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Reader's digest



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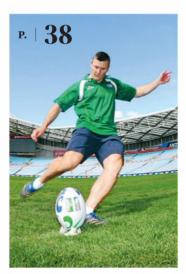
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Letters

READERS' COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

When Doctors Say Sorry

It really does make a difference for doctors to admit they have made a mistake ('That's an Awful Idea!', October), Lsuffered a shattered forehead and broke two bones in my right forearm and both my legs in a car accident. After my second surgery, my orthopaedic surgeon looked me in the eve and said. "I owe you an apology, I missed the fact that you had an exact break. We'll have to take you back



into surgery tomorrow. I'm sorrv. I honestly made a mistake." Not only did I not sue him. I never even considered it

I read 'How to Choose Optimism'. It

inspired me and I opened my box of

friend sitting in my car. This brought

mood for the entire day. ZAHRA SOHAIL

photographs and found one of my

a smile to my face that lifted my

K N

Looking on the Bright Side

'How to Choose Optimism' by Thierry Saussez (September) is an absolutely brilliant article. Many people are caught up in a doom and gloom mentality and are disheartened with life. I feel they would be helped if they were shown how to choose optimism, and we could all do our bit to help someone else, too. LORRAINE POINTON

I lost my car a few months ago and my close friend was diagnosed with lung cancer. Despondent,

Taking on the World

Rezaul Karim Reza's article 'Opening the World of Learning' (My Story,

September) shows how anyone can achieve their dreams through hard work and determination. His strong will allowed him

LET US KNOW

If you are moved - or provoked - by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 6 for how to join the discussion.

to fight against all odds and achieve his goal. He is a beacon for people who give up their dreams at the first hurdle MAHESWADI VELLIGURANTI A

Deskilling Relationships

To forget numbers and addresses without our smartphones is one thing, but digital amnesia has crept deep down into personal relationships 'Deskilling in the Age of Digital Amnesia' (September). There is a growing trend towards people being connected in cyberspace, but in the real world of human sensations and emotions, they are completely absent. SULEMAN ANWAR

Gratitude Attitude

I've seen a positive shift in my dealings with other people after reading 'The Power of Gratitude' (October). Thank you.

WIN A PILOT CAPLESS FOUNTAIN PEN

The best letter published each month will win a Pilot Capless fountain pen, valued at over \$200. The Capless is the perfect combination of luxury and ingenious technology. featuring a one-of-a-kind retractable fountain pen nib, durable metal body, beautiful rhodium accents and a 14K gold nib. Congratulations to this month's winner. Lorraine Pointon. PILOT



Dog Days of Summer

We asked you to think up a funny caption for this photo.

Come up with the funniest caption for my selfie and you could win 100 barks CHRIS ANG

A ruff and pawful week won't stop me from showing the world what a hot dog Lam. ATHIDA K

Living by the DogMa Mother taught me. Eat, sleep and play! DIVYA GUPTA

The only stick I need is a selfie stick. DERORAH THURI EY

Congratulations to this month's winner, Chris Ang.



CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win \$100. To enter, see the details on page 6.



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CONTRIBUTE

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Anecdotes and iokes

Send in your real-life laugh for Life's Like That or All in a Day's Work, Got a joke? Send it in for Laughter is the Best Medicine!

Smart Animals

Share antics of unique pets or wildlife in up to 300 words.

Kindness of Strangers

Share your moments of generosity in 100-500 words.

Mv Storv

Do you have an inspiring or life-changing tale to tell? Submissions must be true. unpublished, original and 800-1000 words - see website for more information.

Letters to the editor, caption competition and other reader submissions

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Raimo Moysa

www.apadana-ielts.com





Editor's Note

The Other Realm

IT'S HARD TO BEAT A GOOD GHOST STORY – particularly when the folk from the afterlife are well-intentioned. While I've never met a ghost, along with 50% of the general population I have no reason to doubt their 'existence', either. In some ways, I feel comforted knowing that spiritual forces might be out there observing the real world – whether or not I'd want one rubbing up against my leg is another thing. Turn to 'Encounters with the Other Side' (page 32) to read the astonishing stories of five people who believe they have come into contact with a ghost. I'm confident you'll find their experiences entertaining. While we're on the topic of stories, if you have encountered a ghost we'd love to hear about it. Send us your story for next year's feature (a maximum of 500 words, please) via the reader submission options opposite.

This month's Bonus Read portrays the destitution experienced by a North Korean mother and her two daughters and their brave attempts to escape into China. Their daring decision to cross an iced-over river tells of how desperate their need to find a better life became.

Lastly, on behalf of everyone at Reader's Digest, we wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season and end to 2016. We look forward to bringing you more inspiring, informative and entertaining stories in the new year.

Happy reading!

LOUISE WATERSON Managing Editor





Stranded in the Snow

It was Christmas Eve. Their car was stuck in a snowdrift. Would she have to give birth in a cow shed?

BY JUDITH STEWART

Judith Stewart and her family emigrated in 1969 to Western Australia where she worked as a speech pathologist until her retirement. She has three children, four grandchildren and three greatgrandchildren. She enjoys singing and oil painting.

IT WAS 1956, and a young couple who lived in a small country town in Warwickshire, England, were expecting their first child. But the baby was already well overdue and in spite of the young mother-to-be staying active and taking long walks, the child seemed reluctant to be born.

