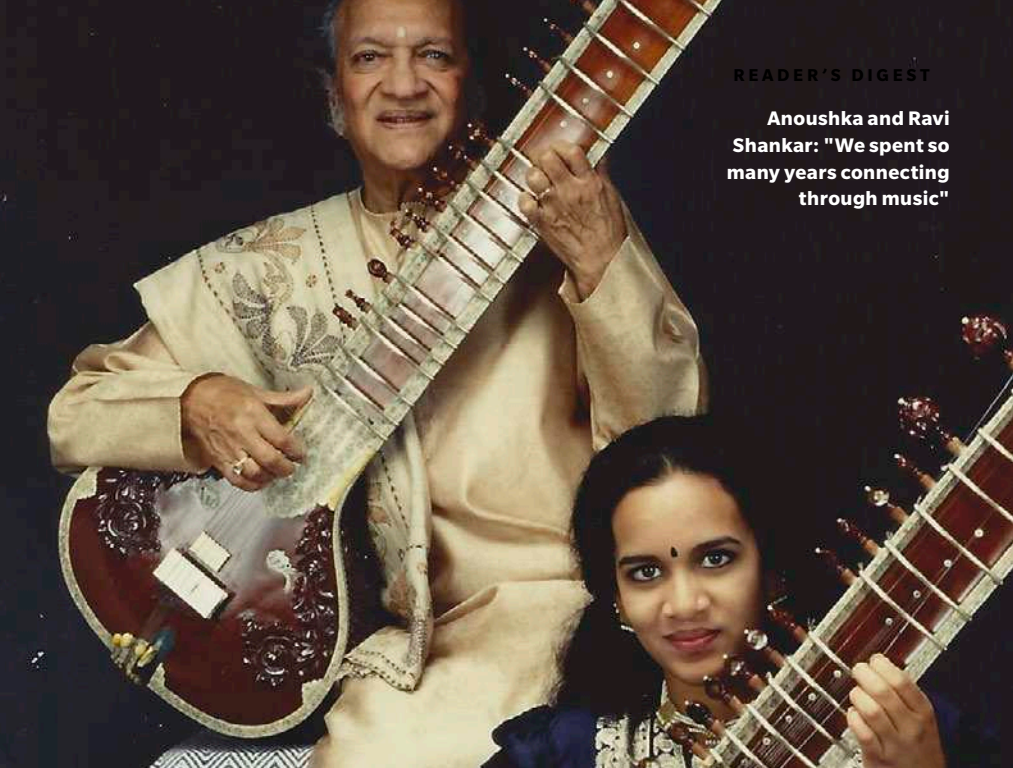
music world. I'd be at Carnegie Hall in these beautiful outfits that were made by my mum; very big, tent-like, loose Indian outfits, but then, with my friends and my peers, we were listening to bands such as Massive Attack and Nine Inch Nails, and it was a bit Gothic. I loved that age and that phase of expression and curiosity and just going, "Oh, yeah, I can do that." Like, what happens if I take silver and make silver lipstick? What happens if want to draw things on my face?

HIGH SCHOOL CHANGED ME.

I wasn't popular at all when I was

younger. Throughout most of middle school [in the US], I was fairly invisible other than to a key group of good friends. High school changed for me because we had two schools in our district: one was huge and had a big football pitch and amazing facilities, and the other one was the older school that was a bit more experimental and had more arts and drama. I went to the more artsy, experimental one, and there I really found my feet in a completely different way. I was the Homecoming Queen, and I don't think it would have happened in a very football-

Anoushka and Ravi Shankar: "We spent so many years connecting through music"



oriented traditional US high school. But, at that particular place, I probably fit the bill.

WORKING WITH STING AND HERBIE HANCOCK. I was really young when I got to work with them. They were two much older, great musicians who expressed a desire to work with me on their own music. There was something hugely validating about that at a time where I didn't necessarily have that confidence myself. It helped with my growth and my confidence as an artist. They came from different

styles that I didn't have a lot of knowledge of, so they were huge learning experiences.

FINDING MY OWN VOICE. When I was 24-25, there was a key moment when I needed to connect to my music in a deeper way because for me, playing the classical music that I had played, I loved it dearly, but it didn't feel like it represented all of me. I didn't feel like I was making music from the deepest part of my heart. I took a pause for a year and I wasn't touring. I thought it would be a simple sabbatical to holiday



Ravi Shankar holding his baby grandson

and have fun, but I ended up making an album. The album, *Rise*, was the first album that I self-composed and self-produced, and it just feels like I started to find my voice in a different way.

FINDING OUT I WAS PREGNANT WITH MY FIRST CHILD. I was in a relatively new relationship and I was quite young. It was a moment of feeling overwhelmed, joyful and fearful in equal measure. I had done a show the day before, and I was unusually tired, I was just finding rehearsals and the show really

difficult. And then, my best friend from California happened to be visiting that week, and I kept on telling her how tired I was the next morning, and she was like, “You’re unusually tired and your boobs look bigger. Let’s go get you a test.” And so, that was that.

MY DAD HOLDING MY BABY SON. It was one of the cutest things I’d ever seen. My dad wasn’t much of a baby-holder. But with my kid, he just fell in love and was constantly knocking on my door, wanting to come over.

Anoushka soon after finding out she was pregnant: "It looks like I'm trying to smile, but I was too shocked to smile"



He'd be making small talk with me to begin with, and I would suddenly realise that he didn't actually want to talk to me; he was waiting for me to give him my baby. He would just sit and hold him, and it was so sweet. I just loved it.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER WAS THE IDEA THAT YOU'RE NEVER DONE LEARNING AS AN ARTIST. Everyone saw him as the pinnacle. People would literally sit at his feet, wanting to learn from him and calling him "master". He was

one of the most knowledgeable, greatest musicians, but spending time with him up close, that was not his perspective. He would always say that, wherever you go, you just see how much more there is to learn, do and discover. He approached it like a student, or a child, always curious and always humble. I think that just set my perspective straight right from the beginning. ■

As told to Eva Mackevic

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Anoushka Shankar releases *Love Letters* P.S. on June 4 on Mercury KX



PHOTO: ©GETTY IMAGES

BEATING BLADDER CANCER

*The key is early detection—
and that's up to you*

BY *Lina Zeldovich*

W

hen Frances Dobrowolski noticed blood in her urine in August 2019, she didn't think much of it. But then it happened again, and since she was scheduled to see her GP in two weeks, she mentioned that strange fact. Her doctor immediately referred her to a urologist, and it proved life-saving for the 78-year-old retiree and grandma. When her urologist threaded a tube with a tiny video camera into her urethra and bladder (a cystoscopy), she immediately saw the cancerous tumours. Frances, who was able to watch the procedure on a screen, also saw the tumours—they were growing from her bladder walls into the bladder. “It was a lot of cancer,” she says.

Frances also learned that smoking could have been the cause. "I quit 13 years ago, but I smoked two packs a day for 40 years," she says. "I thought that if I got anything, it would be lung cancer, but I got bladder cancer instead."

Frances had surgery to remove the tumours within days, but on the follow-up test a few weeks later, more cancer showed up on the screen, so she had a second surgery. She also started a regimen of chemotherapy drug infusions, once a week for six weeks, into her bladder to kill the remaining tumour cells.

When her next checkup revealed another tumour, Frances needed more infusions. "But because I saw my doctor as soon as I spotted symptoms," she says, "and because the tumours aren't growing into my muscles, my prognosis is good. I try to stay optimistic."

ABOUT 550,000 PEOPLE worldwide were diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2018. In the European Union about 120,000 people are diagnosed annually with bladder cancer, and about 40,000 people in the EU die from the disease every year.

Many bladder cancers, like Frances', are highly treatable. The key to beating it is early detection—and that's where things get tricky. Unlike prostate or breast cancers, there's no test that can detect an elevated risk of bladder cancer, so

patients have to spot the troubling signs themselves.

SYMPTOMS

THE MOST TELLING sign of bladder cancer is the sudden appearance of blood in urine, a symptom called *haematuria*, which Frances had. The moment you see it, you should call your doctor right away, rather than waiting for it to disappear. Haematuria may not be accompanied by any pain, so some patients wait for it go away,

WHEN YOU QUIT SMOKING, THE CHANCE OF BLADDER CANCERS DEVELOPING OR COMING BACK DECREASES

losing precious time. In addition to blood in the urine, symptoms may include changes in urination, such as a burning sensation, pain, and increase in frequency and urgency.

These symptoms can be deceptive because people may attribute their onset to advancing age or an overactive bladder, and ignore them. And when they finally share their concerns with their general practitioners, the doctors sometimes mistake them for urinary tract infections (UTIs).

RISK FACTORS, GENDER & AGE

SMOKING IS THE SINGLE most important risk factor in developing bladder cancers, according to research. When inhaled, the smoke toxins pass through the lungs and percolate through the bloodstream until they are filtered out of the body by the kidneys, mixing into the urine. That toxin-high urine can remain

ABOUT 75 PER CENT OF PEOPLE DEVELOP LESS-AGGRESSIVE NON-MUSCLE-INVASIVE BLADDER CANCERS

in the bladder for hours, essentially poisoning its walls.

“When patients quit smoking,” says Dr Antoine G van der Heijden, a urologist at the Radboud University Medical Centre in Nijmegen, Netherlands, “the chances of cancer coming back or evolving will decrease, and survival will increase.”

More men develop bladder cancer than women. According to 2015 statistics, the overall number of new cases in the European Union comprised about 103,000 men and 28,000 women—and doctors think that’s because there are more smokers among men.

However, even though bladder cancer affects fewer women, their survival chances are slightly lower than men’s—and there might be several reasons for that, experts say. The disease may progress faster in women because their bladder walls are thinner, allowing certain tumours to spread more easily and invade other organs. Hormones such as oestrogen might play a role, too. And because women are more susceptible to urinary tract infections, doctors often misinterpret their symptoms.

Most women with cancer whose first symptom is blood in their urine are initially misclassified as having a UTI, says Dr Renate Pichler, a urologist at the Medical University of Innsbruck, Austria. So, she says, if you have been treated with several rounds of antibiotics and your infection isn’t subsiding, it’s time to see the urologist and do a bladder cancer check.

Age doesn’t play a big role in bladder cancer, but the average age of diagnosis is 73. “The highest incidence is seen in the age group 70 to 75,” Dr van der Heijden says.

TYPES OF BLADDER CANCER

THERE ARE IMPORTANT differences between types of bladder cancer. Most patients (including Frances Dobrowski)—about 75 per

cent—develop less-aggressive urothelial carcinomas, which start in the urothelial cells that line the inside of the bladder. Most of these tumours are slender, finger-like protrusions, growing from the bladder's inner surface and towards its hollow centre rather than into its walls and out of the bladder into the surrounding tissues. Dr van der Heijden adds that some types of urothelial carcinomas can be more aggressive than others, so doctors differentiate them by grades that range from zero to four, with higher numbers being more invasive.

The remaining 25 per cent of patients have more aggressive cancers. Carcinoma *in situ*, or CIS, begins as a non-invasive tumour but it tends to grow and spread more quickly and has a higher chance of recurrence. Nearly half of CIS patients will eventually develop a muscle-invasive tumour, says Dr van der Heijden.

Certain rare types of bladder cancers can be muscle-invasive from the start. These are very aggressive, but each constitutes only about one per cent of all recorded bladder cancer cases. Patients' prognosis and treatment depends very much on their tumours' type and stage.



Frances Dobrowolski's cancer was caught early, and she remains optimistic about her outcome

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENTS

AS FRANCES DISCOVERED, to diagnose the cancer, urologists perform a cystoscopy. This allows the doctor to view the bladder's inner lining on a computer screen and get a sample for a biopsy. Sometimes doctors also order a fluorescence cystoscopy, which uses a drug activated by blue light to find abnormal cells. Or, the doctor may order a CT scan or MRI with a contrast dye that highlights tumours, allowing the doctor to

determine the exact type and stage of the cancer present.

Non-muscle-invasive cancers, as in Frances' case, are removed by a procedure called a "transurethral resection of the bladder tumour". A thin instrument is inserted through the urethra and into the bladder. It has a wire loop at the end that removes the tumour. An electrode or laser is then used to destroy remaining abnormal cells, which may not necessarily be part of the tumour.

After the surgery, doctors may also use a catheter to inject a liquid drug directly into the bladder to kill any

TO DIAGNOSE THE CANCER, UROLOGISTS USE A PROCEDURE THAT LETS THEM SEE INSIDE THE BLADDER

remaining cancer cells. This type of treatment is called "intravesical therapy". More aggressive cancers might require multiple applications administered over months and even years, with the exact regimen designed to address the patient's specific case.

Patients must also have regular cystoscopy check-ups after surgery to make sure the cancer doesn't return, because urothelial carcinomas tend

to grow again. But with careful monitoring, future cancers can be prevented from taking hold.

Piet van Klaveren* can attest to that. His bladder cancer fight began in 1996. It was detected because of blood in his urine—which he ignored at first. "Like most men, I postponed it, hoping it would go away," recalls the 73-year-old pharmacist from Wageningen, Netherlands. When he finally mentioned it to his GP a few months later, he was immediately referred to a urologist who diagnosed him with a non-muscle-invasive urothelial carcinoma—so his prognosis was good.

Piet had surgery, but a year later the cancer came back. This time, after scooping it out, Piet's doctor used intravesical therapy, injecting a chemotherapy drug into his bladder over the course of a year. Piet remained cancer-free for a decade when in 2011 he spotted blood in his urine once again. And once again he had surgery followed by intravesical therapy over four years.

"I'm currently free of cancer," he says, noting that regular surveillance is key to staying that way. "My



*name changed to protect patient privacy



THE KEY TO STAYING CANCER-FREE AFTER TREATMENT IS REGULAR CHECK-UPS AND CYSTOSCOPY TESTS

situation is checked twice a year with a cystoscopy.”

Dr Pichler says that patients with early-stage non-muscle-invasive cancers can also receive immunotherapy that is administered via interval therapy that stimulates the immune system to attack cancer.

In the case of muscle-invasive cancers and tumours that can't be stopped by these means, doctors may recommend radical cystectomy—removing the bladder entirely. Then they can either construct a conduit that diverts urine from the kidneys into a small pouch worn on the body that patients empty manually, or they can reconstruct the bladder entirely, from a piece of the patient's small intestine.

“Clinicians need to choose the right option for the right patients,” Dr Pichler says.

The key to staying healthy after treatment is regular check-ups and cystoscopy tests, experts say. Usually, urologists do them every three months for the first two years, every six months for the next three years, and once a year after that, says Dr Pichler.

FOR THOSE SPOTTING blood in their urine for the first time or having a sudden onset of recurring UTIs—especially after never having them before—these are reasons for a thorough urological exam, Dr van der Heijden says. Even having an actual UTI doesn't rule out a tumour entirely, because the two may co-occur.

Keep this advice from Dr van der Heiden in mind: “In women who suddenly have recurrent UTIs, analysis by a urologist is mandatory. In men, a single UTI is already a reason to be referred to a urologist.” ■



HEALTHY INVESTMENTS

What can you buy that will give you the biggest health bang for your buck?



Susannah Hickling is twice winner of the Guild of Health Writers Best Consumer Magazine Health Feature

Home blood pressure monitor

Home monitors are accurate and easy to use—get one with an arm, rather than a wrist, cuff. They allow you to keep a regular check on blood pressure without even leaving your armchair. This could lower your risk of a heart attack and prevent white coat syndrome—where your blood pressure shoots up at the sight of a medical professional and gives a higher reading. Contact your doctor if your reading is consistently high or low (between 90/60 and 120/80 is considered ideal).

Pepper grinder

Rather than filling your grinder with pepper, load it with healthy linseeds and grind over cereal,

yogurt, soups, stews—anything that takes your fancy. Linseeds contain valuable phytochemicals (which are thought to protect cells from damage), fibre and healthy Omega-3 fatty acids. Studies have also found they reduce levels of hormones associated with breast cancer.

Sunglasses

Long-term exposure to UV rays can lead to cataracts and incurable age-related macular degeneration, which can cause blindness. So if you buy shades that are close-fitting—even better, wraparound—and which block out 99 per cent of damaging UVA and UVB rays, you won't just look cool on hot days, you'll be making a great investment in your future vision.

Pair of 2kg weights

Use them to maintain muscle mass, something we lose as we get older. They can also help to improve posture and mobility, and reduce the risk of injury. Keep your weights near you when you're watching telly and try to use them during any commercial breaks.

Veggie cookbook

This will give you ideas for meals that use alternatives to meat, like lentils or beans. These are great sources of protein and soluble fibre, which improve blood sugar, help control weight and lower cholesterol.

Kitchen timer

Intriguing, huh? This neat little gadget will help remind you to eat only what you need. Set it for 30 minutes when you sit down to eat dinner, then eat slowly so that you take your last bite as the timer dings. When you've finished eating, set the timer again for two hours. If you're feeling really peckish when it goes off, allow yourself some dessert. Otherwise, just congratulate yourself for your self-control!

Walking poles

Lightweight poles can help you to feel more stable when walking on uneven ground. They also encourage you to bend your elbows and use your arms as you walk, helping to provide a complete upper- and lower-body workout. You'll burn more calories, strengthen your muscles and take the strain off your knees too. What's not to love?

Vegetable grater

Use it to grate veg such as carrots, cabbage and celery into your meals to add volume. You'll take in fewer calories while eating more food. An added bonus—it's a way of hiding vegetables in casseroles and sauces for those who aren't too keen! ■

For more weekly health tips and stories, sign up to our newsletter at readersdigest.co.uk

Sense Of Rhythm

What do Joe Biden, Tony Blair, Miley Cyrus and Elton John have in common? They all have heart rhythm disorders, also known as arrhythmias or an irregular heart rhythm. As do about 2 million people in the UK

What causes heart rhythm problems?

There are different types of arrhythmia, which are essentially caused by an electrical problem with your heart. When the electrical signals that control heartbeat are disrupted, your heart may beat too fast (tachycardia), too slowly (bradycardia) or in an irregular manner. People of all ages are affected and there are lots of different causes, but triggers can include a virus, smoking, alcohol, caffeine (including energy drinks), exercise and some medications.

What's the most common arrhythmia?

The most common arrhythmia is atrial fibrillation (AF), which tends to affect older people. The top chambers of your heart twitch, making your heart beat more erratically and,

usually, much faster than normal. You are likely to have symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, tiredness and chest pain. It might be intermittent.

AF can be diagnosed with an electrocardiogram (ECG) and treatments include medicines to control your heart rate and cardioversion (an electric shock to reset your heart rhythm).

When are heart rhythm disorders considered serious?

Having AF can increase your chance of having a stroke, and some arrhythmias can lead to sudden cardiac death. In fact, arrhythmias are the most common cause of sudden death in the UK.

Most can be managed successfully with drugs, a pacemaker or the very similar ICD (implantable cardioverter defibrillator), which monitors your heart rhythm and shocks it back to normal if necessary.

What should you look out for?

See your GP if you have palpitations—this could be thumping or fluttering in your chest—which don't go away, especially if you have had heart problems in the past or a family history of heart disease.

If you get palpitations along with light-headedness or fainting, chest pain or shortness of breath, you should dial 999 or get someone to take you to A&E.

Ask The Expert:



Incontinence

Tet Yap is a consultant urologist at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust, London, and privately at The Princess Grace Hospital

How did you become an expert in incontinence?

Incontinence is one of the main issues we address as urologists. For me it started as a piece of research at university and just developed. My experience is unique because I've treated incontinence in the young right through to the later stages of life.

What are the main causes of urinary incontinence in men and women?

Incontinence is when the normal process of storing and passing urine is disrupted. The main types are stress incontinence—when you cough or laugh—and urge incontinence, when you feel a sudden urge to go to the loo.

Stress incontinence can be caused by damage during childbirth or prostate surgery, obesity, neurological conditions like MS and Parkinson's, and some medicines. Urge incontinence can be caused by too much alcohol or caffeine, not drinking enough water, infections and constipation. Another type, overflow incontinence where the bladder is so full that urine leaks out, is often caused by an enlarged prostate.

What can people do to prevent incontinence or stop it worsening?

For stress or urge incontinence, it's important to maintain a healthy weight, and cut down on alcohol—I'd suggest just six units a week if you have an issue—and caffeine, including cola. Just being active and pelvic floor exercises also help.

When should people seek help?

See your GP if you have any type of incontinence. It's very common; around 70 per cent have it at some point in their lives and it causes a lot of psychological issues.

What treatments are available?

There's a ladder of treatments. When incontinence is quite mild, lifestyle changes might be enough. Then treatments range from physio and bladder training to medicines and different surgical interventions. If conservative measures don't work, the next step is usually surgery for stress incontinence and medication for urge incontinence.

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For more information, visit finder.hcahealthcare.co.uk/hca/specialist/mr_tet_l_yap



Baby Blues

A visit to a neonatal intensive care unit helps Dr Max with a seemingly impossible decision

“**Y**OU AREN'T GOING to take my baby away, are you?” asked Rachel, tears welling up in her eyes. I didn't answer. She knew that Social Services had asked me to write a report about her drug use and that what I said might influence their decision as to whether or not she would be allowed to keep her baby. Rachel was now seven months pregnant and had been

seeing me as a patient when I worked in a drug rehab clinic. She was addicted to heroin and initially I had mistakenly thought that being pregnant would mean she would immediately want to engage with treatment and stop injecting. Surely, the bond that a mother feels for her unborn child is stronger than any addiction? How wrong I had been.

Despite her assurances each week that she would stop using, Rachel's urine tests always showed positive for heroin. I knew that heroin was a highly addictive substance, but I still struggled with the thought that while Rachel assured me she would love the child, she could fail it so spectacularly before it was even born.

Rachel was just one of a number of women I saw regularly who injected heroin while pregnant. Hundreds of babies are born every year with heroin addiction because of their mother's use. Because of their



Max is a hospital doctor, author and columnist. He currently works full time in mental health for the NHS. His new book, *The Marvellous Adventure of Being Human*, is out now

size, they experience horrendous withdrawal symptoms, which can prove fatal. I have sat and talked to many people addicted to drugs in an attempt to get them to stop using. These people deserve our compassion and care; many have turned to drugs to anaesthetise themselves to horrific traumas, abuse or neglect they experienced as children. Many more have suffered loss or disruption in their adult lives, which they were unable to cope with, or are dogged by psychological difficulties. But what I learned from my time working with drug addicts was that part of being human is that we all have choices. Certainly some people's choices are harder than others, but these are choices, nonetheless. Every time someone injects drugs it is a choice.

In recent years it has been common practice to do everything possible to ensure that children are kept within the family home, rather than being removed by social services. As a general rule, I believe that the state should intervene as little as possible in people's lives. But a baby is entirely dependent on others for its welfare and therefore the state should act as an advocate to ensure that its welfare is paramount. In failing to enter a detox programme, the mother has

shown that she is prioritising illegal drugs over the welfare of her child. This, of course, is her choice, but equally in making such a choice she is communicating a level of disregard for her unborn child that cannot be ignored. A child being raised in an environment where illegal drugs are being used is not receiving the best care. They are at risk of abuse and neglect and are more likely to develop serious behavioural problems, mental illness and drug addiction later in life. They are at increased risk of having to go into temporary foster care for periods throughout their childhood, leading to further trauma as a result of upheaval and a lack of security and stability.

Around the same time that I had to write the social services report about Rachel's drug use, I was shown around the

neonatal intensive care unit by a friend, Flora, who was the doctor there and I saw a baby who had been addicted to heroin. She was limp, grey and unresponsive. She was given morphine in order to stop the withdrawal from heroin.

As I held this tiny, desperate scrap of a human being in my hands, I knew that she deserved a better start in life. And in that moment, I also knew what the answer to Rachel's question should be. ■

EVERY TIME
SOMEONE
INJECTS
DRUGS, IT'S
A CHOICE

The Doctor Is In

Dr Max Pemberton

Q: I'm in my mid-sixties and have always lived a very healthy lifestyle. Though my weight is constant, and I have a healthy BMI, I have developed quite a tummy in recent years, and have no idea how to shift it! Is it a sign of anything to worry about, or simply a fact of later life that I need to accept? It's affecting my confidence too. - *Cherie, 65*

A: Well, the first thing to say is that you're not alone with this problem. That's not to belittle your concern, but to reassure you that what you're experiencing is very common. In fact, the vast majority of people find that their body is changing and they are putting on weight despite maintaining a healthy lifestyle as they get older. And, as you point out, it can really knock your confidence.

There are several things that are going on and—you'll be pleased to hear—some things you can do to address it. As we age our metabolism changes. This is a normal part of ageing but it means we often don't need as much food as we did when we were younger. If you keep eating what you did

when you were, say in your thirties or forties, you're likely to notice weight gain.

In addition, when people retire, unless they make a concerted effort to keep busy and exercise, they'll often find that their energy output drops, which in turn means they are more likely to put on weight. Finally, as we age, the composition of our body naturally changes. We lose muscle mass—a process known as sarcopenia—and instead hold on to fat stores. This can be difficult to stop, but it can be slowed by taking up weight training to try to hold on to as much muscle mass as possible. Some doctors have even advocated low doses of testosterone for older women to combat this loss, though the benefits are still debated.

Reducing your calorie intake will help. Accept that your body doesn't need as much food as it once did and push yourself with exercise—take the stairs, commit to daily exercise, and you should be able to keep on top of things.

Got a health question for our doctor? Email it confidentially to askdrmax@readersdigest.co.uk





My sleep solution!

Problems had been accumulating over time. Life for me had turned into a state of near-permanent panic as I obsessed about all the problems facing me.

I couldn't sleep, I lost my appetite and I often suffered from migraines, brought on by stress, poor eating and the lack of proper sleep. Burn out was looming. I knew that I desperately needed a good night's sleep.

After reading about Melissa Dream™ an natural herbal supplement, I decided to give them a try and ordered a supply online. After only two days of taking the tablets, I noticed that I felt calmer and more positive because I was sleeping properly. I was relaxed in a way that was totally different to how I had been for ages.

I've been taking Melissa Dream™ for a month now and because I'm getting a good night's sleep, I'm so revitalised and full of energy that I know I can deal with anything life may throw at me. My husband, family and friends have all noticed the difference – I'm back to my normal self and it feels great!

- Wendy.



The secret behind getting a good night's rest.

You'll spend almost one-third of your life sleeping, but while you're asleep, your brain remains amazingly active, creating memories and storing information. Some even think that our dreams can help us make sense of our lives. But that's not the only thing that sleep can help you do. Your physical health, mood, cognitive abilities, and even your body weight depend on the quality of your rest. Here is the secret to getting the good night's rest you've always dreamed of.

Many sleep and nutrition experts recommend checking that your vitamin and mineral intake meets your daily needs. Melissa Dream™ tablets from New Nordic™ are a Scandinavian herbal-based tablet with extracts and vitamins that will work to help maintain a restful sleep that lasts all night long.

They can help you feel refreshed when you wake, without making you feel sluggish like prescription sleeping pills can sometimes do.

In addition, Melissa Dream™ contains green tea with L-theanine, magnesium and B-vitamins. Just two tablets before bedtime will provide the correct nutrients for both nerve and brain functioning. These will accumulate in your body over time and make drifting off a lot easier (and quicker).

Where to buy

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The Problem Of Photographic Memory

Start using your brain as well as your camera, says our memory expert, Jonathan Hancock

WE VISITED ROME for the first time a few years ago, and my memories aren't ones of buildings, statues, or even the food. It's the selfie-sticks—being sold on every street corner, and being put to use everywhere we went. At the Trevi Fountain, inside the Colosseum, even under the magnificence of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, people were photographing themselves, often without bothering to look at all the beauty behind them.

Occasionally I joined in myself, taking pictures as souvenirs of my trip to share with others. But I also made an effort to look around, and to record with my memory—because I know just how important that is.

Research shows that we're distracted by photography. When we take pictures, we may improve our chances of remembering the facts, like where we were or what we ate. But we miss out on other details, and don't see the "big picture" because we're too focused on the small picture on our screen.

What's more, if we rely on photographs to store our experiences, we spend less time practising the act of remembering. And by not stretching our recall muscles regularly, we don't strengthen particular memories.

As a result, we may end up with very one-dimensional records of the past. And that's especially true if we're always photographing ourselves. Posing, static selfies reveal little about what's happening around us, or how we were really feeling at the time.

So take photographs to remind you of key details, to be creative, and to show to family and friends. But get into the habit of capturing experiences with your mind too.

Consciously take in everything around you. Use all your senses, not just your eyes. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings, too. Later, you can use the pictures on your camera to kick-start your recall. But you can also add all those extra layers of detail back in, to relive the moment in its full glory.

It's a great habit to get into. You'll experience more because you're not fussing with your phone. You'll create more durable memories by returning to them again and again. You'll also be exercising your brain, which is the best way to keep it working well for everything. And in the process, I bet you'll discover that your memory is by far the most interesting lens through which to look back at your past. ■

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'The man in the white suit', age 82 years*



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THE HEALING POWER OF
**MEDICINAL
MUSHROOMS**

BY *Katie de Klee*

When you think of valuable mushrooms, you might think of gourmet truffles or posh porcini, but mushrooms are more than just a risotto filling

Medicinal mushrooms are rapidly becoming part of the wellness movement, and their magical properties have nothing to do with psychedelic trips. Funghi make up an entire living kingdom, and modern scientists are starting to understand that mushrooms are closer in DNA to humans than they are to plants. They “breathe” oxygen and release carbon dioxide, they digest rather than photosynthesise, and mushrooms even produce their own vitamin D when exposed to sunlight.

Our ancestors were fascinated by mushrooms; the benefits of reishi mushrooms were recorded in texts as early as the 29th century BC and ancient healers brewed up chaga mushroom teas and used puffballs to treat wounds. Mushrooms are the original superfood; indigenous cultures have used these powerful funghi for thousands of years, but for a long time we have under-appreciated their role in supporting life on earth. What we are only

beginning to now understand is their mighty health-promoting potential—mushrooms can help us to fight illness, focus on work, alleviate stress and enhance our general wellbeing.

Adaptogenic mushroom tonics, elixirs, coffees and lattes are popping up in all the trendiest health cafes and stores. Companies like Four Sigmatic, Moon Juice and Sun Potion are helping us to appreciate the uses and doses of these powerful shrooms.

Mushroom powders are great additions to smoothies and superfood lattes, and are readily available as blends, capsules, teas and tinctures.

Make yourself a reishi hot chocolate to soothe you to sleep, swap out your morning coffee for a lion’s mane latte, or add chaga to your smoothie if you’re feeling a bit run down. Wondering what you’re going to have for supper tonight? Go grab some shiitake mushrooms from your local shop. You’re about to find out why. Here’s a list of our favourite shrooms...

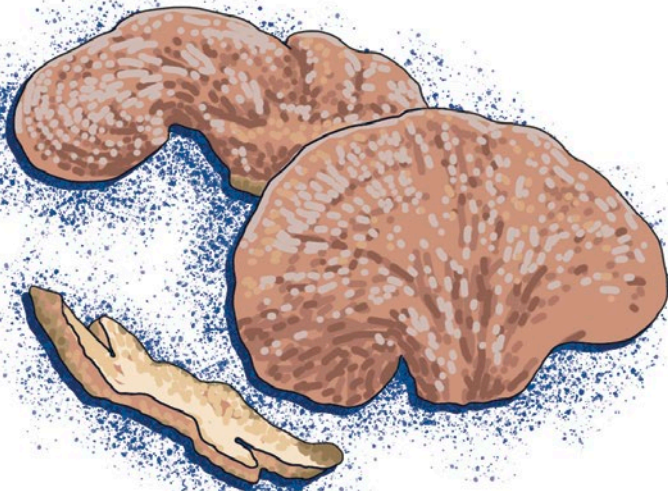
REISHI

Ganoderma lucidum

Reishi, the "Queen of Mushrooms", is often referred to as nature's Xanax because it is a natural relaxant. Popular in Eastern medicine and known as the "mushroom of immortality" in ancient China, the reishi mushroom has a bitter taste but immense health benefits.

Reishi is one of the most popular medicinal mushrooms; it is known for its calming properties and ability to soothe the nervous system. The mood-boosting properties of reishi are due to the compound *triterpene*, which aids sleep and eases anxiety.

Reishi has been reported to help with weight loss, and contains beta-glucans that support a healthy immune system and is even believed to battle cancer cells in the body.



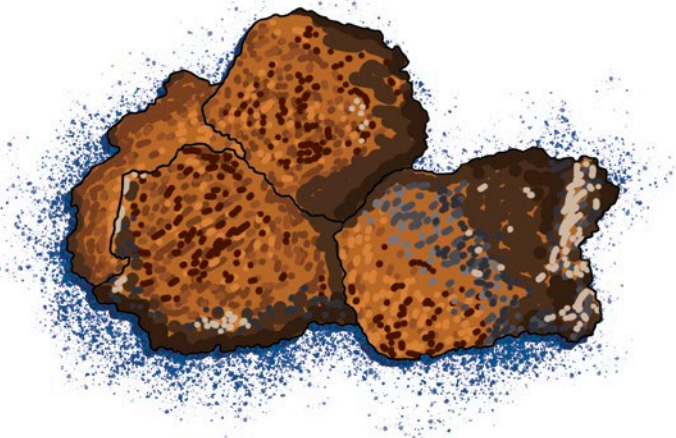
CHAGA

Inonotus obliquus

Hard as tree bark and dark in colour, chaga mushrooms grow almost exclusively on birch trees and are found in the forests of Eastern Europe, Russia and North America. Shamans in Siberia call chaga the "gift of heaven" and the powerful adaptogen is used to fight viral infections. It also fights inflammation and helps sustain energy levels. This particular mushroom is packed with antioxidants, which makes it particularly potent in the fight against free radicals. As well as helping combat signs of ageing, chaga has shown to lower cholesterol and slow the growth of cancer cells.

"Chaga has been used by a variety of cultures for hundreds of years as a tea and tincture," says Tero Isokauppila, a Finnish funghi foodpreneur. "Like all of our functional mushrooms, chaga is an adaptogen, meaning it works with the system to encourage the body to bring balance to itself. In Finland, chaga was also used as a coffee substitute during the Second World War when beans weren't available."

Interestingly, chaga can also be used as a tinder mushroom: the dry inside of a chaga mushroom will ignite with even the smallest spark.



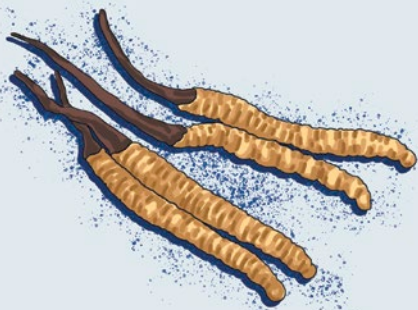
LION'S MANE

Hericium erinaceus

A well-known edible mushroom (the texture is quite like cauliflower) lion's mane literally has the appearance of the mane of a lion. The benefits of this shaggy white mushroom are its ability to boost brain function, memory and cognitive ability.

"History suggests that lion's mane was used in traditional Chinese medicine specifically for stomach and digestive problems," says Isokauppila. "It was also used as a general restorative due to its anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulating properties. Newer research has recently pointed to lion's mane's ability to support productivity, focus, and creativity."

Taken regularly, lion's mane has been known to help provide mental clarity and support brain function, because it encourages the production of both a bioprotein called nerve growth factor (NFG) and myelin, which insulates nerve fibres.



CORDYCEPS

Ophiocordyceps sinensis

The cordyceps mushroom is one of the strangest out there. Known as the "caterpillar fungus", cordyceps spores grow parasitically on the backs of insects high on the plateaus of China and Tibet. Sherpas have traditionally used cordyceps teas to help them climb to insane altitudes, leading to the theory that cordyceps improves the body's ability to oxygenate the blood.

This adaptogenic mushroom boosts stamina, increases sex drive and reduces fatigue. Cordyceps can increase energy and help with athletic performance. World records have been broken by athletes supplementing with cordyceps, and it can also be used to speed up muscle recovery post-work out.

Cordyceps supports the adrenals and has also been used to treat lung disease, respiratory illness and fatigue.

TURKEY TAIL

Trametes versicolor

Even more than most fungi, turkey tail stimulates and supports the immune system because it contains *polysaccharide-K*, a compound used in Japan in prescription anticancer drugs. It has been shown to aid recovery and reduce nausea in post-chemotherapy patients and can help the body fight leukaemia and cancer cells.

Turkey tail also aids the digestive system, with gut-healing prebiotics that feed your good bacteria.

According to leading mycologist Paul Stamets, turkey tail mushrooms have been used to treat various maladies in Asia, Europe and by Indigenous Peoples in North America. There are records of medicinal turkey tail teas being brewed during the Ming Dynasty in 15th-century China. When Stamet's mother was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer at age 84, he encouraged her to take turkey tail. She lived to 93.



SHIITAKE

Lentinula edodes

If many of the mushrooms on this list are sounding strange, this is probably the one that most people have eaten or cooked. Popular on dinner plates, this mushroom lowers cholesterol and contains phytonutrients that help maintain healthy blood pressure and circulation. Shiitake also contain compounds that support cardiovascular health and may help to fight cancer.

Shiitake have symbolised longevity in Asia for thousands of years and are served at Chinese New Year as a symbol of immortality. They are available in most food shops and are full of vitamins B, D and zinc.

PSILOCYBIN

Psilocybin is a naturally occurring compound found in over 200 mushrooms. Michael Pollan's bestselling book, *How to Change Your Mind* focuses on the revolution that is taking place around the therapeutic use of psychedelics and he talks at length about his own experiences with various compounds, including psilocybin.

It's not just Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop team who are experimenting with psilocybin. In 2016, a clinical study at Johns Hopkins Medicine reported that—under carefully supported conditions—psilocybin treatment significantly decreases anxiety and depression in patients with terminal cancer. Subsequent studies conducted at John Hopkins University and New York University have revealed that psilocybin relieves major depression, OCD and anxiety and can help in the treatment of addictions to cocaine, alcohol and nicotine.



A note on foraging:

Some mushrooms are tasty, some are tonics, but many are toxic. So, a word of warning, while mushrooms are truly powerful, if you decide to go foraging, be prudent: many specials are incredibly poisonous and to the untrained eye these are very hard to tell apart from the edible and medicinal.

There are about 4,500 known species of mushrooms in the UK. Many are too tough to chew or are totally tasteless, maybe 200 are edible and 50 of them are poisonous.