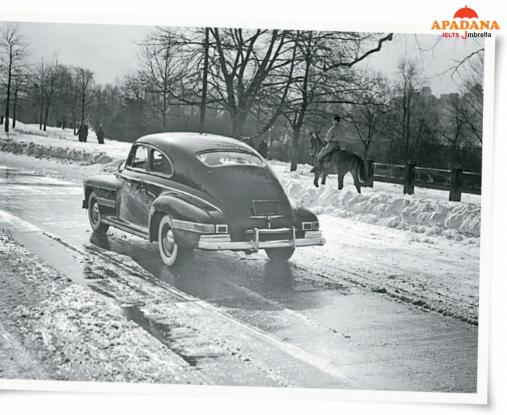
As Christmas was almost upon them she grew more and more depressed. When was this baby going to put in an appearance?

At the time, although petrol was in short supply due to the Suez Crisis, the husband decided that a trip to see her mother would brighten his wife's spirits.

So, early on Christmas Eve morning they put on their warmest clothes and packed some blankets and headed off on the two-hour drive – hoping they had enough petrol to get there and back.

It was a bitterly cold day but the sun shone brightly, the sky was clear and not a cloud was to be seen.

Her mother was delighted to see them though a little concerned that they were now so far away from the



hospital where the baby was to be born. They all had a lovely day together but by mid-afternoon the sun had disappeared, the sky darkened and snow began to fall – just gently at first. With the change in the weather, the couple decided it was best to make tracks for home.

As they drove the snow fell faster and faster, restricting visibility and slowing their progress. By the time they were halfway home the snow had drifted on both sides of the icy country roads and down into the snow-filled ditches below.

The old car struggled on, then stopped dead and slithered down the bank into a snowdrift. They were a long way from any towns. As it was late on Christmas Eve, there was no traffic on the road, either.

The husband tried desperately to push the car out of the snowdrift, but it was wedged solid. He climbed up to the road again but there were still no cars in sight.

In a field next to the road, he spotted an old, disused cow shed, so he carefully led his anxious wife over to it and wrapped her snugly in the blankets, then went back to the car to have another go.

As she watched on, she prayed earnestly for help. Was she going to give birth to her child in a shed on Christmas night, too?

Then through the swirling snow a stranger appeared. Seeing their predicament, he told the husband to stay with his wife, while he single-handedly lifted the car out of the snowdrift. He then manoeuvred the car back onto the road.

Together the two men then tried to start the car only to discover it had run out of petrol.

The stranger disappeared shortly before returning with a can of petrol in his hand. He filled up the tank and set them on their way, refusing to be reimbursed or to leave his address so that at least petrol coupons could be returned.

The relieved couple thanked him from the bottom of their hearts, but he just smiled and wished them a safe journey and a Happy Christmas before fading back into the snowy night again.



Who was he?
Why had he
come to their aid
bringing such
strength and a
can of precious
petrol?



Judith Stewart (left) and her husband (below) with their baby, Simon

Who was he? Where had he come from? Why had he come to their aid bringing such amazing strength and a can of precious petrol?

The couple pondered over these questions on their drive home and for a very long time afterwards. They arrived back safely just after midnight, full of gratitude for their rescue.

They never did find answers to their questions even though they went back to the area and made numerous enquiries over several weeks to try to find their Good Samaritan.

What about the procrastinating baby? Well, our son, Simon, finally put in an appearance on January 2 – hale and hearty with a lusty pair of lungs.

Do you have a tale to tell? We'll pay for any original and unpublished story we print. See page 6 for details on how to contribute.

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Encounter on the Road

He was far from home and full of doubt, but who was the aggressive man in the car behind?

BY GOVIND NAIR

Govind Nair is
22 and lives in
Dubai, United
Arab Emirates.
He is studying
mechanical
engineering at
Swinburne
University of
Technology
in Kuching,
Malaysia. He also

IT WAS A DAMP evening in September 2013 when I landed in Kuching, the capital city of Sarawak in Malaysia. I was a 19-year-old Dubai-raised kid away from home for the first time to start my undergraduate studies in mechanical engineering.

Alone and homesick, the wet welcome I received at the airport didn't make me feel any better. I had never travelled alone before and the seven-hour flight from Dubai was the longest flight I had ever taken. I pushed my luggage and headed to the airport exit to find a grey van with the name of my university on it. My ride, I assumed, and I was right.

As we left the airport, the driver began talking to me; he told me that I was the last of the new students he had to pick up that day. He shared information with me about the city and its people and what I should see and do. As I am a driving enthusiast myself, we started talking about cars and driving in Dubai and his accounts of driving in Kuching.

"Never make a Sarawakian angry," he warned. "No road rage. Very dangerous!" He then went on to list his experiences of road rage and by the time he had finished, I had made up my mind to be very passive on the roads.



Not long into our journey, the lights of the car behind flashed at us. This continued more aggressively and my driver started to panic. A flurry of honks and flashes followed, so we pulled over to the roadside in a well-lit area. My heart was pounding but I tried to put on a brave face as the man from the car emerged and made his way to my side of the van. As he reached my window, I lowered it and tried to force a smile. He reached into the van and I let out a loud "Whoa!"

The man was taken aback and so was my driver. Then I looked down at his hands to see that he was holding my travel pouch. It contained my passport, return tickets, as well as cash and letters for the university. I had left it behind on the trolley at the airport and this man had been

trying to return it to me ever since we had left the airport.

Heaving a huge sigh of relief, I took my pouch and thanked this stranger, "Terima kasih". My attempt at Bahasa Melayu made him laugh and that in turn put me at ease. I imagined the horrible scenario had he not returned it. The man welcomed me to Kuching, wished me luck with my university studies and drove away.

This act of kindness instantly cheered me up and thanks to this honest stranger, the initial self-doubt I had about my decision to study so far away from home was replaced with hope and excitement.

Share your story about a small act of kindness that made a huge impact. Turn to page 6 for details on how to contribute and earn cash.





Smart Animals

Animal behaviour can give us an insight into ourselves



Monkeying Around

ΕΔΡΗΔΝΑ ΥΔΩΜΙΝ

A few years ago when I was 16 years old, my mother took me and my cousin Shayonno to the National Zoo of Bangladesh. Four-year-old Shayanno loved the 'Learn Your Alphabet' books full of pictures of different animals and naturally was very keen to go. I was not so keen and thought about skipping – it seemed like kids' stuff to me – but Mum gave me a firm 'get up and get ready' look.

When we got there, Shayonno wanted to see the monkeys first. We made our way to the monkey

enclosure, where a group of teenage boys were making faces and silly monkey sounds and throwing peanut shells at the monkeys. The boys were grinning and looked proud of their bad behaviour. The monkeys appeared extremely annoyed, as was the rest of the crowd that had gathered. Mum thought she should say something to the boys but it turned out the clever monkeys didn't need defending.

Before she could get a word out, a monkey got down from the platform it was sitting on, ran like a missile to the water tub near the bars where the



boys were standing, jumped into it and shot out its arms, splashing water, sweat and heaven knows what else at their faces. The shocked and scared boys immediately ran away.

Now, it was the monkeys that were grinning and making faces. The rest of us burst into laughter. I was really glad Mum made me go along.

Time for Coffee

EVA KOSEK

Thirty years ago, before we came to Australia, we owned a beautiful blue budgie named Honza. We lived in a two-storey house in Prague, and my husband, Jindrich, spent hours each day training Honza to talk.

Although he had an indoor cage, when we were home we'd let him fly around the house.

Honza was a fast learner and good at understanding instructions and different sounds. When he'd hear my husband's car pull into the driveway, he'd fly downstairs to greet him. Then, when I followed, he would squawk at me, "Mummy, coffee, Mummy, coffee!" Naturally, I did as requested. I miss our little feathered friend – he was a very interactive budgie!

Judd's Intuition

MARY CRYAN

It was five weeks before our first child was due and our cattle dog cross, Judd, began nosing around, smooching and sniffing me up and down. I wasn't particularly bothered by his behaviour, but by the second afternoon, he was starting to annoy me, especially when he nearly knocked me down the front steps.

The following day, things changed dramatically and I'd forgotten all about Judd's behaviour as I suddenly found myself in the throes of labour. Our beautiful baby girl was born four and a half weeks early. After a short stay in hospital, I was back home to Judd, where he doted on us both.

Seven months later and pregnant with our second child, we were told there was a 25 per cent chance that this baby would be premature,

too. But we remained positive that our second baby would be born at full term.

When Judd started to become more pushy – his smooching enough to upset my balance – and ferociously protective of me, it hit me: baby number two was on its way. Two days after Judd's change in behaviour, our

baby boy was born, and like his sister, five weeks early. Judd, it seems, knew about it before either of us.

Love between animals and people truly does exist beyond our physical world.

You could earn cash by telling us about the antics of unique pets or wildlife. Turn to page 6 for details on how to contribute.



THE DIGEST



How to Manage Asthma in the Summer Months

Preparation can help prevent an attack

ASTHMA IN HOT WEATHER

Asthma is a chronic condition with symptoms that can strike at any time of the year. But hot, humid weather can be a real concern for people with asthma. It can lead to an increase in the occurrence and severity of symptoms, particularly for anyone whose asthma is triggered by pollen, dust, sand or pollution, all of which are more prevalent in summer. As long as you have a treatment plan and access to your preventer and reliever inhalers at all times, the risk is usually manageable.

UNEXPECTED ASTHMA

Some people who have asthma rarely exhibit symptoms, leading them

to believe that asthma can go away – but this is not the case. Once diagnosed with asthma, you will always have it. The concern is that some people with asthma may fail to prepare if they are not used to dealing with symptoms on a regular basis.

This leads to an increased risk of a serious asthma attack. If you have been diagnosed in the past, be sure to remain vigilant during summer, even if you don't think you're at risk.

BE PREPARED

If you regularly experience asthma symptoms, it's vital that you take

extra care in hot weather by staying hydrated to help keep airways from drying out. Hundreds of people visit hospital emergency rooms every year for an asthma attack that may have been avoidable with the proper preparation.

Clearing the Air

Air purifiers and humidifiers come in all shapes and sizes. But which are the most effective?

If you suffer from allergies, asthma, hay fever or other conditions that result in congestion and breathing difficulties, you may be considering purchasing a humidifier or purifier to combat air pollution at home. These handy tips will help you choose the best one for your particular needs.

1. EASE OF USE Choosing a unit with filters that are easy to clean and cartridges that are affordable and quick to replace will ensure you stick to your treatment regimen long enough to see significant results.

2. GOING QUIET

Some fanoperated purifiers can be quite noisy, which can affect sleep patterns. Look for units with a power or speed control that's adjustable for your comfort.

3. GO FOR A MULTI-TASKER

Some humidifiers and purifiers are good at relieving one specific condition, while others deal with a wide range. If you're unsure, choose a unit that targets more than one affliction, such as hay fever, asthma, blocked sinuses – even throw in snoring for good measure.