You've
lived

You've
made
a mark

Perhaps
more than
you realise

There
were
ups

There
were
downs

Triumphs

Failures

Love,
laughter,
tears

And children

And now grandchildren

It's time

to tell

your story

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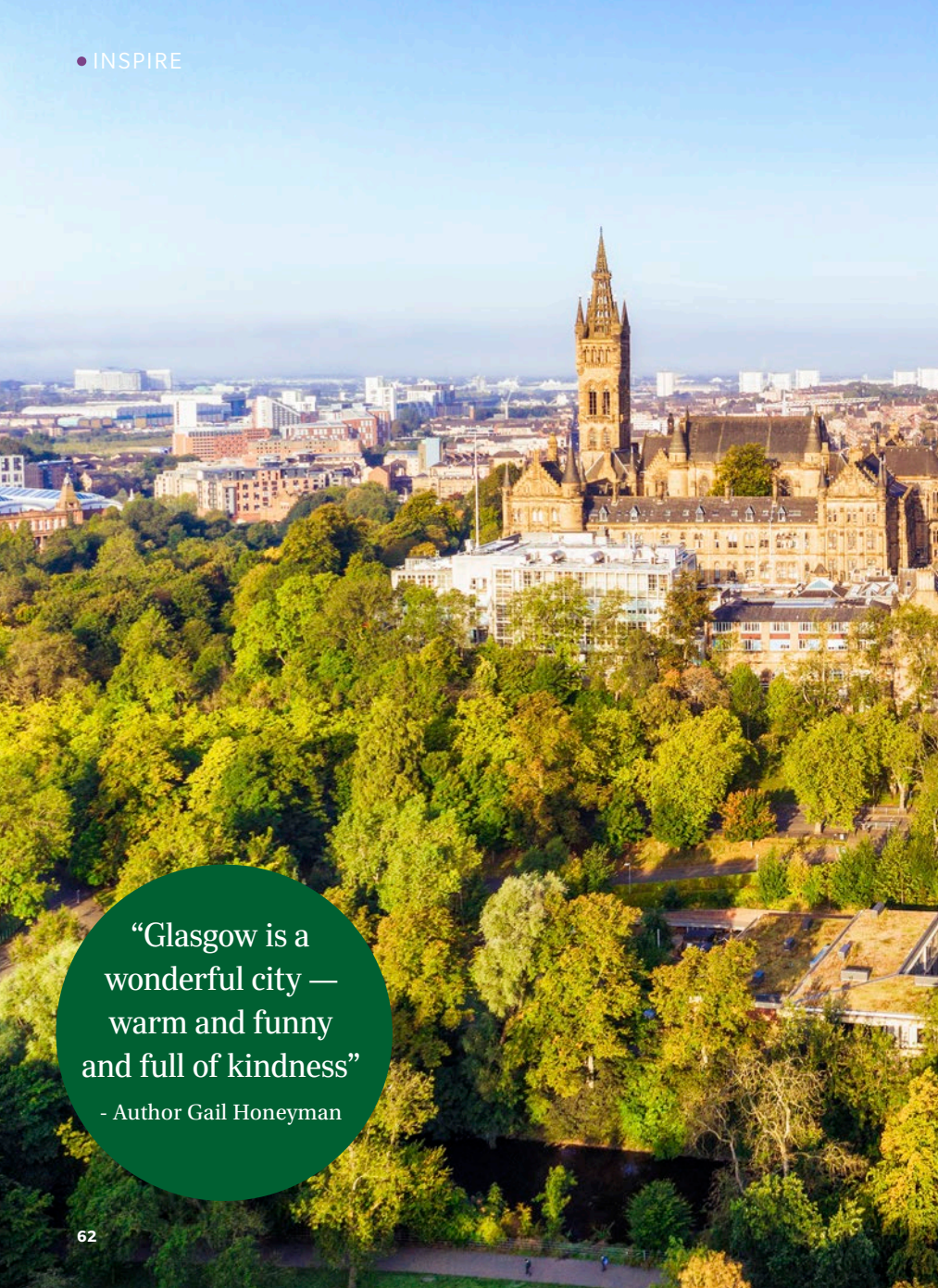
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An aerial photograph of Glasgow, Scotland, showing a dense forest of green trees in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, the city skyline is visible, featuring a prominent Gothic-style church with a tall spire. A large green circular overlay is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, containing a quote and the author's name.

“Glasgow is a
wonderful city —
warm and funny
and full of kindness”

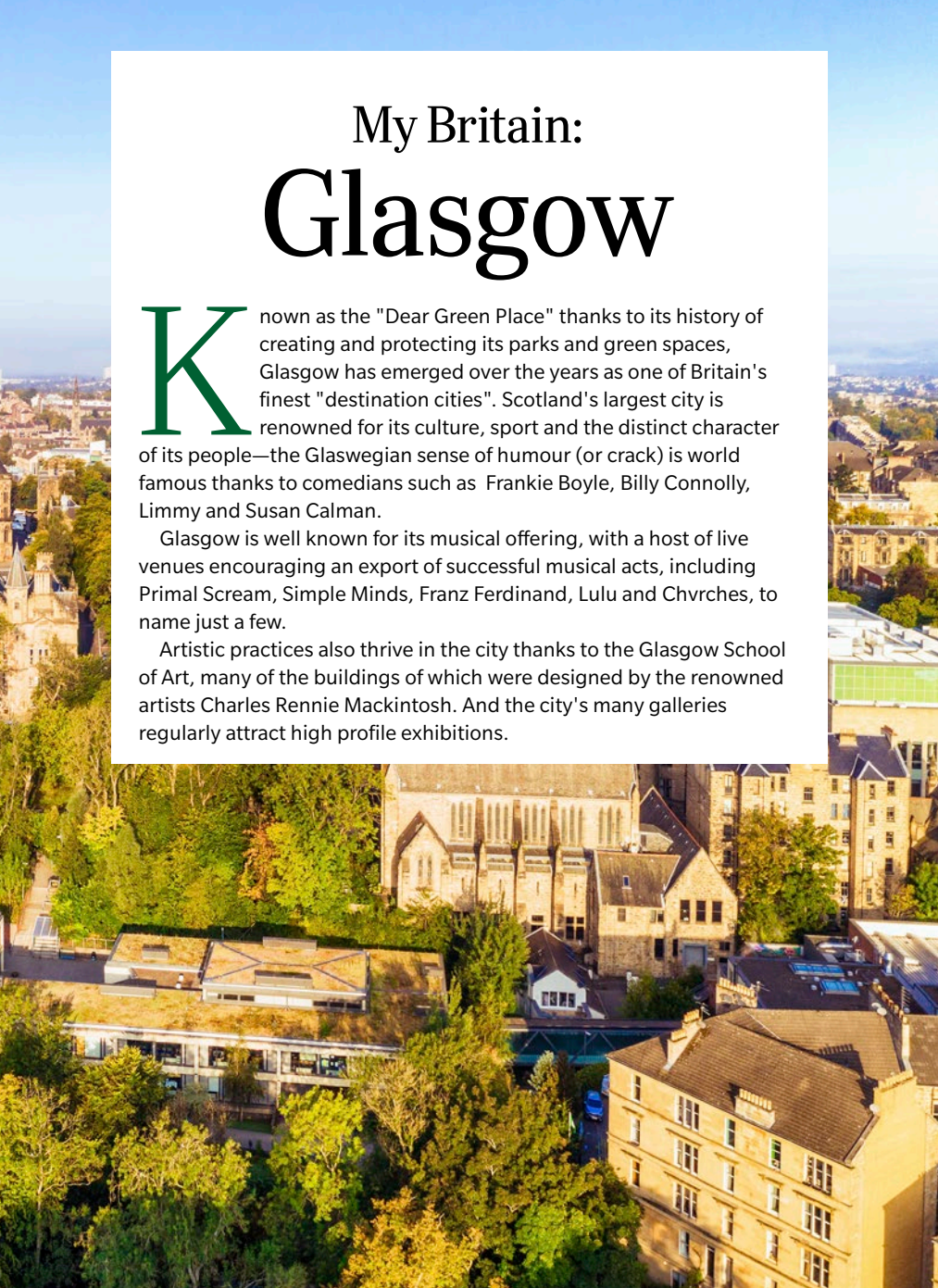
- Author Gail Honeyman

My Britain: Glasgow

Known as the "Dear Green Place" thanks to its history of creating and protecting its parks and green spaces, Glasgow has emerged over the years as one of Britain's finest "destination cities". Scotland's largest city is renowned for its culture, sport and the distinct character of its people—the Glaswegian sense of humour (or crack) is world famous thanks to comedians such as Frankie Boyle, Billy Connolly, Limmy and Susan Calman.

Glasgow is well known for its musical offering, with a host of live venues encouraging an export of successful musical acts, including Primal Scream, Simple Minds, Franz Ferdinand, Lulu and Chvrches, to name just a few.

Artistic practices also thrive in the city thanks to the Glasgow School of Art, many of the buildings of which were designed by the renowned artists Charles Rennie Mackintosh. And the city's many galleries regularly attract high profile exhibitions.



Kevin Dow

Kevin Dow is front of house at The Gannet, an institution of fine Scottish dining in the heart of Glasgow. He was recently nominated for the GQ Food and Drink Awards as "Best Front of House". Visit thegannetgla.com to learn more



I was born and raised in the West End of Glasgow. I have lived in the city for the majority of my life, apart from a couple of short stints in Edinburgh, where I fell into working in bars and restaurants when I was meant to be studying; and a spell in France, where I fell more in love with food and the culture of "living to eat".

Growing up just off Byres Road, there was always something going on and plenty to do and explore. At that time it was a buzzing shopping area with lots of individual retailers and independent suppliers, full of interesting characters

with the BBC based at the top of the road and the university very close.

I love the people in Glasgow, the green spaces, the architecture, the music, the style. There is an undeniable sharp wit amongst Glaswegians and we are not afraid to laugh at ourselves—there is always someone with a quick retort or an insightful quip. The diversity of cultures living in Glasgow makes it such an interesting and vibrant place.

Known as the Dear Green Place, you are never far from a park or open space here and with such a mix of architectural styles, I always tell visitors to look up. The buildings are incredible.

Glasgow is also renowned for music—there are so many bands that have emanated from the city and become internationally successful. Growing up I immersed myself in the music of the city spending so many nights in the amazing venues across town.

Glasgow is not short on spirit, it is a warm, welcoming and friendly city. The people here are genuine, honest, proud and never short of an opinion. Glaswegians love to enjoy life, and want everybody to enjoy it with them, they have a brilliant, sharp sense of humour and love to laugh.

Having worked in hospitality in the city for well over 30 years I have met so many interesting people, they love to know you and be known by you and are truly interested in your welfare. It is difficult for me to go anywhere in the city



without bumping into someone I know or who knows me!

The Gannet was one of the first restaurants that opened in what is now the destination dining area of Finnieston in Glasgow's West End. Started in 2013 by chef/owners Peter McKenna and Ivan Stein, I joined them in 2014 to lead the front of house team.

Over the past eight years we've built a strong network of local suppliers and artisan producers furnishing us with some of the most fantastic ingredients from Scotland's rich larder, recognised by many as the best in the world, including sustainably caught seafood, grass-fed heritage aged beef, free-range poultry and wild game. We have gained a reputation as one of the must-visit



restaurants in the city with 3 AA Rosettes and Michelin Guide Plate listings and a host of accolades over the years. As well as the amazing food on offer, we aim to make every visit an experience—the comfortable and relaxed environment; warm, friendly and approachable service style—allowing guests to enjoy the very best Glasgow and Scotland has to offer.

It's hard to name my favourite spot in the city—there are so many to choose from, and over my lifetime Glasgow has become a destination city, building a reputation as a centre of academia, culture, business, conferencing and tourism. But I think the spot that reminds me most of Glasgow and growing up in the west end is the Kibble Palace glasshouses in The Botanic Gardens.

Lisa Lawson

Lisa Lawson is the founder of Dear Green Coffee Roasters, a Glasgow-based ethical coffee roastery. Visit deargreencoffee.co.uk to learn more



I was brought up just outside of Glasgow and have lived in the city since 2002, so I've been here for most of my adult life! I spent a lot of my childhood in Glasgow and as soon as I had finished studying and travelling I always knew that I'd return. I've never wanted to live elsewhere thanks to the art, music and now the long-awaited foodie scene. I love how Glasgow has the feeling of being in a village, yet being surrounded by the buzz of a city! There's so much heart and soul in Glasgow, and it's full of friendly, resilient and welcoming people.

Having worked most of my life in hospitality, I've been excited by the

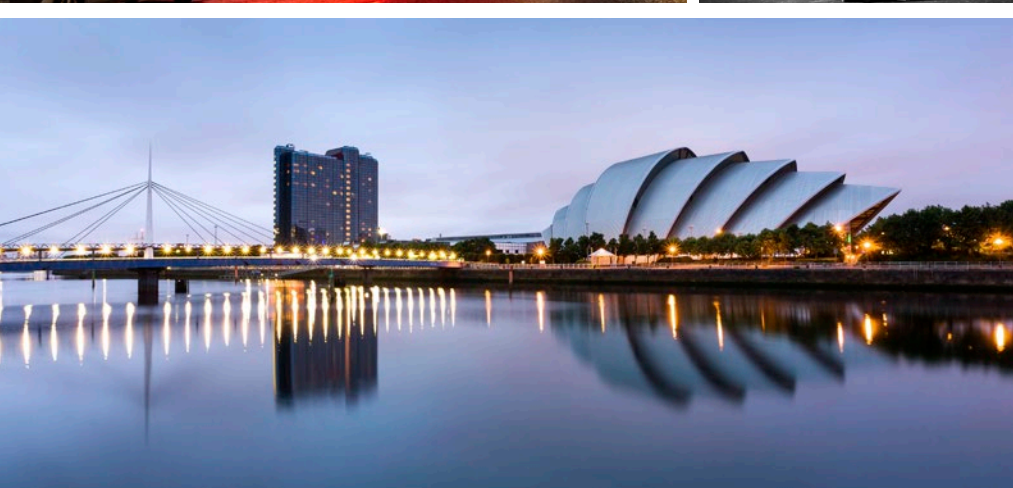
growth of quality restaurants, cafes and bars in recent years. I've witnessed areas like Finnieston, Dennistoun and the Southside all developing into destination neighbourhoods next to beautiful parks, with interesting new businesses to visit. It's amazing to see how despite the city developing, time seems to stand still here when you look around at the enduring beauty of the Medieval, Georgian and Victorian architecture.

I launched Dear Green Coffee Roasters in 2011 as there weren't any specialty coffee roasteries based in the city. I named the company after Glasgow, the "Dear Green Place" and have roasted and supplied cafes, restaurants and bars in the city and beyond ever since.

We now also host the annual Glasgow Coffee Festival, putting Glasgow on the map as a quality coffee destination. Dear Green has been on an incredible journey since its founding, and has been supported by loyal customers since day one. We're lucky to be based in such a great city and we're extremely proud to be part of Glasgow's story.

It's so hard to pick a favourite part of Glasgow. I love that I work near the Barrrowlands Ballroom and experience the oldest part of Glasgow each day, yet live on the Southside and can go running in Pollok Park each evening and feel like I'm in the countryside. ■

Plan a visit to Glasgow at visitscotland.com, or peoplemakeglasgow.com



If I Ruled The World

Lorelei Mathias

Comedian and “proud ADHD-er” Lorelei Mathias is the founding member of Melon Comedy, whose Edinburgh TV Festival-nominated comedy series is online now

I would end all non-biodegradable plastic production. I’m a massive idealist generally, which is part of having ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder]. The very fact that compostable plastic exists blows my mind. By 2050, there’s going to be more plastic than fish in the ocean and there’s now an island of trash the size of France in the sea, because we have this plastic that doesn’t dissolve. So that would be the first thing.

All schools would have compulsory neurodiversity education. And I would make it compulsory in the workplace too. When places don’t understand about neurodiversity, you end up feeling like a square peg—like you’re annoying people and under-performing, when really, [ADHD] is an absolute superpower.

I would ban Hollywood remakes. Or if that wasn’t allowed, I would

make studios have to really justify why they’re putting millions of pounds into a production that’s already been made. My reason for that is that I find it a crime against creativity. There are thousands of talented screenwriters not being given a break. Instead, I would spend that money on training and mentoring up-and-coming writers.

I would introduce “Broken Heart Day”. I don’t think the death of love has been given enough importance in our world. Heartbreak is something pretty much everyone goes through but no one really admits how hard it is. If someone dies, you get compassionate leave, but I would make it compulsory for all employers to allow compassionate leave if someone’s going through a breakup, or divorce too.

All menstruation products would be free. Women have to spend at

least £3 a month on sanitary products. And when you add that up the total cost is in the thousands, and it's just really arbitrary that we have this expense and men don't.

I'd ban all automated phone

and chat lines. I don't think

it's ever helped me to be stuck in this kind of Kafka-esque loop of "Press one, press two, press three". And it's never ever got me through to the right person at the end of it all.

I spent three hours on the phone to my bank yesterday just going round and round and round and round. There's nothing quite like these things for fanning the flames of anxiety and rage, and it also increases our sense of isolation. Plus it's taking away jobs!

All self-checkouts would closed.

Big supermarkets have probably saved millions from the reduction in staff and yet that discount is not reflected. So shoppers are essentially being asked to do their

own mini-shift in the supermarket at the end of a long day at work. I know it's a very quick shift, but when I'm tired I actually can't cope with operating the self-checkout machines. Let's ban them!

I would implement

COVID-offsetting. The

effects of the pandemic have been really arbitrary. There's people who ended up winning from COVID and earning loads because of their role, like food delivery companies and Zoom, for instance. But then the flipside is that people in industries like live theatre and comedy have really suffered.

There are so many people with small businesses who have had to close and it's really tragic. So I would set up a new tax that ensured that anyone who has benefited over a certain amount through the pandemic paid into a fund. And that fund would then pay out to the people who have had their lives

ruined by it. ■

.....
Melon Comedy's new sketch show *Batshit* is out with Comedy Sauce, available online now. Visit @lemoncomedy on Twitter for more information





We're getting better at acknowledging that sex in later life is important, but grieving physical intimacy when a partner dies is rarely discussed



SEXUAL BEREAVEMENT: THE GRIEF WE DON'T TALK ABOUT

BY Natalie Healey

When Alice Radosh's husband of over 40 years died in 2013 following a serious illness, she turned to books in an attempt to better understand the immense pain she was feeling. Unflinching memoirs about the death of a partner such as Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* or Joyce Carol Oates' *A Widow's Story* were cathartic reads but Radosh's overpowering feeling was that something was missing. In the swirl of overwhelming emotions that accompany grief, she felt blindsided by the realisation that the sexual intimacy between her and her husband Bart was gone for good. "It was absolutely amazing to me that there were hundreds of pages about these very close, wonderful relationships but not a single word about sexuality," she says.



Silence around sexual bereavement—the immense loss of sensual enjoyment and shared intimacy felt when a long-term partner is gone—makes those grieving for their beloved feel even more alone, believes Radosh from New York. When she tried to raise the issue with friends, the subject was swiftly changed. And if loved ones did respond, their well-meaning advice often missed the mark. “They suggested going to the hairdressers or getting a dog,” she reveals. “It really seemed to me that the message was: don’t talk about this.”

“UNEXPRESSED GRIEF
CAN LEAD TO HEALTH
PROBLEMS SUCH AS
INSOMNIA, ANXIETY
AND DEPRESSION ”

But studies have shown that unexpressed grief can lead to health problems such as insomnia, anxiety and depression—and even physical symptoms like unexplained pain and stomach problems. Failing to openly acknowledge an aspect of bereavement is known as



"disenfranchised grief," says Radosh. But how do you talk about sexual bereavement when it feels like it is a subject people draw the line at?

LOSING TOUCH

One taboo we are getting better at talking about is that people are enjoying sex well into later life. Research shows people in their sixties, seventies and beyond consider physical intimacy a vital component in their lives and relationships. This can even have unintended consequences—charity Age UK found rates of sexually transmitted infection diagnoses rose by 23 per cent between 2014 and 2018 in those aged 65 and older. But why are we not also acknowledging that people in this demographic are

“SEX IS SO MUCH MORE THAN BODY PARTS—IT'S CONNECTION, INTIMACY, EXCITEMENT AND PLEASURE”

dying, asks Radosh—and that the loss of a long-term partner will leave their other half grieving the end of this shared sexuality?

Author and sex educator Joan Price from California felt this like a ton of bricks when her husband Robert died from cancer in 2008 when she was in her early sixties. “People are so sex negative that they think we as grievers shouldn’t be feeling our sexual urges or that it dishonours

our partner," she says. "But sex is so much more than body parts. It's connection, intimacy, excitement and pleasure." Even though Price has made a living writing about and educating people on sexuality, she found the experience of sexual bereavement gruelling. "I was numb in my body most of the time," she shares. "But I would have other times where I just needed the touch and to feel the excitement of being aroused by a person that I am attracted to and feel comfortable with." Like Radosh, Price was dismayed to find that none of the grief books she

happens when sex and grief collide. She and her colleague Linda Simkin mailed an anonymous survey to 104 women in the US, who were all over 55 years old and in relationships. They asked the participants how often they had sex, whether they enjoyed it and if they thought they would miss it if their partner died. The researchers also asked the women if they felt they'd be able to talk to friends about this aspect of grief. The results were stark. Almost three quarters of women said they would miss sex if their partner died. But while many (67 per cent) said

"DELIBERATELY REPRESSING SEXUAL FEELINGS BECAUSE OF GUILT OR CONFUSION CAN LEAD TO SEXUAL PROBLEMS DOWN THE LINE "

came across mentioned sex, so she decided to write her own. *Sex After Grief: Navigating Your Sexuality After Losing Your Beloved* includes not only Price's own story, but many other people's experiences of sexual bereavement and how they dealt with the difficult feelings.