4. BRANCH OUT If you've tried more common units and haven't been thrilled with the results.

don't give up. More and more innovations continue to be made, such as dry salt therapy

units, UV-light purifiers and more advanced temperature-controlled humidifiers.

5. DO YOUR PART

Even the best units aren't miracle workers. Give yours every chance of producing results by also keeping a well-ventilated home with regularly cleaned rugs and carpets.





APADANA IELTS , Imbrella

6 Sneaky Causes of High Blood Pressure

Could you be at risk and not even know it?

BY LISA BENDALL

1 MEDICATIONS Many prescription Land over-the-counter medications can raise your blood pressure. These include antidepressants, birthcontrol pills, decongestants and paracetamol. It may also surprise you to know that the routine use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can lead to a blood pressure problem. They can also affect how some blood pressure pills work. "I see patients who are taking naproxen or ibuprofen daily," says Dr Richard Ward, a primary care GP. "They should monitor their blood pressure, particularly if they're on either for a long period of time."

2 HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS Natural remedies can have side effects, too, and sometimes affect either your blood pressure or the way your blood pressure medication is working. Particular pills to watch out for include arnica, bitter orange (also called Seville orange or zhi shi), ephedra (ma-huang), ginseng,



guarana, St John's wort, garlic, ginkgo and licorice root. If you're being treated for hypertension, let your doctor know what herbal supplements you're taking.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION Studies suggest that sleeping fewer than six hours a night might cause high blood pressure, or make an existing hypertensive condition worse. Researchers believe that adequate sleep is important for regulating stress hormones and keeping your nervous system in good health, both



factors in maintaining healthy blood pressure. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep a night.

DRINKING FRUCTOSE In a 2010 study from the University of Colorado, men and women who consumed more fructose were more likely to develop high blood pressure. However, some scientists dispute this, saying that blood pressure is only raised with extremely high consumption of fructose. Fructose is a common ingredient in soft drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks and flavoured water

Want a drink that may help lower hypertension? The University of Western Australia released evidence that three cups of black tea a day can significantly lower blood pressure.

STRESSING OUT We're still Olearning about the links between stress and blood pressure. We do know that when you're feeling stressed, your blood pressure can temporarily surge higher. What's not clear yet is whether chronic stress by itself leads to long-term hypertension. But it's safe to say that when you're stressed out, you may be more likely to eat too much, drink too much and not sleep enough, which are all causes of hypertension. Plus if you're under stress, your selfcare often suffers. You may skip your blood pressure medications, for example. But stress management techniques such as exercise and meditation help reduce your blood pressure, so why not reap all the benefits at once?

5 ALCOHOL AND ILLEGAL DRUGS

Although small amounts of alcohol may have some health benefits, heavy drinking can boost your blood pressure or interfere with the medications you're taking to control it. So can illegal drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines.

The more factors the pressure avoid to long e central him.

The more we know about factors that increase blood pressure, the easier it is to avoid them. "If we live long enough, about 95 per cent of us will develop

high blood pressure,"
Ward says. "But by
maintaining a
healthy lifestyle, we
can push off that
inevitable increase
in blood pressure as
long as possible."



Best Foot Forward

Protect your feet from blisters, cracked heels. suphurn and more

BY ASTRID VAN DEN BROEK

BLISTERS

Strappy new sandals can come with painful reminders; blisters. "Blisters are caused from friction If you're wearing an ill-fitting shoe while doing a lot of walking, a blister can form," says podiatrist Dr Hartley Miltchin. A blister (that 'pillow' of fluid between the shoe and foot) is how the body protects the foot's underlying structure, he says. "I don't recommend popping them because a burst blister can be susceptible to infection." Instead, cover it with a Band-Aid and let it heal on its own

PREVENT IT Wear new shoes around the house to break them in or on short walks only.

BURNS AND LACERATIONS

In summer your feet are more exposed to the elements, including the sun's rays and sharp objects.



"The skin on the top of our feet is extremely sensitive and susceptible to sunburn," says Miltchin. **PREVENT IT** Apply sunscreen on the tops of your feet, and cover your feet outdoors at all times. Wear sandals outside, and if you're lake- or oceanbound, wear water shoes to prevent

cuts from sharp rocks and shells.

Poolside? Sandals or thongs will help

protect you from picking up a fungus.

FOOT ODOUR

Embarrassed to take off your shoes because your feet smell? "Odour is caused by bacteria," explains podiatrist Dr Hillary Brenner. "Our feet sweat more in the summer and that attracts bacteria, which causes the smell." In summer, each foot can sweat up to 230 ml of moisture a day. **PREVENT IT** Rotate the shoes you wear to give each pair a chance to dry out. And while you can try shoe



sanitiser products, Brenner also suggests spraying your shoes with an aerosol underarm deodorant (let them dry before wearing again). As for your feet, wash them regularly, and try using an antifungal foot soap with teatree oil (which helps kill the bacteria).

CRACKED HEELS

"We carry most of our weight in our heels and we often don't moisturise

them with effective products," says Miltchin. The skin on the soles of our feet is about 20 times thicker than elsewhere on our bodies. "Calluses can build up on the rim of the heel and if left long enough, can develop into cracks, which can become painful and infected," he adds.

PREVENT IT Use a heavy foot cream specifically

for feet based on shea butter or urea. Miltchin also suggests this regular treatment: soak a pumice

pumice stone and your feet in a warm basin of water with a few drops of dishwashing liquid for ten minutes. "Take the stone and gently rub off the callusing on the bottom of the foot and the heels to remove the dead skin. If your feet are really bad, try applying a non-greasy cream such as Eulactol Heel Balm Gold which is specially formulated for dry, cracked and thickened skin on feet. It is also suitable for diabetics.