As well as being a topic that is rarely openly discussed, sexual bereavement is also under-researched. Radosh, a neuropsychology researcher, set out to change that and find out how other people really felt about what

they would want to talk to friends about sexual bereavement, more (72 per cent) said they would rather have the friend be the one to bring up the topic first. Yet 57 per cent of participants reported it would not occur to them to initiate a discussion with a widowed friend about sexual bereavement. The findings are published in the journal *Reproductive Health Matters*.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Sexual bereavement is a stigmatised issue because people are not keen

to acknowledge it, says sex and relationships therapist Rhian Kivits. “It feels like an elephant in the room.” She has noticed that her own clients don’t usually bring up the topic without a gentle prompt. Shame is the overriding emotion for many who miss physical intimacy after a partner dies, she reveals. “They worry they’re devaluing their loved one by focusing on these feelings or think there’s something wrong with them.” In some cases, Kivits says, deliberately repressing sexual feelings because of the guilt or confusion can lead to sexual

professionals should be able to talk easily about the subjects most people feel intimidated discussing and will be able to provide tailored support, he says.

The more we acknowledge sexual bereavement, the better we will be at finding ways to address it, says Radosh. She hopes health professionals can play a bigger part in the conversation in future. But research shows doctors generally avoid talking about sex—especially with older patients. This is a missed opportunity, says Samantha Evans, former nurse and co-founder of

“RESEARCH SHOWS THAT DOCTORS GENERALLY AVOID TALKING ABOUT SEX— ESPECIALLY WITH OLDER PATIENTS”

problems down the line when the bereaved person does feel able to seek out intimacy again.

Rather than bottling up uneasy feelings, Peter Saddington, sex and relationships counsellor at Relate, encourages people to discuss the topic with a potential new partner. “It becomes a bigger issue the more you keep it a secret,” he says. “It’s much better to talk about it and say what you’re thinking and how you’re feeling.” He also recommends speaking to a trained grief or sex and relationship therapist. These

sexual pleasure retailer Jo Divine. While she advises many older people who have lost a partner, she acknowledges there are many others “who wouldn’t dream of buying a sex toy and are suffering in silence”.

NO RIGHT OR WRONG APPROACH

Of course, sexual bereavement is not just a phenomenon that applies to older people. Sadly you can lose the love of your life at any age—and during the coronavirus pandemic, we are more aware of that than



ever. Alex Delaney from London was 34 when her husband died of a pulmonary embolism three years ago when he was just 39. “You’re not just missing them because of their character, you’re missing them because of their physical presence,” she says, revealing that she sought casual sexual encounters early on in the grieving process. While most of her friends were very understanding, she says others were baffled when she told them she was having one-night stands.

The important thing to bear in mind, says Price, who has since met a new long-term partner, is there is no right or wrong way to grieve. And the same applies to sex. Whatever your age, gender or sexual orientation, there’s no prescribed method for

“THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO GRIEVE—AND THE SAME APPLIES TO SEX”

bringing sexuality back into your life after you lose a partner. “What I want to reassure people of is whatever your timeline is, it’s OK,” she concludes. “If you need the relief of being with someone quickly, don’t judge yourself. If you go years without being ready and your friends are pushing you to move on, don’t judge yourself. And it doesn’t have to be all or nothing—there are a lot of things in between being alone and falling in love.” ■

In lockdown, Mum and
I were able to move
past our clashing
personalities and connect

Character

BY John Danakas FROM *THE GLOBE AND MAIL*

ILLUSTRATION BY MEREDITH SADLER

Studies



L

ast spring, when the first lockdown began, the task to check in daily on our elderly mother fell to me. I was no longer working in an office, and since I lived alone I could more easily limit social contacts and ensure her safety.

My brother and sister-in-law handled the weekly food shopping (dropped off at the side door) as well as Mum's monthly haircut (with her seated smack in the centre of the back garden on a white-gone-grey plastic lawn chair).

Mum is 88 and lives on her own in the home she and my father moved into after their retirement. Dad passed away about 12 years ago—he fell ill just as my parents were about to celebrate their 50th anniversary.



She's blessed, of course, to have her two sons and three grandchildren nearby, and my brother and I are lucky even to have been able to visit her. Still, I wasn't sure how the visits would go. Mum and I agreed long ago that we have clashing personalities and, even as I've crossed into my late fifties, our differences still present challenges. She appreciates discipline and order; I favour improvisation. We do share a facility with language—but, unfortunately, when directed at each other, it can be biting.

Initially, I timed my visits to coincide with the Greek game shows she watches every afternoon on satellite TV. The ice-breaker worked: soon we

MUM AND I AGREED LONG AGO THAT WE HAVE CLASHING PERSONALITIES AND OUR DIFFERENCES ARE STILL CHALLENGING

found ourselves rooting for the same contestants or comparing the relative appeal of the various hosts.

Mum became fascinated with my ability to find out trivial information almost instantly on my smart phone: the age of a Greek pop singer, the selling price of the house down the



MY MOTHER ALSO
REVEALED FAMILY
HISTORIES I WASN'T
AWARE OF: THAT AS A
CHILD SHE ENJOYED
CLIMBING TREES AND
THROWING STONES

street, the year that a family acquaintance married.

“How can that little thing know so much?”

What I discovered when we turned

away from the TV, however, was that my mother knew things Google didn't. Soon I set aside my phone and made Mum my preferred search engine. I learned, for instance, that the German soldiers occupying her hometown south of Sparta during the Second World War sunbathed in the nude every afternoon, and that the trick to cooking wild dandelion greens so they are only slightly tart and deliciously tender is not to over-boil them.

My mother also revealed family histories I wasn't aware of: that as a child she enjoyed climbing trees and throwing stones; that in 1934 my paternal grandparents lost their twins—two boys not yet six months

old—on consecutive days to a mysterious “grippe” virus; that my mother had only ever seen snow once before moving to Canada; and that my father, in their first years of marriage, had earned her lifelong loyalty by agreeing without argument to pay for her own mother’s new dentures.

I was hooked. Soon I was visiting twice a day.

ON ABOUT DAY 12 of that initial lockdown, Mum’s landline went dead. I called the phone company and learned the problem could last as long as a week. The customer service rep was surprised that Mum didn’t own a mobile and recommended we buy one for her to tide her over.

“We’ll call the television news,” I joked, “and invite them to interview the octogenarian learning to use a smart phone for the first time.”

Mum wasn’t amused. We binned the mobile idea. But now the issue remained of how she would contact anyone in the event that she needed help. We decided it was best if I slept over until the landline was repaired. I packed my overnight bag.

“I get up a few times a night, I’m just warning you,” she told me.

“It’s OK,” I replied. “So do I.”

She laughed: “I guess so. I’m only 30 years older than you.”

The week living together went surprisingly well. Never a handyman, I nevertheless tried my best to make myself useful. I changed a light bulb,

found a discarded piece of skirting board with which she could easily switch the television on and off, and took her reading glasses in for repair when the toothpick I tried as a temporary fix to replace a screw didn’t quite do the trick.

When we weren’t addressing the long list of deferred household maintenance chores, we planned the day’s menu, went for walks down the street and continued our open-ended chats.

One night at bedtime, which was signalled on weekdays by the 9pm closing credits of *Wheel of Fortune*, she turned to me and said: “Now I’ve learned your character.”

I didn’t ask her to elaborate. But, choosing to interpret the gleam in her eye as an indication that her conclusion was a favourable one, I found myself struggling to keep from choking up.

ONE AFTERNOON WELL into the second month, after the phone was working again, I called Mum to let her know I was coming by. No answer. I dismissed any negative thoughts. I drove over and knocked at the door. Again, no answer. Now I was getting worried. I called my brother and the friend down the back lane my mother often visited pre-pandemic. Neither had heard from her that morning. I retrieved the extra set of house keys from my car and let myself in. My heart thumped. I checked the upstairs



THERE'S FILO PASTRY WAITING IN THE FREEZER FOR THE DAY SHE CAN BAKE FOR US ALL AGAIN

rooms, the basement. No Mum. I realised I hadn't checked the bathtub. I steeled myself for the worst, pulling the shower curtain aside.

Nothing.

I got into my car and headed down the street. Maybe she'd taken a walk. I spotted a police car parked outside a fast food restaurant. The officers

might have spotted her somewhere, or at least I could report her as a missing person, I decided.

As I swung into the shopping centre car park, there was Mum walking down the adjacent street, sunglasses shading her eyes, a shopping bag hanging at her side.

I was too relieved to chastise.

"I'll drive you home," I offered.

"I'm fine, thanks," she said. "I just needed to do something myself."

I smiled. "I was ready to have the police track you down."

"Don't worry," she said. "It won't happen again. I don't like all the new rules. The cashier scolded me for resting my purse on the counter."



rhyming Greek— one of the countless Old World aphorisms in her repertoire.

I guess when you've lived almost 90 years, you come to realise that the end of life is always near.

In the meantime, Mum is eagerly anticipating her COVID-19 vaccine. And like so many other grandparents, she's looking forward to safely hosting her grandchildren again.

There's even filo pastry waiting in the freezer for the day she can bake a *spanakopita* for us all.

Physical distancing measures notwithstanding, my generation fully expects to visit our parents

as they are dying, usually in hospital. I've learned that the real reward comes in visiting them as they are living.

With at least some level of pandemic restrictions still in place, my sessions with Mum have become the highlight of my day. Some days I drop by as many as three times.

I like to believe the time spent with her is good for my character. ■

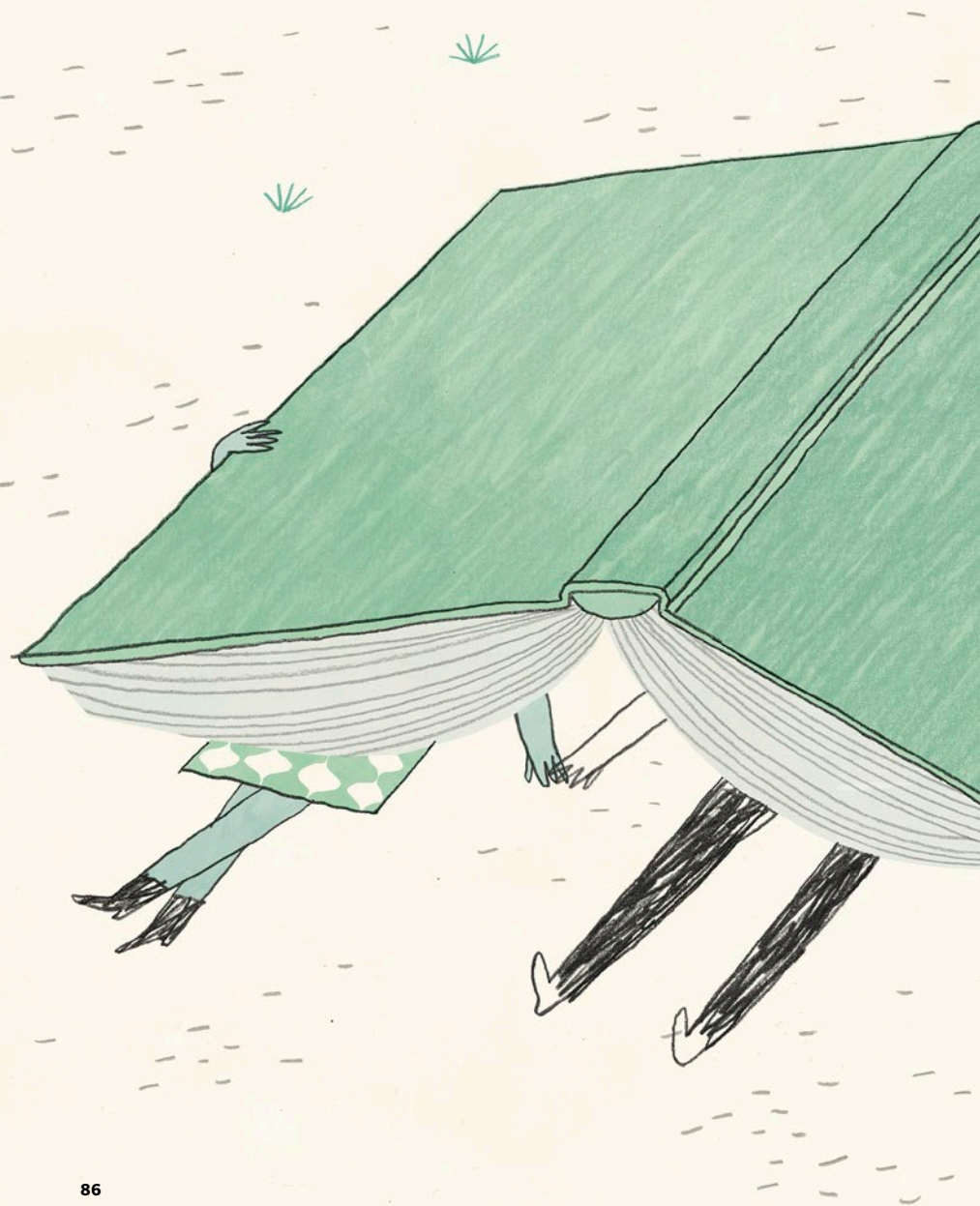
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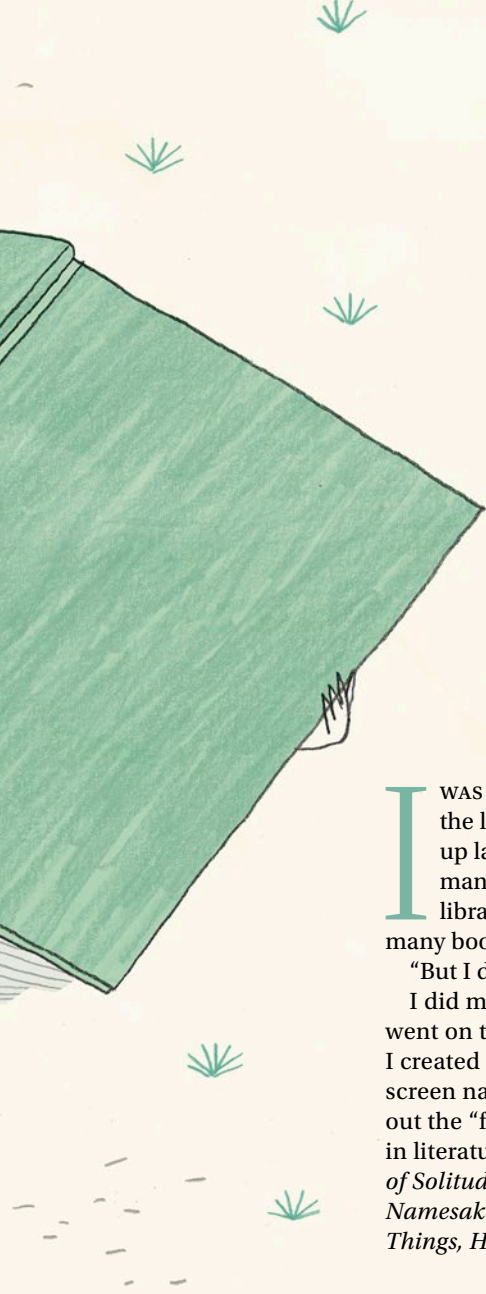
NOW, OVER A YEAR AFTER our lockdown journey began, the pandemic hasn't given up. But neither has my mum. The winter months were the hardest, forcing her to remain indoors more than she'd have liked. Her spirit, though, remained as indomitable as ever.

The year hasn't been without loss. At least a dozen of Mum's friends have died, and so has one of my own. "The shovels, the spades and straight to Hades," my mother intoned recently in

Shoulders Above the Competition

The myth that escaping from a straight jacket required the ability to dislocate one's shoulders was started by Harry Houdini to lessen the amount of competition





Where do bibliophiles
exchange sweet nothings?

Falling In Love, By The Book

BY *Karla Marie-Rose Derus*
ADAPTED FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

I WAS ALWAYS A reader. As a kid, I walked to the library several times a week and stayed up late reading with a torch. I checked out so many books and returned them so quickly the librarian once snapped, “Don’t take home so many books if you’re not going to read them all.”

“But I did read them all,” I said back.

I did my undergraduate degree in English and went on to get a master’s in literature. When I created my online dating profile, I made my screen name “missbibliophile52598.” Filling out the “favourite books” section, I let my taste in literature speak for me: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *A Moveable Feast*, *White Teeth*, *The Namesake*, *The Known World*, *The God of Small Things*, *How to Read the Air*.

But I realised it had been more than two years since I had read most of those titles. I had stopped reading gradually, the way one heals or dies. I tried to maintain my bookish persona. I joined book clubs that I never attended. I requested a library book everyone was reading, only to return it unread.

I still loved the idea of reading. Whenever I found a bookstore, I would linger between the shelves for hours as if catching up with old friends, picking out volumes I had read and buying new ones. But it was clear to me: I was becoming a person I did not know.

David was my first online date. His profile said he liked to read, so I asked him about his last book. His face lit up and his fingers danced. David read much more than I did, about a book or two a week. We seemed an unlikely couple: me, a five-foot-three Black woman born to a Caribbean mother, and him, a six-foot-four white man. But as we got to know each other, our shared faith and mutual love of books bridged our gaps.

When we compared libraries, we had only four titles in common. David preferred history and non-fiction, whereas I gravitated toward fiction writers of colour and immigrant narratives.

On our seventh date, David and I visited the library.

"I have a game," he said, pulling two pens and sticky notes out of his bag.

"Let's find books we've read and leave reviews in them for the next person."

We wandered the aisles for an hour. In the end, we sat on the floor among the poetry, and I read him some. He listened, his head tilted down, asking, "What is it you like about that one?"

That spring, as we picnicked outside, I said, "If I tell you something, will you not judge me?"

David raised his eyebrows.

"I've only read one book this year."

"But it's June," he said.

"I know."

"But you like books," he said. "You like bookstores. You like libraries."

"Is it a deal breaker?"

"No, but still. Read a book!"

I was painfully aware of the glaring hypocrisy in my life. I defended the virtues of bookstores in the age of online retailing and bought books whenever I got the chance, but I hardly read them. They sat on every surface until my house appeared to wear books the way one wears clothes. They piled up on chairs and draped across sofa arms.

The Japanese language has a word for this: *tsundoku*. The act of acquiring books that go unread.

Each of my bookshelves holds two rows of books, an inner and an outer. Surrounding the bookshelf are stacks containing different categories of books: Books I Have Read. Books I Want to Read. Books I Started but Did Not Finish Because I Did Not Like Them. Books I Started and Loved but

Could Not Justify Reading Given Their Graphic Sexual or Violent Content.

The next time I visited a second-hand bookshop, I bought five titles for myself and two for David. His charge to “read a book” echoed in my head. One afternoon, I picked up one I’d bought solely for its poetic title.

I had a hard time getting into it. The narrator was an old man, but he sounded more like what a young woman thought an old man might sound like. Whenever I was tempted to give up on it, I thought of David.

I pushed through the first two

Whenever he turned to discussing his current non-fiction book about the rise of Silicon Valley or environmental philosophers, I would tell him of fiction, of men who left their countries by hiding in boxes only to climb out and turn into birds. I would remind him that sometimes the only way to explain the world we live in is to make it all up.

I asked David once what he liked about me.

He paused, then said, “You make me less cynical. I see the world as a more wonder-filled place with you.”



I FELT HIM PUSHING ME TO BE MORE OF WHO I WANTED TO BE

chapters and discovered a new narrator in the third. I loved the alternating points of view. I carried the book to work. I read at lunch and on my walk home, occasionally lifting my eyes to avoid strangers and uneven concrete.

“How’s your day?” David texted.

“Good. A little tired,” I replied.

“I stayed up late and finished my book.” I tried to slip it in casually, but I was proud of myself. The last time I’d pulled an all-nighter to read, I was 12 and the book was *Little Women*.

It was not a competition, but there was a tug. I felt him pushing me to be more of the person I used to be and more of who I wanted to be.

David suggested we visit the library again. He asked if I remembered the game we played on our first visit.

“I remember,” I said.

He pulled a book from the shelf, dropped to one knee, and opened it. Inside, his note read: “Karla, it has always been you. Will you marry me?”

His proposal had rested between the pages of *The Rebel Princess* for over a year.

“Yes,” I said. “I’ll marry you.”

We embraced as we stood in the middle of the fiction aisle, surrounded by other people’s stories, about to begin our own. ■

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● TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

Fishermen with lobster traps, an iconic scene on PEI; (Opposite page) Oysters can be enjoyed at countless eateries across the island



Where The World Is Your Oyster

*Prince Edward Island serves up rural charm
and a seafood feast that doesn't end*

BY Janie Allen

PHOTOS, PREVIOUS SPREAD: @TOURISMEPEI / YVONNE



WE ARRIVED ON a wet September day and drove for miles past fields and farms to our lodging, a golf resort and spa tucked into western Prince Edward Island. It was the end of a two-day drive north from New York into eastern Canada. In the early evening chill, my husband, Glen, and I hurried to the soon-to-close restaurant and ordered seafood chowder.

Generous bowls of steaming, creamy goodness were brought. New England clam chowder has nothing

of Canada's yield, and PEI lobsters account for one-fifth of the country's production. The island is the leading oyster producer in eastern Canada.

We were here for the Fall Flavours Festival. We'd catch a few events, meet locals and explore the island. But after our first night, we added chowder to our agenda, and looked up the list of 63 restaurants on the "Chowder Trail." As the days passed, our affection for the "garden of the Gulf" grew.

Our first destination the next morning is the biggest tourist

PEI HAS AN UNDERWATER BOUNTY, AND ITS RED SOIL IS BRIMMING, TOO—WITH POTATOES

on this comforting feast. We inhaled the salt-air aroma and spooned in shrimp, clams, haddock, lobster, and potatoes. It tasted heavenly—rich and hearty—and we devoured it, all but licking the bowls as we relaxed for the first time that day.

Holidaymakers flock to PEI, Canada's smallest province, most summers for its parks, red-sand beaches and quaint seaside villages. Fans of the red-haired Anne, of the classic children's books, are drawn from far and wide to Green Gables Heritage Place.

But it's the seafood that attracted us to this 140-mile long crescent in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Canada is a major supplier of seafood to the world; PEI mussels make up 80 per cent

attraction in tiny O'Leary: a 14-foot fiberglass potato out front of the Canadian Potato Museum. In addition to the island's underwater bounty, PEI's rich red soil is also brimming—with spuds. The industry is worth a billion dollars annually to the island's economy. More than half of PEI's harvest of some 85,000 acres is processed into products including a fast-food staple.

"A plant here supplies the French fries for Wendy's [a fast-food chain] as far west as Thunder Bay, Ontario, and as far south as Washington, DC," Jonathan MacLennon, 45, a fourth-generation potato farmer, tells us. Soon, his warehouses will be filled with 22 million pounds of potatoes. That's a lot of chips.



Clockwise from top left: Basin Head Provincial Park, at the east end of the island; Charlottetown; cooking lobster on the beach at Fall Flavours Festival; museum at Green Gables; PEI clam chowder, the ultimate comfort food



We eat lunch in the museum's Country Kitchen, and I order lobster-stuffed baked potato. A treat back home, lobster here is as common as chicken. Over the next few days I see it on menus as an ingredient in pot pie, poutine, lasagne... there's even lobster-stuffed chicken!

By late afternoon we are at Skinners Pond. The year's second lobster season is on, and boats are bringing in their catch. On the wharf, workers at the Royal Star Foods shed are unloading crates of lobsters. They don't seem to notice the wind

We end the day's sightseeing at North Cape, the island's picturesque northwestern tip and location of one of PEI's 63 lighthouses. Upstairs in the Wind & Reef Restaurant, seafood chowder packed with clams, scallops and more hits the spot as we look at the view of red sandstone cliffs—PEI's cliffs, soil, and beaches get their hue from iron oxide—and a churning, desolate sea. Hogan had told us two men died out there in a lobster boat two years ago. "It hit a rogue wave that almost took the cab off."

Aquaculture is thriving in PEI's bays

THE YEAR'S SECOND LOBSTER SEASON IS ON, AND BOATS ARE BRINGING IN THEIR CATCH

blasting off the sea, and cheerfully answer our questions.

Half of Royal Star's 47 boats here didn't go out today because of the stiff wind, says Chris Hogan, a seasonal worker. Still, some 10,000 pounds have come in. Chris grabs a writhing male as big as two dinner plates to show us. Royal Star ships live lobsters as far away as China and Japan.

Fisherman Blain Gavin, 53, says he brought in 700 pounds today; 500 to 600 is "typical." A good day would be up to 2,000 pounds. Fishermen get around CAD5,50 (GBP5,20) a pound, but licenses are limited.

"Ideally, you have to get one from somebody who is getting ready to retire," Gavin explains, "or buy someone out."

and estuaries. Blue mussels are "rope-grown" inside mesh socks suspended in water, and oysters are either wild or cultured on private leases.

Curious, we arrange to meet oyster farmer Adam Buchanan next morning at his home on the Trout River in western PEI. When we arrive, the 37-year-old is in the garden screening oysters heaped on a tray, part of an order of 80,000 to be picked up by a processor today.

From May through November, he will market a million oysters from his 32 acres of leases on the Foxley River. I ask him what it takes to grow them to market size—around three inches—and I get quite an unexpected answer. "We're just babysitters," he says. "We provide

habitat. They eat algae and plankton that grow in the rivers.”

Each summer during spawning, many oyster farmers gather oyster larvae, called spats (Buchanan gets his at a hatchery). As they grow, they are transferred to mesh bags, then suspended in cages in the river for up to four years.

PEI oysters, widely referred to as Malpeques (after PEI’s second-largest bay), are special, he says, because they’re small—“easy to eat”—and the water’s salinity is high compared with oysters from other regions. “We have a good sweet-salty taste.”

Matthew, Buchanan’s helper, scoops two and hands them to us. I take a dripping shell, uncertain. “I’ve never eaten a raw oyster!” I admit.

“There’s no neat way to do it,” Buchanan says.

I take a bite, and it’s extremely tender. Scraping it off the shell releases an exquisite burst of its briny flavour.

Together we drive down a bumpy track to Foxley River, where we see rafts of cages suspended from floats. “Here we’d be well into tens of thousands of cages,” Buchanan says. “Probably the most expensive leases in PEI are in this river.” The leases trade for up to CAD40,000 (GBP23,100) an acre.

In the afternoon we head to Charlottetown, centrally located on the south coast. Fields yield to

East Point Lighthouse is still operating more than 150 years after it was built



rolling spruce-covered hills. We detour to Victoria by the Sea, an arts community, but are disappointed to find it all but deserted on this autumn weekday. The cosy Landmark Oyster House is open, and we enjoy some chowder, with a new appreciation of the oysters in it; salmon, haddock, mussels, and bacon add to the bold flavours. A homemade biscuit is a nice touch.

Our server says they’ll close soon for the winter. I ask where locals go when they want to eat out at that time of year, and the server replies that only about 40 people stay year-round.

“Forty!” Glen whispers to me amazed after the exchange. “They could all eat together!”

We are taken aback by how few

people live on PEI. The population is only about 158,000; the capital, Charlottetown, has a mere 36,000, small for a city with a deep-water harbour, university and even a spot in history as Canada's birthplace (an 1864 conference here led to Canada's unification).

In Charlottetown we settle into

TRAVEL TIPS

GETTING THERE **Air Canada** and **WestJet** fly to Charlottetown. You can also take a **car ferry** to PEI from Nova Scotia, or drive across the 13-kilometre **Confederation Bridge** from New Brunswick.

LODGING **Mill River Resort**, millriver.ca; **Great George hotel**, Charlottetown, thegreatgeorge.com; **The Inn at Spry Point**, innatsprypoint.com

DINING **Clam Digger's Beach House & Restaurant**, Cardigan, entrees CAD16-30, clamdiggerspei.com; dining room at the **Culinary Institute of Canada**, Charlottetown (prices comparable to area restaurants; or **Marché** has inexpensive grab-and-go), hollandcollege.com/dining; **FireWorks**, dinner set menu, CAD165, innatbayfortune.com.

Check prices/availability of hotels, and restaurant hours, on their websites or at tourismpei.com (which has travel restriction updates). Note that some PEI tourist attractions are closed in winter.

the elegant Great George hotel, on a quiet street behind the 1847 Province House, and walk around the corner to the Brickhouse Kitchen & Bar—after all, it's on the Chowder Trail. Its bowl was judged best at the 2018 PEI International Shellfish Festival. The broth of milk, lobster sauce and spices is more sophisticated than we've had so far. It's packed with lobster, mussels, haddock and scallops, and splashed with olive oil. Delicious! We're quickly learning that the basic ingredients are similar, but no two chowders are alike.

We've signed up for a half-day cooking class at The Culinary Table Studio, a Fall Flavours venue in New London, on the north coast. The former church building is a stylish space with a modern kitchen and big harvest table.

We are eight: three couples and two single women from New York, Florida, New Brunswick, Alberta and PEI, respectively. Owner Derrick Hoare introduces Chef Taylore Darnel, a Vancouverite with short hair and blue-grey eyes, and confidently announces, "By 12:30 you'll be sitting down to a beautiful lunch." On the menu: lobster risotto, fennel-steamed mussels and a surprise dessert.

We don aprons and each pick up a live lobster. After carefully sliding the rubber bands off the claws, some of us eye the steaming pot with apprehension. "They don't have a central nervous system... so they

don't feel pain," Darnel reassures us. I'm not sure if that's true, but there's nothing for it but to drop the lobster gently in.

Nine minutes later, we take them out, their dark shells now bright red. Soon we're up to our elbows shelling lobsters; stirring risotto; debearding and washing mussels; and learning knife skills for dicing vegetables.

We feel gratified as we enjoy lunch. The risotto is perfect, "not gloopy, not soupy," as Darnel says. The mussels are delicately flavoured. And we're all wowed by dessert: "Scallops on the Beach." The seared scallops garnished with candied lemon peel and crushed shortbread (the beach) are tender and sweet. It'll be a talking point back home: "Scallops! For dessert!"

OUR FINAL THREE days include time at the Culinary Institute of Canada; browsing Charlottetown's shops on Grafton Street; and a walking tour of historic homes. We head to North Rustico one evening for a "roving feast" in a harbour-side tent, where we devour more oysters, and, another day, we take a boat tour with a fiddle-playing fisherman. In the village of Cardigan, we find a new twist on chowder at Clam Digger's restaurant: mussels in addictively good curry broth.

For our final night, we've planned a special dinner at Chef Michael Smith's FireWorks restaurant at The Inn at Bay Fortune. Smith, a TV chef,

cookbook author, and the island's official food ambassador, offers an eight-course set menu. His concept is simple, sustainable home cooking, all done over fire.

Much of the food served is raised and grown on FireWorks' biodynamic farm, and after Kevin Petrie, its manager, leads diners on a garden tour, we head to a firepit where chefs are grilling oysters on the half-shell. "Chef Michael's one rule is that you must chew your oysters!" he says. "You gotta open up the flavours." You don't have to tell Glen and me twice. The oysters, raw but warm, and seasoned with melted lovage-herbed butter, are every bit as good as that first one I tried.

At 7pm we take our seats for the parade of food. The menu is a wonder, from "100-Year-Old Bread" made from heritage flour, to a salad of shoots, stems, leaves, and flowers. "Everything on your plate is edible," we're told, including the tops of roasted carrots and beets. There's pork belly, and bluefin tuna; the boat captain who caught it is named on the menu. The chowder is a feast: mussels, bar clams, lobster, scallops, rock crab, seaweed, and more. By the end we've lost count of the courses—and the calories.

The end of our trip comes too soon. We loved the green countryside, beautiful coasts, friendly people, and all that fresh food. Did we find our favourite chowder? Not quite. All the more reason to return! ■

My Great Escape:

Cramond Island

*Our reader Poornima
Ramesh explores
scenic Scotland*

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to spend a little bit of time by the sea, then Cramond Island makes the perfect day trip from Edinburgh. Home to oodles of history, beautiful scenery, and of course, the peaceful sound of crashing waves, it makes for the perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of the nearby busy city life.

Tucked away in a little-known area of Edinburgh, the village of Cramond lies sleepily by the sea. Complete with a tidal island once inhabited by the Romans, you can't go wrong by taking the number 41 bus from the city centre and spending a couple of hours exploring the area. When we arrived, the island was full of mist and thanks to the low tides, we ran all the way via the pathway from the mainland. At high tide, the tidal island is cut off from the rest of the world by the sea. At low tide and a few precious hours each side of



it, you can reach Cramond by foot. Around a kilometre and a half walk from the mainland, the journey is very pleasant and the path littered with seashells.

Once on the island, the views over the surrounding bay are breathtaking. Rising to a height of 68 feet above sea level, many of the surrounding towns and islands are



visible from Cramond. The island is the perfect place to walk around, have a picnic or simply enjoy a good book. It's also possible to see many of the abandoned buildings around the island, which are now covered in lots of colourful graffiti.

As the only way to reach Cramond is by foot, make sure you check the tidal times before crossing so that you don't find yourself trapped on the island. This happens more than you might think as the water comes in quickly and the footpath is rapidly submerged in seawater. A notice board lies at the end of the walkway to the island on the mainland, listing tidal times for that day.

We had spent plenty of time relaxing and walking around, we'd watched people taking their pets for morning walks and we'd enjoyed the misty weather, but when we walked back to the mainland after three hours, many other people had only just started visiting the island.

The ice cream truck near the water was most definitely a welcome sight upon our return! Munching on my refreshing ice cream and waffle cone, we began planning for our next nearby sightseeing—the picturesque Lauriston Castle with Edwardian interiors, which is situated nearby, in the opposite direction to the island. ■

Tell us about your favourite holiday (send a photo too) and if we print it, we'll pay £50. Email excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk

ANAFIOTIKA

Athens

HIDDEN
GEMS

Want to experience a hint of Santorini in Athens? Then head for Anafiotika, a pretty timewarp huddling just below the imposing Acropolis citadel's north flank and reached by trudging up unpromising stair-alleys on the ancient district of Plaka.

This teeny village's key moment came in 1841, when King Otto I encouraged the transformation of Greece's then-tiny capital into a modern city. Amid the influx, carpenters and masons from the Cycladic island of Anafi hastily began assembling small stone houses on empty rocky terrain atop Plaka.

Named Anafiotika, or "little Anafi", the resulting village is a Cycladic vision of whitewashed cubic homes, tiled roofs and blue-painted shutters or doors. Today, less than 50 originals remain—most still inhabited by descendants of those original immigrants—but a tranquil island feel magically persists. Bougainvillea spills over narrow, cobbled alleyways that wind, wiggle and dead-end. Potted geraniums line pastel-shade patios; cats sun themselves on sills.

Look out for two pretty 17th-century churches, Ayio Georgios tou Vrachou and Ayio Symeon, both given a Cycladic makeover. Visit Anafiotika's high point and the underrated Kanelloupoulou museum, its handsome neoclassical mansion housing 6,000 archaeological finds from Ancient Greece. And, most of all, admire the vistas from several viewpoints, over Plaka's red tiles across greater Athens' sprawl to distant Mount Lykavitos.

You won't find souvenir shops (happily) nor tavernas—although Yiasemi, a traditional but trendy restaurant, awaits at the foot of the stairs. To explore Anafiotika, walk first to Ayio Georgios tou Vrachou on its southeastern edge. ■

By Richard Mellor



Questions About Contactless

Not everyone has welcomed the arrival of contactless with open arms. Our money expert is here to lay your concerns to rest



CONTACTLESS CARDS ARE being used more and more, with two-thirds of debit card transactions now made via a quick tap. And with the

payment limit increased from £45 to £100, use is likely to keep growing.

With people using cash less due to the pandemic it's never been easier to spend with your debit or credit card without entering a PIN. But does this boon for convenience have any downsides?

Here's what you need to know about using your contactless cards and devices, and just how safe this payment method is.

How does contactless work?

You'll know if your card is contactless thanks to a universal symbol of four curved lines (similar to the Wi-Fi symbol). This same icon indicates that the retailer or business you're at accepts contactless payments.

Embedded in each contactless card is a chip which uses radio frequencies to communicate with near-field communication (NFC) technology. So tap your card on a reader and they can talk to each other to process the payment.

In fact you don't even need to tap the card. It just needs to be within a few centimeters of the reader to connect. Within seconds you'll get confirmation that the transaction has gone through (or hasn't) and that's it.

The same chip technology can also be found on things like phones and smart watches, which can be used to pay in the same way if they are connected to your bank cards.

These sometimes have no upper limit as you'll need to use biometrics such as your fingerprint or a face scan to approve the purchase.

Does contactless always work?

Though the individual transaction limit on these cards is now £100, it doesn't mean you'll never have to enter your PIN. Regulations require retailers to ask for the PIN after you've spent a cumulative total of £300 on the card or made five separate transactions.

This is also probably why your transactions are rejected from time to time, rather than you not having enough money in your account. If it does happen you simply need to enter your card and type in the PIN to approve the purchase. This not only limits any potential fraud (more on this in a bit), but means you're less likely to forget your number!

Can scammers use contactless?

In theory, a crook with a card reader



Andy Webb is a personal finance journalist and runs the award-winning money blog, *Be Clever With Your Cash*

who was close enough to you and your card would be able to take money from your card or skim your card details. Still, there's no record of this ever happening, and there are so many conditions that would have to be in place for it to work that it's incredibly unlikely.

Nonetheless, if you were to lose your card or it was stolen then payments could be made. And you could argue that it's more tempting for thieves to target purses and wallets now that they can use them for more expensive transactions.

However, any fraudulent use would be restricted by that £300 total. And you'd get that money refunded by your bank as long as you've reported the card missing, and you didn't do something deemed negligent such as willingly giving your card to someone to use.

Though you'd most likely notice if someone has stolen your card, it's important to check your bank statements regularly to ensure there aren't any transactions in there that you didn't authorise. Mistakes can happen too, say if the person charging you accidentally typed in the wrong amount. Always check the total on the contactless reader before tapping. Asking for receipts after

MOST BANKS AND CREDIT CARD COMPANIES NOW ISSUE CONTACTLESS PAYMENT CARDS AS STANDARD

purchase will also help you check you've not been overcharged.

If you're still worried, you could line your purse with foil, or buy a RFID-blocking card. Either should stop the signals from and to your cards. However the benefit of these is really just to put your mind at ease as fraud remains incredibly unlikely.

Can you refuse contactless cards?

Most banks and credit card companies now issue contactless cards as standard. If you don't want this feature you'll have to request a new card, though there's no guarantee you'll be able to get one.