FOOT ODOUR TIP

Excessive
perspiration,
combined with
bacteria, causes foot
odour. Spray your
shoes with a sanitiser
product or an aerosol
underarm deodarant
and let them dry
before wearing them

TOENAIL DISCOLOURATION

Perhaps your nails are looking a little thick and possibly yellowed? This is often indicative of a fungus in the nail. Yellow nails need to be treated either with an at-home product or at the podiatrist's.

PREVENT IT "Use an antifungal powder or spray on your feet to keep

them fresh and dry," suggests Miltchin.
Keep nails neat and trimmed. You can also stash your own box of tools at your regular nail salon – many salons offer to

do this for you – or bring your own clean tools.



SALAD

Prawn, Peach and Snow Pea Salad

Preparation 10 minutes Cooking Nil Serves 4

500 a cooked, peeled prawns

2 tablespoons lime iuice

250 g snow peas

2 peaches

1/4 cup (60 ml) extra virgin olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

8 cos lettuce leaves

1 Trim the snow peas and cut them in half diagonally. Place in a heatproof bowl, cover with boiling water and leave for 1-2 minutes, or until just softened. Drain and refresh under cold running water, then drain again. and place in a large salad bowl.

2 Peel, halve and dice the peaches. Add to the snow peas, along with the prawns.

3 Whisk the lime juice with the olive oil and salt and black pepper to taste. Pour over the salad and gently mix to combine.

> 4 Arrange the lettuce leaves on a serving platter. Neatly pile the prawn salad over the top and serve.

> > Alternatively. roughly tear the cos lettuce and add to the salad before serving.

Tir Substitute mango or avocado for the neaches

For extra bite. add a finely chopped red chilli.

PER SERVING

748 kJ, 178 kcal, 28 g protein, 2 g fat (<1 g saturated fat), 10 g carbohydrate (6 g sugars), 3 g fibre, 190 mg sodium



Heart-Healthy Foods

Fish and seafood

Fish and seafood contain omega-3 fats, which help to lower the risk of heart disease and stroke. Choose fish that is high in omega-3 fats, such as salmon or sardines

Whole grains and wholegrain breads will keep you feeling full for longer.

Oats Try to include a cup of rolled oats with your breakfast as porridge or in your muesli.

Garlic This may help to lower 'bad' LDL cholesterol and blood pressure.

Linseeds Sprinkle a tablespoon of linseeds over your cereal - they have been linked to reduced risk of heart disease.

Olive oil Believed to be one of the reasons for the low rate of heart

olive oil is a rich source of mono-unsaturated fat. Nuts Munch on a handful of almonds, pecans or macadamias, as part of a heart-smart diet.

Soy beans

Soy protein helps to lower harmful LDL cholesterol.

Drinks to Make Summer Sparkle

Summer entertaining is easy with these refreshing ideas.

ELDERFLOWER FIZZ

Pour 30 ml elderflower cordial into a tall glass. Fill with ice cubes and top with soda water or sparkling white wine. Garnish with a slice of lemon or with raspberries.

CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL

Put a sugar cube in a champagne glass, add a splash of bitters and let soak in. Pour in 30 ml brandy or liqueur of your choice. Top with sparkling wine. Garnish with lemon peel or a cherry or strawberry, if wanted.

Dress up your cocktails with herbs or fruit to give them extra appeal

MOJITO

Put 1 tsp caster sugar and 2 tbsp lime juice in a tall glass. Add 10 mint leaves and crush with the back of a spoon or a muddler. Pour in 60 ml rum (optional). Add ice cubes and slices from 1 lime. Top with sparkling water. Garnish with mint leaves.







IFI TS | mhrella

Remote Control **Battery Quick Fixes**

Follow these tips to keep your batteries (and remote control) from running out of juice.

BATTERY AGE Despite your best intentions, the batteries in your remote could be well past their best-by age. If you shop in a store with a low turnover, it is possible that the batteries have been gathering dust for a while before you purchased them.

BATTERY DRAIN Batteries drain more quickly when they are in an electronic device, even if the device is off. If you have a camera or battery-operated gizmo that you only use from time to time, take the batteries out until vou need them. If you have a device that runs on both batteries and electricity, take the batteries out and store them safely while you're using the wall plug.

BATTERY EXPLOSIONS

Alkaline batteries sometimes explode. In fact, if you look at the packaging for your AAs, you will probably see a small-print warning advising you of this potential danger. This is very rare, but it does occasionally happen. These potential blasts are why you may have heard you should not mix new and used batteries or different types of batteries (non-chargeable with rechargeable, for example) in the same device. When batteries have different levels of charge, the stronger cell will discharge rapidly to compensate for the weaker cell, which can cause it to overheat and, on rare occasions, go boom.

PROPER STORAGE It is a myth

that batteries last longer if you store them in the fridge. In fact, prolonged exposure to extreme cold or heat reduces battery life. When storing batteries, they should not make a connection so make sure they are not touching other batteries or anything metal. Don't

carry loose batteries in your bag because they might come into contact with a metal object.

Easy ways to avoid an ironing disaster

IRONING SYMBOLS

The first mistake of the amateur ironer is likely to be not reading or understanding the ironing instructions before putting hot metal to fabric. The ironing instruction symbols found on clothes labels are quite easy to interpret once you know them. They are variations on a little iron icon. If you're not supposed to iron the garment at all, the iron icon has an X over it. If the little iron has dots in it, they correspond to the number of clicks on your iron's thermostat. Two dots in the iron icon mean to set your iron to the two-dot setting.

GUMMING UP THE WORKS

Ironing fabrics too cool is not disastrous, just ineffective. Ironing too hot can cause woollen fibres to



Ironing symbol

Iron at low temperature





Iron at high temperature



become shiny and may cause man-made fibres to melt. If you touch a hot iron to a nylon jacket, for example, it will melt. In the process, the iron becomes coated in the liquid jacket material. Every time you fire it up, it will melt a bit of the gunk and transfer it to anything else that you iron. That is why you should always examine the surface of the iron before you start any new ironing job.

DEGUNKING THE IRON If you find that you have a gunky iron, try this trick. Lay out a piece of aluminium foil and

iron it. The build-up should stick to the foil after a few passes.



Most Festive Christmas Cities

Where to enjoy a picture-perfect white Christmas

BY JACKIE MIDDLETON

QUÉBEC CITY, CANADA When the narrow streets of Old Québec City are covered in a dusting of snow, it feels like you've wandered into a Victorian Christmas card come to life. Enjoy the warm hospitality of this charming Canadian city with festive outdoor concerts, holiday markets and the extravagant QuébecAdabra! – an evening festival of music, lights, animation and architectural projections held citywide. QuébecAdabra! runs from December 22 to January 4, 2017.

2 LONDON, ENGLAND The capital is bursting with holiday cheer.
Dazzling Christmas lights brighten up Oxford Street, Covent Garden and Carnaby Street. Skating aficionados can go for a seasonal spin on the picturesque rinks in Somerset House, Hyde Park, Canary Wharf and the Tower of London. Love holiday music? St. Martin-in-the-Fields hosts an inspiring line-up of Christmas concerts while London's most famous Christmas tree holds court nearby in Trafalgar Square.

3 ANTWERP, BELGIUM Historic buildings and sensational holiday decorations make Antwerp one of Europe's most popular Christmas destinations. The city centre is buoyant with the spirit of the season thanks to the lively Christmas market and festive evening concerts. Sample mulled wine and Belgian delicacies as you watch the antics of the muchbeloved street entertainers.

4 STUTTGART, GERMANY A visit to Stuttgart's Christmas festival is like stepping back in time. The medieval Old Palace, vibrant Christmas market and breathtaking illuminations create a seasonal paradise. Skate on the outdoor rink, feast upon grilled sausages and soak up the fairytale ambience in the heart of the city.

Prague's stunning Gothic architecture provides a dramatic setting for its Christmas festivities. At the foot of the Church of Our Lady before Týn, the Old Town Christmas market sells stocking fillers and treats to the thousands of shoppers who visit each December. Carollers perform seasonal favourites while an elaborately decorated Christmas tree adds to the joyous atmosphere.



Experience the hustle and bustle of New York with impressive window displays

6 NEW YORK, US If you like your Christmas celebrations bold and over-the-top, make New York City your holiday destination. Manhattan seems even more magnificent at Christmas time. Rockefeller Center's iconic Christmas tree and outdoor skating rink vie for attention with the beautiful storefront displays at Macy's and Saks 5th Avenue.

ROVANIEMI, FINLAND For a storybook Christmas, Rovaniemi in Finland is hard to beat.
Lapland's capital becomes a winter wonderland. The area is illuminated by the spectacular Northern Lights, also known as Aurora Borealis, and this spellbinding astral show can be witnessed around the city from mid-August until early April. This magical place is also the official home of Santa Claus himself and visitors of all ages can meet his reindeer, huskies and elves at Santa Claus Village right on the Arctic Circle.





Great Holiday Gifts for Globetrotters

BY KAT TANCOCK

Travellers will delight in these thoughtful accessories

TRAVEL-SIZE PRODUCTS help you pack lighter and get through airport security, but they also give you a chance to sample new skincare ranges. When considering gift ideas, look for ones among the luxury end that have an exfoliating cleanser, SPF moisturiser. as well as an eve cream and a cleanser.

NOISE-CANCELLING EARPHONES

A good pair of noise-cancelling earphones will save your ears by blocking outside noise rather than just cranking up the volume, and save your sanity by tuning out aeroplane hum. loud chatter and other distracting noises. Over-the-ear styles can cut at least 90 per cent of environmental noise, and also come with a carrying case.

PORTABLE SPEAKERS

If you're travelling with a laptop or iPad, compact portable speakers can make rainy-day movie time that much more eniovable: if vou've got your MP3 player, they can come in handy to

play music or even white noise to help you sleep. Choose a model that runs via Bluetooth has a built-in rechargeable battery and a decent sound quality.

TRAVEL TOWEL Impromptu swims. getting caught in a downpour... there's more than one reason a spare towel in vour suitcase can come in handy. Aim for a super lightweight and easy-to-dry towel, preferably made of microfibre that can absorb four times its weight in water and then get almost dry once you wring it out. Also ask whether the towel is treated with an antimicrobial agent so it won't get stinky.

> WATER PURIFIER While many resorts and camping sites.

around the world are installing water purifiers to make the local supply safe to drink. others still rely on bottled water which has a huge carbon footprint. Save the hassle by aifting a water bottle with built-in UV filter. which removes harmful elements in 60 seconds.





JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Four great reasons why you should join us online...