Many banks are adding a feature to their mobile apps that allows you to turn off the contactless feature, and there's talk that some will offer the ability to lower the upper transaction limit to below £100. ■

The Unusual Suspects

Amazingly, meerkats are the most murderous animals on Earth. Twenty per cent of all meerkats die at the hands of another meerkat

Source: nature.com

On The Money

Andy Webb

Q: My wife has just learned that she is the joint executor of her father's will (along with her twin sister). She has a very strained relationship with her sister and so doesn't want to have to share this responsibility. She is quite elderly herself (her father is approaching 99!) and has said she would rather not have the hassle of the whole thing. Is there any way to opt out of this role without starting the will over from scratch? - Dennis, 76

A: Hi, Dennis. So the good news here is that there's no need to change the entire will. Instead, your father-in-law should instruct a solicitor to add a codicil—an addition or supplement that explains, modifies, or revokes part of a will. This could be to appoint a substitute executor, or just remove your wife and leave your sister-in-law with sole responsibility.



This written document will need to be signed and witnessed, and there will be a cost involved. Until January 2022 it's possible to have wills and codicils witnessed by video if you're not able to see people in person due to coronavirus isolation.

If a codicil isn't possible, then your wife can declare she doesn't want to be involved in the process when her father dies. To do this she will need to fill in a Deed of Renunciation. It's important she doesn't get involved in dealing with the estate in between the death and completing the form. ■

A TASTE OF HOME

MOLLY BAZ

Hot 'n' Crispy Chicken Cutlets with Kimchi Ranch

While I certainly didn't grow up eating kimchi, breaded chicken cutlets made a weekly appearance on our family dinner table. More often than not they were accompanied by a small ramekin of steamed peas, and a plate of buttered egg noodles (truly delish).

These days I prefer to eat my chicken cutlets accompanied by a big, refreshing pile of crunchy kimchi and a generous serving of this kimchi ranch dressing instead,

but the sentiment is more or less the same: chicken cutlets
RULE.



METHOD

Marinate the chicken:

- In a medium bowl, whisk together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup labneh, 3 tablespoons kimchi brine, 1 tablespoon onion powder, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons cayenne pepper.
- Pat 2 chicken breasts dry and slice each in half lengthwise to create 2 thin cutlets. Season the cutlets all over with 2 teaspoons salt and transfer to the marinade, turning to coat. Marinate the chicken at least 15 minutes at room temperature and up to 8 hours in the fridge.

Make the kimchi ranch:

- In a small bowl, whisk together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise, 2 teaspoons onion powder, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup labneh.
- Finely grate 1 garlic clove and zest half of a lemon into the labneh-mayo mixture. Cut the lemon into wedges and set them aside for serving.
- Thinly slice half of the chives and stir them into the ranch. Slice the remaining chives on the bias into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch(ish)-long matchsticks for garnishing later.
- Finely chop $\frac{3}{4}$ cup kimchi and stir it into the ranch. If it looks a little thick, add a splash or two of water until it is swooshable and spreadable. Season with salt.
- Heat the oil: in a large Dutch oven, heat 2 cups neutral oil over medium heat; the oil should be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep. It's ultimately going to need to reach about 200°C , so use a deep-frying thermometer to check from time to time and adjust the heat as needed to maintain that temp. If you don't have a thermometer, throw a few pieces of panko in the oil, and if they



sizzle like crazy, you're in the right ballpark for frying.

Bread the chicken:

- Place 2 cups of panko in a medium bowl.
- Working one at a time, use tongs to dip each cutlet into the panko and use your fingers to press and pack the panko onto the chicken until very well coated. Transfer to a plate.

Fry the chicken:

- Line a rimmed baking sheet or a large plate with paper towels.
 - Once the oil reaches 200°C, working in 2 batches, fry the chicken cutlets until deeply golden brown all over, flipping halfway through, 3 to 5 minutes per side.
 - Transfer the cutlets to the paper-towel-lined baking sheet and season well with salt.
- Transfer the cutlets to a cutting board and slice across the grain (perpendicular to the point of the breast) into ½-inch-thick pieces.

Plate 'em up:

- Spread some kimchi ranch on each plate, add the cutlets and the remaining 1¼ cups kimchi, top with the reserved chives, and serve extra ranch alongside.

INGREDIENTS:

Serves 4

- 1 garlic clove
- 1 lemon
- 1 small bunch chives

DAIRY

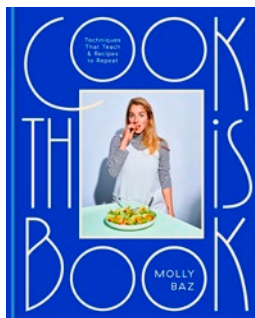
- ¾ cup labneh or plain whole-milk Greek yogurt

MEAT

- 2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts or 4 chicken cutlets (about 2 pounds)

PANTRY

- 2 cups kimchi
- 3 tbsp kimchi brine
- 1 tbsp plus 2 tsp onion powder
- 1¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 cups neutral oil, such as canola, vegetable, or grapeseed
- 2 cups panko bread crumbs



Reprinted from *Cook This Book*. Copyright © 2021 by Molly Baz. Published in the UK by Robinson, Little, Brown, £26



World Kitchen

Lithuania: Šaltibarščiai

(“Cold Borscht”)

A cold, bright-pink-coloured summertime soup might sound like madness but it's in fact an all-time favourite for most Lithuanians, served in virtually every restaurant of this compact but cosy Baltic country. Beetroot—which lends this soup its psychedelic-pink colour—is in season in June, and with the weather outside getting increasingly warmer, what better time to try out this quick, gratifying and refreshingly cooling soup? Traditionally, it's served with a side of boiled or roasted potatoes, but it's equally tasty just on its own

Method:

- 1** Peel the potatoes and chop into bite-sized chunks. Put them in a saucepan of boiling water, add a good pinch of salt and boil until tender. In the meantime, assemble the soup:
- 2** Cut the beetroot and cucumber into short, thin strips.
- 3** Dice the boiled eggs.
- 4** Chop the spring onions into 1cm pieces.
- 5** Pour the kefir into a large bowl and add the chopped ingredients.
- 6** Season with salt to taste.
- 7** Ladle the soup into bowls and sprinkle with the chopped dill.
- 8** Sprinkle the boiled potatoes with some more dill and serve on a side plate.



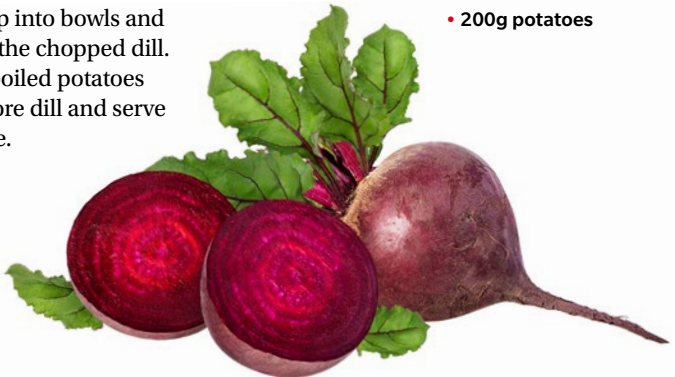
Serves: 6

Ingredients:

- 120g boiled and cooled beetroot
- 100g fresh cucumber
- 6 spring onions
- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 3 pints kefir
- Fresh chopped dill, to garnish
- Salt to taste

For the side dish:

- 200g potatoes



Coasting Along

This quick, easy craft will give you an instant boost

With all of the extra time spent at home lately, I've been dreaming up endless new ways to customise my space—from painted wall accents, to custom shelving. But personalising your home doesn't have to mean a big project; even small, inexpensive things can add a unique touch!

A great example are my woven felt coasters. They can be customised with your favourite colours, and take under an hour to craft a set of four. They're a fun way to add something new and personal to your space, and are guaranteed to make your morning coffee routine a little brighter.

You will need

Ruler

Bulldog clips or pegs

Thick felt in two colours

Waterproof contact adhesive

Fabric scissors or rotary cutter



Mike Aspinall runs one of the UK's most popular craft blogs, The Crafty Gentleman, where he shares free DIY tutorials

How to make it

1. Cut out 10 strips of felt (5 in each colour), each measuring 1.5cm wide by 15cm long.
2. Take five of the same colour strips and lay them next to each other, with a small gap between each one. Weave one of the other colour strips across the middle—go over one, under one, over one, etc.
3. Repeat this weaving process with the remaining strips. However, make sure that you alternate the over/under/over pattern for each adjacent strip. This will begin to build up the woven checkerboard design, and lock the strips together in a lattice.
4. When all 10 felt strips have been woven together, gently slide them all closer together to close any gaps.
5. Trim the ends of the strips, so you have a 2cm excess on all edges.
6. You now need to glue the ends down so it doesn't unravel. For each loose end, alternate between sticking it down and cutting off the excess, or folding the excess underneath and gluing it to the bottom (it may not sound like it, but it will become very obvious which method to use for each strip when you make the coasters).

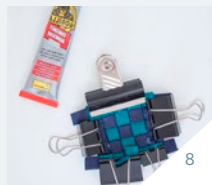
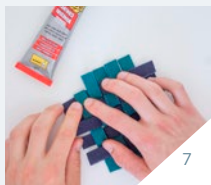
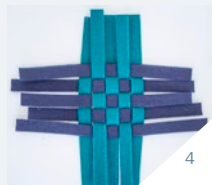
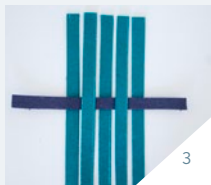
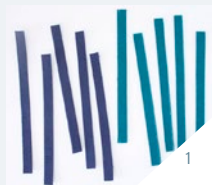
Follow the instructions on your waterproof contact adhesive to ensure the best bond.

7. Once all of the felt has been stuck in place, cut a square of felt to the same size as your coaster. Glue it to the bottom to hide the edges that you folded over earlier.

8. Leave the contact adhesive to dry completely (it's a good idea to put something heavy on top, to hold the coaster together as it dries).

I just love the subtle texture that the woven design introduces, and, because they're made of thick felt, these coasters are incredibly durable and won't deform when wet (essential qualities for coffee lovers).

Once you've made a few coasters, you could also use this technique to make woven felt placemats or a trivet, too. It's such an easy way to add a splash of personality to your home! ■



The Bee In Our Bonnet

Bees are crucial to human survival, but due to climate change, pesticides and habitat destruction, their numbers are in decline. Here's how to help

BEES HAVE BEEN around for over 100 million years, and in that time they've found a niche in almost every part of the globe. There are over 20,000 species of bee, but these wonderfully adaptive insects—who've survived a whole host of changes since they first appeared on our planet—are now under serious threat. With around one-third of bee species in decline, it's a critical time for us to do everything we can to support them.

It's easy to see why the loss of bees would be catastrophic. Bees are part of our planet's delicately balanced ecosystem. If a bee species dies out, the plants and trees that depend on it are affected too; in turn the creatures who feed or live on those plants are affected and so on up the food chain.

While it may seem that we can't do much as individuals, we can certainly work together with others to bring about change. **Friends of the Earth**, **Greenpeace** and other charities are working hard to raise awareness of the problems bees are facing. Supporting these groups is one way of helping bees—through fundraising, membership and signing petitions, or simply following them on social media



and sharing campaign details. Read all you can about bees in your area to see what factors are affecting them locally, and look out for action groups to see if a plan is in place to help. Search for “bee corridor” initiatives and see if you can help with establishing these, or consider supporting beekeeping projects, which give something back to the community as well as bees.

There are also bee projects that businesses can support—by either adopting a hive or sponsoring one—to improve their green credentials. **Bees for Business** have more information on this.

There are plenty of consumer choices you can make that benefit bees: buying your food supplies from local producers, for example, means that you're supporting smaller, less intensively farmed initiatives, which are far better for our pollinators. Some producers who promote pollinator well-being label their items as bee- or pollinator-friendly, so look out for these too. ■

Extract from *The Little Book of Bees*
by Vicki Vrint, Summersdale, £6.99

Expert Q&A:

Kirstie Jamieson, Marketing Director at Rowse Honey

What are the biggest environmental challenges we currently face losing bee populations?

Honey bees are best known for producing delicious honey, but our diets actually depend upon the work that these powerful pollinators do. They are responsible for so many of our favourite foods, bestowing a rainbow of colour, flavour, variety and nourishing goodness onto our plates. A staggering three-quarters of crops that produce food are reliant on pollinators. These miniature heroes have a vital impact on food production and balancing the environment.

What does Rowse do to help our planet? As well as working with our fantastic partners through Rowse Hives for Lives, we're on a mission to help Feed The Bees. Last September, we launched a campaign to encourage the public to grow wild—leaving areas of their gardens to wildlife, and also planting wildflower seeds. We gave away a total of 138,000 seed balls with 11 different types of wildflowers to people across the UK, which would cover the whole of Wembley Stadium!

Wildflowers are full of nectar and pollen, which bees need to be able to pollinate and help our ecosystem thrive.



What changes need to happen to tackle ecocide together?

Everyone has a part to play in helping to protect vital ecosystems. From daily tasks like recycling and reducing food waste, we can all be kinder to our planet. For example, if we all stopped wasting food at home for one day in the UK, it could do the same for the climate as taking 14,000 cars off the road a year. Vital actions like this, and those closer to nature like avoiding the use of harmful pesticides on crops, can make a real difference.

What will happen to us in the future if nothing changes?

Our natural environment is vital for our health and wellbeing, from the air we breathe to the food we eat. Honey bees alone are an extremely important species. They are critical pollinators, so without them, we may lose the plants that they pollinate, the animals that eat those plants, and the fruit and veg that we eat, which of course need pollination to grow. These tiny creatures have such a huge impact on sustaining the global population, so it's extremely important we prioritise looking after them and our general ecosystem. ■

To learn more, visit rowsehoney.co.uk

Play By Your Own Rules

As COVID restrictions lift in Britain, Catherine Summers considers the impact on our wardrobes

COULD IT BE? Are we really free from all lockdowns and restrictions? It's time to celebrate where style is concerned. Jogging bottoms are no longer *de rigeur*. The 15 month-long leisure wear phase will hopefully be over sooner rather than later. We'll now have to dress ourselves for events far more fancy than just taking out the bins or popping to the supermarket.

One thing's for sure: we need to celebrate dressing up again. All those smart or "saved for best" clothes need an airing, an outing, the overdue realisation that they're loved. But do we now need to consider our style choices more carefully—and will we worry about making a fashion faux pas after spending so long in our comfy jim jams at home?



Catherine Summers is an award-winning fashion blogger, posting regularly on her website, notdressedasalamb.com and on her Instagram account, [@NotLamb](https://www.instagram.com/NotLamb)

In my humble opinion, there's no such thing as a "fashion faux pas". I say, "Just wear what you want" (and don't worry about it). Thankfully, following the advent of social media, attitudes have shifted with regards to women and what they wear. It's created an attitude that didn't exist 20 years ago, that is, to forget fashion "rules" and social expectations. It's never been easier to see what regular women all over the country (and the world) are wearing on an everyday basis. We're no longer restricted to being exposed to models or celebrities only—we can take inspiration from anyone, anywhere.

Attitudes on social media can be, however, very different from those of the general population. Social media users often forget that not everyone is online sharing photos of themselves and what they wear every day. Many women aren't aware of the freedom that comes with embracing your own style (whatever it may be) and going against all those outdated fashion rules.

The fear of what others will say about what we're wearing is the



biggest thing that holds some of us back. But consider this: the choices that we make for ourselves (hobbies we enjoy, music we listen to, what we wear, etc.) have, for the most part, absolutely no consequence to those around us. The “what will they think” questions in our head are usually of no importance to our friends and family. If what we do doesn’t have any major impact on their lives, then they’re really—in the nicest way, of course—not that bothered.

Is this why, therefore, some

women shy away from wearing bolder clothes? Or even from dressing smartly, fashionably, classically (in other words, however they want to dress) because they’re afraid of what others might think about them?

The media is partly to blame, but thankfully those outdated “Ten things women should stop wearing after the age of 40” listicles, which create panic about not doing the right thing and being judged, are becoming obsolete and are now often regarded as anti-feminist. ■

Brush It Off

Jenessa Williams scrubs away the layers of ambiguity around body brushes

What Are They?

Body brushes are soft-bristled tools that can be found in most beauty stores, often priced well under £10 and available in various shapes and sizes. A long-handled brush with natural fibres is your best bet if you're going to tackle your whole body.

What Are The Supposed Benefits?

You might be surprised to learn that scrubbing in the shower can actually do more harm than good. When skin is wet with hot water, pores will open and loose dirt will get trapped, actually making it harder to slough away. By brushing when skin is dry, you'll get rid of dead skin cells with ease, allowing moisturiser to sink in much more effectively.

Regular exfoliation is said to help your body retain a tan for longer (natural or fake), as well as prevent ingrown hairs. Claims of its effectiveness on the lymph system are still yet to be scientifically proven, but some people with lipedema or drainage issues have also found that it helps to relieve some of the swelling or sensations of pressure that the condition can cause.

Does It Work?

If you've never body-brushed before, the results might be alarming—it's impressive how much dirt our bodies can hoard! While most of us rely on soap to keep ourselves clean, the removal of surface dirt before you shower will significantly help to smooth your skin and penetrate those stubborn pores, boosting circulation. A good body brush session shouldn't take more than 5-10 minutes, working in circular motions towards the heart.

The key is to go carefully. If your skin is sensitive or prone to flare-ups of eczema or psoriasis, a silk exfoliating glove (such as that by social-media breakout brand No.1 Illume) might be more appropriate.

Body brushing can also help your mind. Much like stroking a pet or having a massage, deliberate, repetitive motions can be great to de-stress. Dim your lights, find yourself some scented candles and brush yourself down—you might be surprised at how much lighter you feel. ■





★★★★☆

MY NEW YORK YEAR

THE CLICK-CLACKING OF old typewriters, huge polka dot blouses, the crinkly rustle of envelopes sliced with a paper knife—there are so many delectable little touches to *My New York Year*. A deliciously nostalgic film set in the 1990s, it follows an old-fashioned literary agency steadfastly resisting the looming tech boom—you can't help but smile upon hearing lines like "I hope this email craze is just a phase" or "computers *make* work rather than alleviate it".

The latter is uttered by the agency's alpha-female boss, Margaret (played by the ever-elegant Sigourney Weaver)—an intimidating woman with a penchant for martinis and cigarettes and no time for

nonsense. One of her core jobs is managing the notoriously reclusive and eccentric writer JD Salinger who, one day, surprises everyone by announcing he wants to publish his first book in decades. We watch all of this unravel through the eyes of the peppy Joanna (Margaret Qualley known for her breakthrough in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*)—a recent graduate and aspiring poet who takes on a clerical job at the agency and makes a peculiar connection with Salinger. While not without its grating fantasy sequences and some clumsy acting, *My New York Year* is ultimately a warm, feel-good movie that'll delight literature and the Big Apple lovers alike.

By Eva Mackevic

Further viewing...

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA (2006)

FOR SOME MORE frothy entertainment in its purest form, why not revisit this 2006 cult classic that we still can't get enough of? Following the similar trajectory of a young *ingénue* landing a prestigious job in New York and working for an impossible boss, *The Devil Wears Prada* features career-making performances, clothes to die for and dialogue that remains an internet GIF and meme goldmine many years later.

Let's start with the performances. The "devil" in question, is Miranda Priestly—the editor of an iconic fashion magazine *Runway*, whose character was clearly inspired by the notorious editor of *Vogue*, Anna Wintour. She's played here by the unflappable Meryl Streep with her blood-chilling whispery diction and cutting insults ("Florals? For Spring? Groundbreaking.")—a performance that earned her an Oscar nomination. Anne Hathaway is her new assistant Andy—an ambitious young woman with little interest in fashion but lofty ideas about a career in journalism. Stanley Tucci and Emily Blunt also shine in their colourful supporting performances peppered with excellent one-liners and even a bit of slapstick.



Then there are the outfits. One of the most expensively costumed films in history, *The Devil Wears Prada* is an agony of Gucci, Versace, de la Renta and, of course, Prada. Outrageous necklaces, chic high heels, head-turning dresses and quintessentially early-Noughties hats are on constant display, making you want to burn through your credit card on some online shopping sites.

It's a film that left a lasting mark on both the fashion and entertainment industries: it's been referenced in every show from *The Simpsons* to *The Office*, and Anna Wintour's popularity skyrocketed after the release, turning her into a cultural icon.

by Eva Mackevic

SOMETIMES THE MOST fun TV comes from TV mocking itself, and there's plenty of that about this month. To plug a post-COVID programming gap, Fox is offering a belated UK rerun to *The Grinder* (Fox; NOW TV), a 2015 sitcom with a solid-gold premise: the former star of a slick legal drama (Rob Lowe) moves in with his brother (Fred Savage), an actual lawyer. Cue relentless razzing of procedural clichés, and Lowe again proving what a precise comic actor he is; even his over-waxed hair amuses. It's a one-series wonder—canned after 22 episodes by mirthless suits—so enjoy while you can.

The second spinoff from 2014's *What We Do in the Shadows*—following the sitcom of that name (itself streaming via iPlayer)—the agreeably daft *Wellington Paranormal* (Sky Comedy; NOW TV) redoes *The X-Files* as *Police Camera Action*-style fly-on-the-wall. Here, we're

following Mike Minogue and Karen O'Leary—the suburban coppers who proved clueless around the film's bloodsucking—as they blunder into further spookiness: crop circles, cows stuck up trees, sentient fatbergs. Sample dialogue: “I know a lot about the walking dead.” “How?” “By watching *The Walking Dead*.” (It hardly helps.)

Finally, a second run confirms *Mythic Quest* (Apple TV+) as an early contender for sitcom of the decade. Why has a show centred on the gaming industry engaged even non-gamers like me? Partly it's the writing, waspishly funny yet sincerely sweet, but it's also sharp-eyed indeed on wider shifts in workplace culture. Between two poignant standalone episodes, the new season even generates inspired comedy from the fact F Murray Abraham (as veteran yarnspinner CW Longbottom) spent some of shooting in self-isolation. Typical gamers—they can't stop problem-solving.

by Mike McCahill



Retro Pick:

It's Always Sunny in

Philadelphia S1-14 (Netflix)

Team *Mythic Quest*'s ongoing side-project: an ever-risky, oft-hilarious morality play with a peerless ensemble—not least Danny DeVito as the world's worst human.

Album Of The Month:

The Proposal OST by T. Griffin

MUSIC AND EMOTION are intrinsically linked to one another in the human brain so it's no surprise, then, that what often contributes to the greatness of a film is a well-planned soundtrack which can elevate the emotional weight of what we see on the screen. Such is the case with T. Griffin's atmospheric, textured score to *The Proposal*—an art-world docudrama about the legacy of Mexican architect Luis Barragán, which raises questions of intellectual property, appropriation and obsession. T. Griffin, who's been creating film music for some 20 years now, mirrors these themes via smooth-flowing peaks and valleys of ominous electronica, gentle Spanish guitar and nods to the timeless sounds of Celtic music.

He also has a penchant for breaking into unexpected drum patterns that shoot out of tracks like a battle cry, eliciting an almost primal fight or flight response in your gut.

Though closely linked to the film text, T. Griffin's soundtrack works exquisitely well as a standalone album with the power to conjure up beautiful imagery in your mind and set your imagination on fire.

The Proposal is out on June 11 via Constellation

by Eva Mackevic



The Year In Film Scores

Though the 2021 Oscars are now done and dusted, it's certainly not too late to check out these sublime soundtracks which were nominated for Best Music

Soul

A joint effort between the Nine Inch Nails duo, Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross as well as Jon Batiste, the score to the uplifting Pixar feature *Soul* was the 2021 winner of the Best Music category

Da 5 Bloods

Spike Lee's war drama starring the late Chadwick Boseman was scored by none other than the acclaimed trumpeter Terence Blanchard, with loads of references to the 1970s like Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On?*

Minari

This moving drama that took the world by storm features the music by Emile Mosseri who had previously garnered widespread acclaim for his soundtrack to TV hit, *Homecoming*

The News of the World

Award-winning composer James Newton Howard took an unusually minimalist approach to scoring this Western starring Tom Hanks as a Civil War veteran

June Fiction

A masterfully crafted central character is the key to the appeal of June's fiction pick

Sorrow and Bliss

Meg Mason

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.99

MARTHA RUSSELL, the narrator of Meg Mason's blisteringly good new novel, is funny, clever, fundamentally kind and much-loved by her husband Patrick. But she also suffers from a severe mental illness that began on the morning of her French A Level when "a little bomb went off in my brain". Ever since, she's had debilitating bouts of depression and an overall sense that she finds it "more difficult to be alive than other people". And as time goes on, what she once regarded as Patrick's charming quirks become sources of deep irritation: a process not unknown in relationships, of course—but which, in her case,



causes her to hurl wild insults and heavy objects at him.

However sorry you feel for her, then, Martha shouldn't be much fun to be around, either for the other characters or the reader. Yet, while we're left in doubt as to how infuriating she can be—including to herself—the book does a miraculously effective job of never letting us lose sight of her inherent likeability. No matter how bad things get, she remains ruefully witty and heartbreakingly self-aware (basically, she knows when she's being unreasonable, but can't reason herself out of it).



James Walton is a book reviewer and broadcaster, and has written and presented 17 series of the BBC Radio 4 literary quiz *The Write Stuff*

She's also aware of how lucky she is to have such supportive people around her. Granted, she doesn't get much help from her mother: a bohemian (ie, drunk) sculptor. But Patrick, her dad Fergus and her sister Imogen continue to stand by her—and not simply out of duty or sympathy. Like the reader, they can't help enjoying her company. The scene-stealing Imogen in particular is a terrific character, wisecracking her way through the travails of having four very young children and advising Martha that marriage is “just a question of toughing out the next 40 years”.

The result is a novel that manages to be psychologically complex, yet still an utter joy to read. *Sorrow and Bliss* bristles with great one-liners and set-pieces that are sometimes alarming, sometimes comic, but more often both. Naturally, the publishers are making comparisons to *Fleabag*—but for once, this feels wholly justified, as Mason keeps us endlessly entertained without ever playing down Martha's pain.

Name the author

Can you guess the writer from these clues (the fewer you need the better)?

1. She started out as an actress, including in the TV series *Rentaghost*.
2. Her first big writing success was the TV series *Widows*.
3. Her most famous creation is DCI Jane Tennison.

Paperbacks

Life's What You Make It

Phillip Schofield

(Michael Joseph, £8.99). The TV presenter looks back on his long career. He also writes with touching honesty about his more recent realisation that he's a gay man.

Dead to Her

Sarah Pinborough

(HarperFiction, £8.99). Pinborough's *Behind Her Eyes* was turned into a huge Netflix hit earlier this year. Her latest is another sharply twisting thriller.

Broken Greek

Pete Paphides

(Quercus, £9.99). Lovely memoir of growing up in 1970s Birmingham as the shy child of Cypriot chip-shop owners—and discovering pop music.

And Now You're Back

Jill Mansell

(Headline Review, £8.99). An old love inconveniently returns just as the heroine is about to be married in this hard-to-resist romantic heart-warmer from the ever-popular Mansell.

Jo Cox

Brendan Cox

(Two Roads, £8.99). The husband of the murdered MP on their life together, and his since she died. A powerfully fitting tribute.

READER'S DIGEST RECOMMENDED READ:

The Beautiful Game

Dreams come true in a memoir from the "voice of football"



MANY BOYS, OF COURSE, dream of becoming footballers. The young Clive Tyldesley, though, wasn't one of them.

According to his thoughtful, often funny and above all heartfelt new book, the only thing he ever wanted to be was a football commentator.

Well, as we know, this was one boyhood dream that came true. Clive began his career in local radio, before moving to television, where he was made ITV's chief football commentator after Brian Moore's retirement in 1998. He held the post until last year when, to his clear but not over-dwelt-on distress, he was informed by a Zoom call that ITV was "refreshing" him out of a job.

One of Clive's justified bugbears is the kind of commentator whose commentary essentially translates as "Look at me!"—something he himself manages to avoid even in his autobiography. We do get occasional glimpses of his private life, but the focus is firmly on football. As well as revealing plenty of secrets of the commentator's

trade, Clive makes the most of his four-decade ringside seat to show us how much the game has changed since the days when players could reliably be found at the local working men's club having a pint, a fag and a game of snooker.

He also gives us plenty of great first-hand stories about pretty much everyone who's been anyone in football during that time: from Kenny Dalglish personally consoling the bereaved after Hillsborough to what it's like to be on the receiving end of a tirade from Alex Ferguson (not much fun, apparently). He writes unsparingly, but with obvious sadness, about Brian Clough's decline into alcoholism in his later years at Nottingham Forest.

Here, however, is Clough in happier—if perhaps no less intimidating—form back when Clive was a just rookie reporter at Radio Trent...

“ It was 21 August 1976. My 22nd birthday, the opening day of the new league season. Forest's first fixture was at Fulham and I had been granted permission to travel with the club party by train to London. Departure was at 9.30. I was at Nottingham Midland station by 8.45.

It was a sun-kissed morning but I was formally dressed in a double-breasted blazer, grey pleated 'slacks' and shiny black shoes. The jacket was even a similar shade of blue to

the club's own. My carefully-chosen wardrobe was set off by a Persil-white button-down shirt. I looked ready for a golf club prize giving.

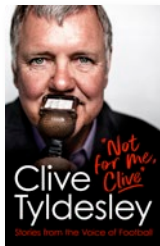
I was first to take my seat in one of the club's two allocated private coaches... by about 20 minutes.

When Brian arrived, he breezed past me with a boisterous 'good morning, young man' before checking his stride and returning to the table I was now sharing with a trusted friend, John Lawson of the Evening Post. The manager's two hands came to rest on the table as he leant over me and took an exasperated breath before delivering his sermon.

'Young man, you're very welcome to travel with the Nottingham Forest official party, but when you do, we expect you to wear a tie, understood?'

'I'm sorry, Mr Clough. I didn't know.'
First black mark of the day gathered in record time. I put on my stern, sad face and waited for the manager to move on to the more

Not for Me, Clive:
Stories from the
Voice of Football
by Clive
Tyldesley
is published by
Headline at £20



important matters of the day in the next coach. He didn't.

'Young man, you are very welcome to travel with the Nottingham Forest official party, but when you do, we do expect you to wear a tie,' he repeated pointedly without moving an inch.

'I'm really sorry. I've got money, I'll buy a tie as soon as we get to London. It won't happen again.' I was now blushing, throbbing, sinking, gulping and a few other '-ings' besides. Brian wasn't going anywhere.

'Young man, as I've already said, you are most welcome to travel with the Nottingham Forest official party, but when you do, you... wear... a... tie.' And with the delivery of the final wailing word, a crumpled pound note suddenly appeared on the table and Brian turned and walked on.

'Train leaves in 15 minutes,' he added as if making a platform announcement. I spent the next 13 of those 15 minutes, sprinting out of the station and rushing down towards Canal Street where, momentarily, a gents' outfitters was just opening for business. An instant purchase was completed and I put on the burners back up the hill to the station entrance above which the giant clock was almost audibly ticking towards half past. I was in my seat, tie in place, a good two minutes before the whistle blew for the train to roll south. ”

Haunted: More from *Not For Me, Clive*

"Nearly every obituary I read of the broadcast icon that was Brian Moore referred to the moment he unadvisedly put Kevin Keegan on the spot during an England penalty shootout. It was about the only mistake of a marvellous 37-year career that anyone can remember.

That fleeting moment when he lost his impeccable judgement and asked Keegan if he thought David Batty would score lived with Brian for ages. It tortured him. He re-ran it over and over in his mind. He felt worse for Kevin than he did for himself.

We know that we are only commentators. Nobody dies when we cock up. If the nation guffaws then that is a tiny price to pay for doing a job that was once a magic castle in the air for most of us. Just try to refrain from asking us at a charity event what our worst mistake has been. Our charity might just run out there and then. It's our job. We take it seriously. We are haunted by our mistakes."

And the name of the author is...

Lynda La Plante (who claims her acting career was mostly spent playing prostitutes). Jane Tennison is the main character in *Prime Suspect*, and the latest of La Plante's many novels is *Judas Horse*.



Books

THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Axel Scheffler is an award-winning illustrator, best known for his work on children's books. *Pip and Posy*, based on picture books illustrated by Axel, goes out on Channel 5's Milkshake! and Sky Kids On Demand



Petzi auf der Robinson Insel by Carla Hansen

Illustrated by Vilh Hansen, this is one of a series of books that I loved as a child growing up in Hamburg in the Sixties. I seem to remember getting them sometimes after unpleasant visits to the dentist! The *Petzi* books described the adventures of a little bear, who wore spotted dungarees and was fond of pancakes, and his exploration of the world together with his friends, a pelican, a penguin and a seal. I think they may have influenced my way of seeing the world as I still prefer to draw animals with clothes! There were also two little characters, a frog and a tortoise, having little extra adventures on the side, which I loved.



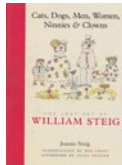
I Am Papa Snap and These Are My Favourite No Such Stories written and illustrated by Tomi Ungerer

When I was teenager I discovered cartoonists and illustrators like

Edward Gorey, Sempé and Bosc, but most of all I loved the art of Tomi Ungerer. A French artist with strong political views—anti-war, anti-racist, anti-nationalist—Ungerer covered a wide range of styles and subjects, from satirical drawings to picture books. He was a passionate European, born in an area where German and French cultural influences met. I think he was probably the strongest influence on my own work as an illustrator. His sense of humour, his love for details and the absurd, and the world he creates in his drawings, all apparent in *Papa Snap*, I found very appealing.

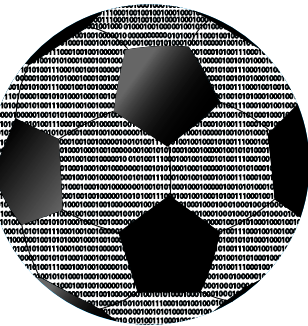
Cats, Dogs, Men, Women, Ninnies & Clowns: The Lost Art of William Steig by Jeanne Steig

When I discovered the work of William Steig I was already working as an illustrator. He worked as a cartoonist for *The New Yorker* all his life and came to writing and illustrating children's books when he was in his sixties. I love his picture books: *Solomon the Rusty Nail*, *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble*, *Gorky Rises*. The wackiness of his stories and the warmth and emotional precision of his illustrations never fails to touch me. This book is slightly different as it was published posthumously and contains about 400 unpublished drawings.



How AI Plays Ball

This month, James O'Malley gives us the lowdown on the tech that's fuelling football



IN A WORLD as complicated as ours, what could be purer and more wholesome than a good, old-fashioned game of football? When Euro 2020 finally kicks off this month, we can put aside the spreadsheets, mute the email notifications and power down our laptops to enjoy the simple pleasure of watching 22 men kick a rubber ball filled with air around a field, just as we have done for generations.

At least, that's how we might like to imagine it. But the reality is that the world of football is today just as much about technology and data as everything else that we do. And I'm not just talking about VAR (Virtual Assistant Referees).

Today, having good quality data is an essential part of managing a top-flight sports team, and collecting that data is big business. Specialist sports data companies like Stats Perform exist to collect and analyse every pass, volley and shot to help teams, broadcasters and bookies all make

better sense of the action on the pitch.

Have you ever watched a football match and wondered how they can flash up on a screen so quickly which team has had more possession or taken the most shots at goal? For every football match, Stats Perform have a team of three watching live—one person monitoring each team, and one to check—and recording every “on ball event” into a database.

The company also uses artificial intelligence and machine learning technology to analyse video footage of games, to calculate the precise locations of players, and the trajectory of the ball.

Even training sessions have been transformed into data-points, as teams have their players wear sensors to track them around the pitch, as well as health data like heart rates—with all of the data sent in real time to iPads for coaches to analyse.

But collecting data is only useful if you actually do something with it. So what sorts of insights can coaches make use of? One now common

data-insight is the “expected goals” metric, which is a measure of how individual players and teams are performing compared to how data suggests they should perform. The problem with rating players without data is that not all shots towards the goal are created equal: some are

COMPARING ONE **TYPE OF GOAL** TO OTHERS IS LIKE COMPARING APPLES TO ORANGES

the result of a player in a deserted penalty box, with just the goalkeeper to contend with. Others are headers of the ball from an incoming corner, and so on. Comparing one type of goal to others is like comparing apples to oranges.

So instead “Expected Goals” uses data from 300,000 previous goals that have all been categorised and calculated to work out the statistical probability that a shot taken from any given position and in any specific circumstances might go in the goalposts.

And this is used to benchmark a player’s performance, enabling apples to be compared with apples. If the player is successfully scoring more goals than they would be statistically expected to, then they are over-performing, and if they are scoring

less... maybe the manager should start thinking about the transfer window.

This isn’t a joke. One of the best uses for this sort of data isn’t just monitoring the performance of your current players, but for figuring out who to pick in the first place. It’s an approach that was first pioneered in 2002 by middling baseball team Oakland Athletics.

The team couldn’t afford to shell out for the best, most expensive players, but they realised that by looking carefully at the data, they could identify cheaper players who could bring the most value to the team, or whose individual attributes could collectively add up to something more formidable than its parts.

For example, the data revealed that it was less important to focus on the players who can slug flashy home runs and more important to have players who can reliably get to the bases without getting out. So in using this approach to optimise the team, Oakland were able to go all the way to the play-offs. Luckily, Gareth Southgate doesn’t have to worry about money. But he does have to worry about picking the players who can best perform for England. So perhaps winning the tournament will not depend on whether he can give a suitably inspiring half-time speech when we’re two-nil down to Germany, but on whether he and his team have spent enough time hunched over their laptops. ■

You Couldn't Make It Up

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When I was around six, I used to attend mass with my family every Sunday. Once, I got very confused and I said to my mum, "Well, I understand there's Jesus and God the Father and the Holy Spirit but who is this Peter God?"

My mother looked at my quizzically: "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, at the end of the mass, we say, 'Thanks Peter God.'"

"I think you mean, 'Thanks be to God,'" said my mother with a sympathetic smile.

STEVE GILDERT, *Cheshire*

When I played games with my son

Luke, aged seven, I used to let him win. But then I decided he should learn that in life things don't always go your way. So I won the next game. This clearly bothered him.

In the supermarket later that day he said in a loud voice while in a

long queue to the cashier, "Don't beat me again, Mummy. I don't like it." I got some very suspicious looks!

AVA JACOBS, *Frodsham*

I read out the results of a survey

to my husband, Neil, about who uses the most words in a day: a woman or a man. The outcome was that a woman uses 28,000 to a man's 14,000. I added that it was probably because women always have to repeat themselves because men don't listen.

Neil turned round and said, "What?"

LOIS JONES, *Ruthin*

I thought my children were fussy

about food but last Halloween I took my nephew round with me for trick or treating. When someone handed him a bowl with sweets to take his pick, he would inspect them and if he didn't care for what sweets there



"JOHN, DON'T FORGET THE MASK!"

were, he would look up and say, "No, thank you," and then march onto the next house!

CORRINA WILLIAMS, *Denbigshire*

On the odd occasion my partner

Lee makes his own sandwiches for work. The other day I got the bread, butter and peanut butter out along with two knives. When he decided to take over, he asked why I had got two knives out. I explained it's so that I don't get peanut butter in the butter and vice versa. "Oh," he replied, "I usually use one knife and then lick it each time."

JANE WHITAKER, *Kent*

I promised myself a tattoo for my 50th birthday. I chose two beautiful fish leaping from the sea. After the first fish, it had hurt so much that I had to call a halt. I was really lucky that the tattoo artist decided to start

with the fish. I can't imagine how I would be able to explain the splodgy blue puddle on my shoulder blade.

SUSAN KENNEDY, *North Ayrshire*

Our son's friend's dad telephoned our house and asked to speak to his 11-year-old son who was over to play. "Hello, Dad," said his son.

"I want you to come home AT ONCE," we could hear his dad say, "I need help with your homework!"