We give away cash and prizes

Join fun competitions and quizzes



SUSCOMETODAY & WIN

First look at future issues

Get a sneak peek
at upcoming
stories and
covers



We give great advice

Get regular home, health and food tips from The Digest



Friends and good manners will carry you where money won't go.

MARGARET WALKER



We help you get motivated

#QuotableQuotes and #PointstoPonder to get you through the day









Living in a Connected World

BY KATHY BUCHANAN

Wander around your local area and you'll see the average person can't seem to live without technology. But are some countries

more switched on than others?

The GfK Connected Consumer Index is an annual ranking of eight world regions and 78 countries that compares the level of connectivity of each area. Perhaps, not surprisingly, Hong Kong continues to be the world's most 'connected' population in 2016 along with North America (US, Canada and Mexico), while

Singapore and Australia maintain their second and third ranking in the Asia-Pacific region, respectively. New Zealand is fourth, Malaysia is eighth, and China is ninth.

"We are living in an increasingly global world of technology," says technology expert Paul McCarthy, who is also the author of Online Gravity: The Unseen Force Driving the Way You Live, Earn, and Learn.

"In the 1950s technology was in the hands of governments," he points out. "Now it's mostly all private sector and the power is increasingly moving to the consumer. Things are changing rapidly."

McCarthy says the next generations are likely to be the first ones without home phones, relying on their smartphones instead (which are also predicted to become much cheaper). Already, in Hong Kong and Singapore, wearable technology is very popular, together with 'connected cars'.

"Technology allows vou to have a more fulfilling life. You can enjoy the company of family and friends, share ideas, meet new people and open vourself to a world of new learning," he says. "You can already enable your smartphone or Fitbit to record how much and how fast you walk. Aiming to solve simple and practical health issues with technology will be next."



IELTS . Imbrella

Don't Drown in Your Email

Here's a strategy to get your inbox under control

GET IT TOGETHER Think of your inbox like the one on your physical desk. Your goal is to have everything out of it by the end of the day. Your goal should also be to keep it empty. Start by creating a set of folders in your email program. One suggestion is to create a folder labelled 'follow up, one called 'pending,' and a third called 'archive'

■ Follow-up folder – is for messages dealing with tasks you must complete. They may require a long answer, or you may need to draft a document or research something in order to reply.

Pending folder - is where you put messages that you do not need to respond to immediately but that you need to keep 'active' for the time being - for example, if someone promised to get back to you and you need a reminder to follow up.



It makes everyone's life more efficient if you use succinct, specific and searchable subject lines.

Good Example -Questions about page six of the proposal **Bad Example - Can** vou look this over?



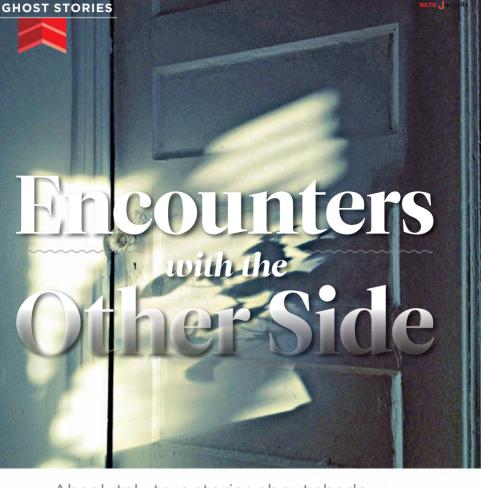
DON'T OVERTHINK IT You may feel the urge to create dozens of specific sub-folders in your archive. This is unnecessary. A study conducted by IBM found that people who searched through unsorted email found what they were looking for faster than those who had an elaborate filing system. Unless your job is specifically project-based, allowing for a very clear organisational system, the more

folders, the messier.

DON'T CHECK YOUR INBOX CONSTANTLY

A better strategy is to only check when you have at least a few minutes to read and respond - unless, of course, it's screaming URGENT at you.





Absolutely true stories about shadowy figures, moving objects, strange voices and other things that go bump in the night

FROM REDDIT.COM



alloween is the traditional time for ghouls and spooks to emerge, but for many people, fright night is every night. According to numerous polls, at least half of us believe in ghosts and spirits. Scientists have come up with many reasons for spirit sightings, ranging from the physical (low-frequency sounds, magnetic fields, thermal patterns) to the psychological (suggestibility, fear of mortality). But as sound as these explanations are,



the existence of ghosts will most likely remain murky: while they can't be proved to exist, they cannot be resoundingly debunked, either. Online you'll find thousands of people's firsthand experiences with the paranormal, and we've selected five of the most vivid. Read them, and then ask yourself: do you believe?

The Little Hands

I'VE NEVER LIVED in a haunted house, but my mother did as a teen. Other houses on her street had strange things going on, too. A few homes away from her lived a man and his family. One night, one of his daughters went to hed with a had headache. The next day, she was dead - she'd passed away from an aneurysm. After the funeral, the family went away to get their minds off the tragedy, and the father asked my uncle - my mother's brother - to check on their pets. My mom and dad (they were dating then) went with my uncle; my mother had heard there was a grand piano and she wanted to play it, and my dad was studying to be a veterinarian.

After entering the house, my uncle and my father headed to the basement to see the animals, and my mother went to the piano on the ground floor. She was playing it when she felt something brush her ankles. She thought a cat must have left the basement and walked past her. She kept playing, and she felt it again. She looked under the piano and saw nothing. When she started again, she felt hands clasp her legs and grab them tightly. She dashed to the basement door, called my uncle and father,

and waited for them. When they all walked outside, my uncle could tell my mother was rattled and asked what was wrong. She told him what had happened, and he turned white. He told her the daughter who died used to play a game with her father. When he'd play the piano, she'd crawl underneath, grab his ankles, and push his feet up and down on the pedals.