MICHA BRYN, *Liverpool*

Once, at a restaurant, I decided to tell our waiter off because the starter I had ordered was terrible: limp lettuce and watery sauce with very few prawns.

"This prawn cocktail is really awful," I complained.

"I agree," he said, "I'd never order that here either."

PIA AINSWORTH, *Manchester*

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

This month marks the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, the monumental English charter that set a precedent for civil liberties. Want to enhance your political vocabulary? Start here!

BY ROB LUTES

1. convene—A: assert rights. B: meet together. C: subscribe to an ideology.

2. inalienable—A: unwaveringly loyal. B: irrefutable. C: impossible to give or take away.

3. utilitarianism—A: the belief that a good action is one that helps the most people. B: public discourse impedes governance. C: informed citizens elect better leaders.

4. filibuster—A: lengthy speech to prevent legislative action. B: release of prisoners. C: campaign for office.

5. ombudsperson—A: person who changes their political affiliations. B: person who investigates complaints against authorities. C: pundit.

6. laissez-faire—A: doctrine that government should not interfere in the market. B: forbid peaceful protest. C: fight drugs.

7. social contract—A: agreement to run for office. B: between the people and the state to co-operate for social benefit. C: to sell a vote.

8. militia—A: weapons stockpile.

B: battle. C: civilian military force.

9. due process—A: established course for legal proceedings. B: an election campaign. C: graduated system for granting rights to new citizens.

10. libertarianism—A: advocacy of freedom. B: language designed to inspire upheaval. C: the belief that certain groups should have greater freedoms.

11. remonstrance—A: runoff election. B: apology from a leader. C: protest or complaint.

12. impeach—A: charge with misconduct while in office. B: exile. C: praise a political opponent.

13. devolution—A: internal squabbling. B: central government giving power to local groups. C: move from democracy to authoritarianism.

14. enfranchise—A: lobby politicians. B: grant the right to vote. C: publicise a new political idea.

15. ratify—A: insult a monarch. B: meet in secret. C: make official.

ANSWERS

- 1. convene**—[B] meet together. The American representatives *convened* every spring to debate bills.
- 2. inalienable**—[C] impossible to give or take away. Cecil believed he had an *inalienable* right to hunt.
- 3. utilitarianism**—[A] belief that a good action is one that helps the most people. A firm believer in *utilitarianism*, Prime Minister Belotti governed by the numbers.
- 4. filibuster**—[A] lengthy speech to prevent legislative action. Clocking in at three hours, MP Andrew Dismore's 2013 *filibuster* was the longest in England's history.
- 5. ombudsperson**—[B] person who investigates complaints against authorities. The *ombudsperson* cited 35 incidents of improper spending.
- 6. laissez-faire**—[A] doctrine that government should not interfere in the markets. The government took a *laissez-faire* stance, allowing the tourism industry to self-regulate.
- 7. social contract**—[B] agreement between the people and the state to co-operate for social benefit. The tribal chief's authority is based on an unwritten *social contract*.
- 8. militia**—[C] civilian military force. A *militia* of farmers and miners held off the invaders.
- 9. due process**—[A] established course for legal proceedings. Having decided Audrée was guilty from the beginning, many villagers advocated abandoning *due process*.
- 10. libertarianism**—[A] advocacy of freedom. The columnist invoked *libertarianism* in arguing that sex work should be legalised.
- 11. remonstrance**—[C] protest or complaint. Following the citizen group's *remonstrance*, the government agreed to taxation reform.
- 12. impeach**—[A] charge with misconduct while in office. The story seemed to have been made up in an effort to *impeach* the president.
- 13. devolution**—[B] central government giving power to local groups. The President showed his commitment to *devolution* by moving all of the government offices out of the capital city.
- 14. enfranchise**—[B] grant the right to vote. The NGO's goal was to *enfranchise* every adult citizen.
- 15. ratify**—[C] make official. The minister promised to *ratify* the bill as soon as it crossed her desk.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

7-10: fair

11-12: good

13-15: excellent

Reader's
digest

DIGESTED

TUNE INTO OUR PODCAST

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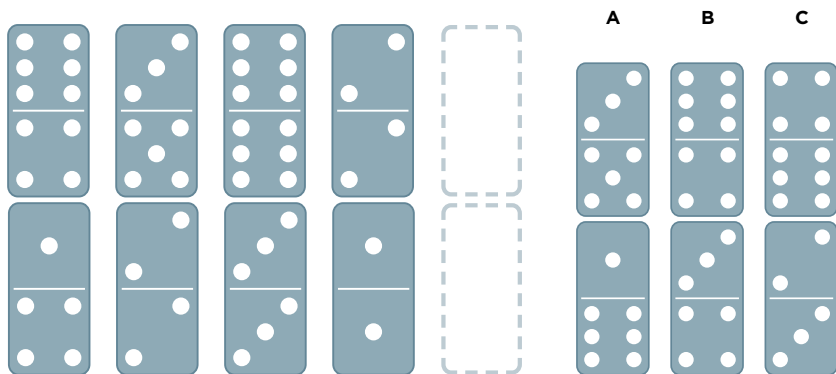


Brain teasers

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles,
then check your answers on p139

The complete set

In each column there are two dominoes. Each of these pairs obeys a certain rule, so that together they make a set. Among the options below, which other pair of dominoes belongs to this set?



Cryptic equations

Each letter in these equations stands for one of the seven numbers listed below. No two letters have the same numeric value. Match each letter to a number to make the equations work.

2 4 5 6 7 8 11

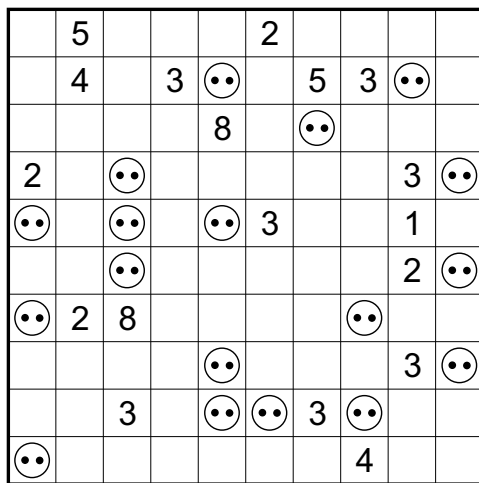
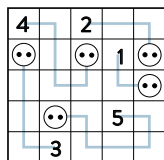
$$\begin{aligned}
 C + L &= Z \\
 Z - H &= E \\
 A \times H &= Q \\
 Q - A &= H
 \end{aligned}$$

Contact

HOW TO PLAY:

Draw a line from each number to an outlet. Each line should pass as many empty squares as the number indicates. No square remains empty, and no outlet remains unused.

EXAMPLE:



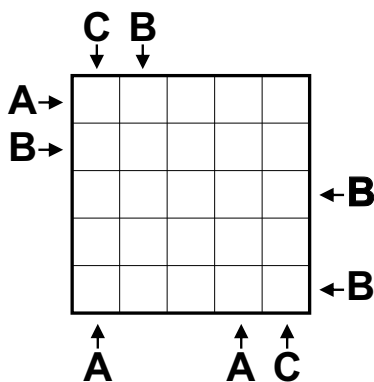
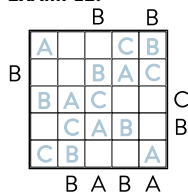
ABC

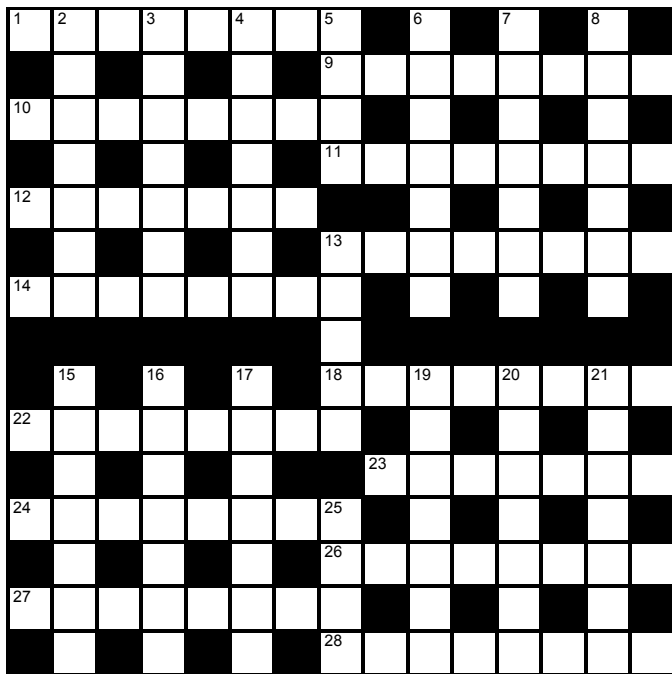
HOW TO PLAY:

Enter in each row and column the letters A, B and C in such a way that no row or column contains the same letter twice.

The letters outside the grid indicate what letter is encountered first from the direction of the arrow.

EXAMPLE:



**CROSSWISE**

Test your general knowledge. Answers on p142

ACROSS

- 1 Fabric (8)
 9 Longing (8)
 10 Merchant (8)
 11 Imagine (8)
 12 Candidate (7)
 13 Precarious (8)
 14 Turns around (8)
 18 Exceptionally tense (8)
 22 Portuguese jellyfish (3-2-3)
 23 Austere (7)
 24 Hallway (8)
 26 The world of schools and universities (8)
 27 Its capital is Little Rock (8)
 28 Locate exactly (8)

DOWN

- 2 Breathtaking (7)
 3 Vague (7)
 4 Ailment (7)
 5 Small harp-like musical instrument (4)
 6 The gathering of crops (7)
 7 Uncommon (7)
 8 Cuddle (7)
 13 Doorkeeper (5)
 15 Stonework (7)
 16 Portal (7)
 17 Like Abba (7)
 19 Make clear (7)
 20 Underwater missile (7)
 21 Inhabitant of, eg, Tehran (7)
 25 Coarse file (4)

BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

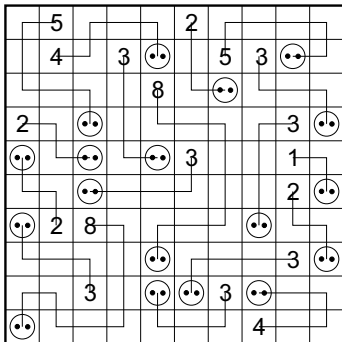
THE COMPLETE SET

C. In each pair, if you add the dots in the bottom domino and then multiply this sum by two, you'll produce the total number of the dots in the top domino. For example, in the first pair, the bottom domino has five dots in total, and the top one has twice as many—that is, 10 dots.

CRYPTIC EQUATIONS

A = 2 H = 4 C = 5 L = 6

Contact



ABC

		A	C	B
	B	C		A
C	A		B	
B			A	C
A	C	B		

£50 PRIZE QUESTION

THE MISSING LINK

What number is missing from the square?

2	3	5	2
1	0	2	9
6	3	?	0
3	6	2	1

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ANSWER TO MAY'S PRIZE QUESTION

TRIANGLES
31

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LUCY PESARO, *Middlesex*

Laugh!

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or facebook.com/readersdigestuk

I'm delighted to announce that I've just won a "Drinking Milk Like a Cat" competition! Just doing my lap of honour.

Seen on Twitter

They should name those tags that they put around babies' wrists in the maternity ward "The Born Identity".

Comedian OLAF FALAFEL

I still can't believe that I ran into the man who invented the globe. It's a small world.

Seen on Twitter

I recently passed the house I grew up in while driving, so I stopped and asked if I could go in to look around. The owners said no and slammed

the door on me. Parents can be so rude!

LUKE HAMMETT, Cheshire

Imagine how offended whales would be if they found out that we listen to their conversations to help us fall asleep.

Seen on Twitter

RIP to boiling water. You will be mist.

Seen on Facebook

Despite my very best efforts, I'm still a terrible ventriloquist, and I say that through gritted teeth.

Comedian GARY DELANEY

A "onesie" is a selfie taken by the Queen.

Seen on Twitter

I watched a documentary about how ships are kept together last night.

RIVETING!

Stewart Francis



This week I got paid £15 writing comedy. Whoever said you can't make a living through comedy had clearly never heard of instant noodles.

Comedian RONNY PASCALE

Grace in the Church of England is extremely English in its passive aggression: "For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful."

You might as well be saying, "Thanks Debbie, for the absolute slop you've served up. It will take divine intervention to be grateful for the awful English cooking you have provided."

Comedian JAMES DONALD

I really hate metaphors, I can never relate to them. Like, "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater." In no way does that make sense to me. I mean, I don't even have a baby. At least not since the bathwater incident...

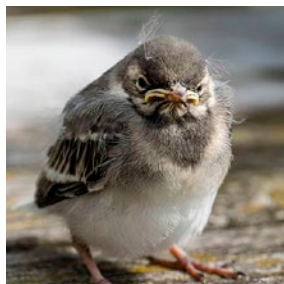
Comedian JOE CHRISTIANSON



Angry Birds

THESE HILARIOUS BIRDS
HAVE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS
OF PERPETUAL
JUDGEMENT

[via sadanduseless.com](http://via.sadanduseless.com)



People said I would never make it as an autocue operator, but when I finally did, I left them speechless.

Comedian GARY DELANEY

How do governments know how many census forms they should send out?

Comedian MILTON JONES

The Pope arrives at the airport very early for his flight. While he waits, he asks his driver if he can drive around for a while since they have time to kill and he hasn't driven a car since becoming Pope.

Naturally, his Holiness is a bit rusty, so he's driving poorly, when suddenly he sees police lights behind him. He pulls over and when the officer comes up to the window his eyes go wide. He says to the Pope, "Hold on for a minute," and goes back to his car to radio the chief.

"Chief we have a situation. I've pulled over an important figure."

"How important? A politician or something?"

"No, Sir. He's bigger."

"A celebrity? A major politician?"

"No Sir, he's much more important."

"Well *who* is it then?"

"Well actually I'm not sure, but he must be a big deal—the Pope's his driver."

Seen online

Freaky Fridays

Twitter users share some of their strange superstitions

@TiffShall: My mum has to eat Gummy Bear heads first, so they don't feel the pain when you eat the rest of them.

@MikeCheq123: When I was little I noticed that movie vampires only ever bit their victims on the right side of their neck. I didn't sleep on my left side until I was 30. Just in case.

@AbbyTribble: When at a large staff meeting, event or any occasion that involves a round of applause, I always get the last clap. If I have to I will keep going. Don't test me. You will lose.

@Donnetta_W: I keep a broom by the door because I was told the ghosts will have to stop to count the broom straws and forget why they were coming to haunt us.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across: 1 Material, 9 Yearning, 10 Retailer, 11 Envisage, 12 Nominee, 13 Unstable, 14 Reverses, 18 Electric, 22 Man-of-war, 23 Spartan, 24 Corridor, 26 Academia, 27 Arkansas, 28 Pinpoint

Down: 2 Awesome, 3 Evasive, 4 Illness, 5 Lyre, 6 Harvest, 7 Unusual, 8 Snuggle, 13 Usher, 15 Masonry, 16 Doorway, 17 Swedish, 19 Explain, 20 Torpedo, 21 Iranian, 25 Rasp

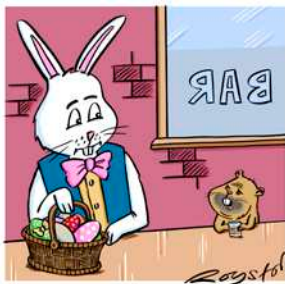
Beat the Cartoonist!



Think of a witty caption for this cartoon—the three best suggestions, along with the cartoonist's original, will be posted on our website in mid-June. If your entry gets the most votes, you'll win **£50**.

Submit to captions@readersdigest.co.uk by JUNE 7. We'll announce the winner in our July issue.

APRIL WINNER



Our cartoonist's caption, "**Easter Bunny, huh? Enjoy it while it lasts. I guess no one remembers the Harvest Festival Hamster**" failed to beat our reader Davina J Maric, who won the vote with her caption, "**Mate, I told you, it's not good to keep all your eggs in one basket.**" Congrats Davina!

IN THE JULY ISSUE



Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen

I REMEMBER...

British TV star and "homestyle consultant" looks back on his life and career



WE CURED COVID: WHAT'S NEXT?

Scientists developed vaccines for coronavirus in record time. So what's stopping us curing other diseases?

+

MADS MIKKELSEN

We sat down with the Danish actor to talk about his latest project, *Another Round*

GOOD NEWS

FROM AROUND
THE WORLD

Felix Böck gets
creative with
diverted waste



A SECOND LIFE FOR CHOPSTICKS

Eating sushi with his girlfriend one day in 2016, Felix Böck realised he was holding an underused resource in his hands. The carpenter and engineer, then 27, had come to Canada from a small village in the German Alps to study sustainable construction materials at the University of British Columbia. At the hundreds of sushi restaurants in Vancouver, chopsticks and other wooden utensils were being used once and thrown out—more than 100,000 every day, according to a 2018 study by *Metro Vancouver*. Most had been used for an average of 20 minutes before going to landfills.

Thus ChopValue was born. Böck's start-up recycles used wooden chopsticks and transforms them into

premium household objects, from cheeseboards to bookshelves. The company makes about 30 such items, as well as other custom projects, each utilising chopsticks (a charcuterie board uses 900 of them). So far, ChopValue has repurposed almost 33 million chopsticks.

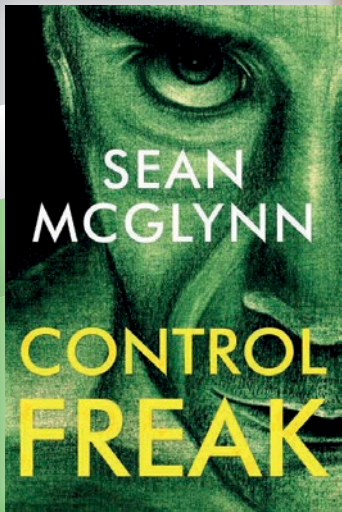
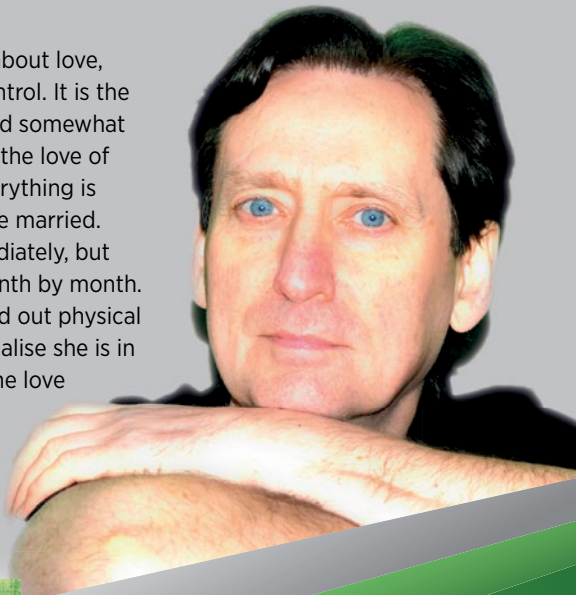
The company's innovations don't end there: its products are manufactured in "microfactories"—franchises with workers (five to seven on average) who collect chopsticks from restaurants and produce items that can be sold by local retailers.

"We're trying to scale our idea in the most sustainable way," Böck says. "We're onto something great here, something inspiring."



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THE AUTHOR

Sean McGlynn is a retired solicitor/lawyer from, and living in, Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland. He is married to Catherine for over forty years and is a father, and grandfather. As a solicitor he ran his own practice from 1990 to 2011. During that time he has dealt with many legal issues, including the abuse of women by their partners. One victim, sadly, did not survive. 'Control Freak' is his first novel based on his experiences.

 facebook.com/sean.mcglynn.752

'Control Freak' is available in paperback and e-book from Amazon.co.uk, paperback available from Waterstones, W.H. Smith, Foyles.co.uk, Brownsbfs.co.uk or directly from Pegasuspublishers.com from £8.99.

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