Reddit.com contributor PATENTEDSPACEHOOK

An Unseen Patient

THE AMBULANCE COMPANY that I used to work for had a 'haunted' ambulance: rig 12. A lot of paramedics had stories about it, but I never put much stock in paranormal stuff. That is, until I had my own experience with rig 12.

My partner and I were working in a rural community at 3am, and it was pitch-dark and completely quiet. We were both dozing; I was in the driver's seat, and she was in the passenger seat. I woke up to a muffled voice, and I thought my partner was talking. I told her I was trying to sleep and closed my eyes. I distinctly heard a male voice say, "Oh my God, am I

DEADER'S DIGHTS T mbrella

dving?" followed by a few seconds of heavy breathing, My partner and I sat up straight and looked back into the patient compartment, where it sounded like the voice had come from

Things were quiet for a couple of seconds: then we heard the click of an oxygen-bottle regulator and a hiss, as if it were leaking. I turned on the lights. and we ran out of the

rig. I thought a transient might have climbed in while we were asleep, so we opened the rear doors. No-one was there. I checked the oxygen bottles: neither was opened. We didn't sleep much after that.

Reddit com contributor ZEPRO

An Impish Ghost

MY NEIGHBOUR DIANE and I had a playful poltergeist for years, and we called it Billy. I'd come home and find something put in a weird place: milk in a cupboard, toilet paper in the fridge, laundry detergent in the bathtub. Diane once called to ask if Billy had been around, because she couldn't find a bottle of milk. We finally found it outside on her back steps. And sugar ... darn sugar! Every



She was playing the piano when she felt something brush her ankles

morning, my sugar bowl was empty.

When I had enough. I'd point to Diane's home and vell, "Go see Diane!" Within five minutes. I'd get a call from her, and she'd say, "Thanks a lot," because he'd gone and pulled shenanigans at her place. This occurred for the entire two years we lived there No-one believed us - not even our husbands. My mother thought someone was stealing from us when

we were out of the house. My sister believed something was going on but didn't know what. I still can't explain it.

Reddit.com contributor ABBYS ALIBI

The Eerie Attic

IT SEEMS SO CLICHÉD to start by saving, "I don't believe in ghosts, but ..." However, that's where I'm coming from. A few years ago, I moved into a one-bedroom apartment in Melbourne; it was my first time living on my own. The apartment block had been built in the 1930s. I'd been there for a few months when I came home from work one day and went into the bathroom. I saw something strange: the wooden board covering a hole in the ceiling that led to a small attic space lay broken in two pieces on



the ground. I examined the broken pieces. The hoard was 3 cm thick. and it would have taken a Bruce Lee to break it. I thought the landlord had sent someone to work on the attic.

I emailed pictures to the landlord asking if anyone had been there (with an undertone of annovance, since she hadn't warned me). Her reply

read. "Please call me as soon as you are able to," I called, and she explained that her last two tenants had said the same thing happened. She promised to replace the board. and she did

A month later, I woke up one night around 4am. I had so many goose bumps, it felt like someone was rubbing his or her hands on me. Everything was silent, but then I heard this sound coming from above my bed. It was a dragging sound, like someone pulling a sack of potatoes. I was frozen stiff with fear. I thought, Someone is up there for sure. There is no way an animal could make that sound. After five minutes, I managed to work up the courage to turn on the light and walk to the bathroom. I was armed with a cricket hat

When I looked, I saw that the new board covering the hole was broken in two! I felt sick. The dragging sound had stopped. But I heard something else whispering. The sound was clear and coming from the attic. It sounded like

children's voices, and I could hear one sentence repeated over and over: "It's vour turn ... It's vour turn ..."

I switched on every light in the apartment to make things feel normal. It was 5am and dark outside. I watched TV to try to unwind Then a fuse blew My pet budgie, Dexter, whom I kept in the kitchen, usually never made

> a sound at night, but he started squawking like he was being strangled. I'd never heard him make those sorts of noises - he was screaming, I grabbed my car keys, ran out,

Someone is up there for sure sat in my car, and waited there until the sun came up.

> When I saw people walking their dogs, this comforted me enough to go back in. The front door was open, but I thought I had closed it when I'd run out. I went to the kitchen to check on Dexter, and he wasn't in his cage - I felt sick again. All my windows were closed, so I looked everywhere inside. When I walked to the bathroom, I heard splashing. Dexter was half drowned in the toilet! I took him out. washed him, and dried him. I was so confused. At 8am, I called the landlord and gave her a watered-down version of the night. "Oh, wow, you heard the whispering, too!" she said.

> I stayed there for 18 more months. I heard the whispering on a few occasions, and twice the board covering the hole in the ceiling moved. Although I

I was frozen stiff

with fear. I thought,

live elsewhere, the landlord recently called. She said that her new tenants had begged to speak with me about some of the stuff that's been going on there. Forget it – it's their problem now.

Reddit.com contributor DIGSDAWS

The Boy with No Eyes

was woken up by my bedroom door opening, followed by someone sitting on my bed. I felt my leg grazed and the bed sink under a person's weight. Thinking it was my mother, I opened my eyes to see an eyeless boy (he had black empty sockets) about my age sitting at the foot of my bed. He extended his hand, and in it was a little box. I was startled but reached out. He pulled back. I reached again and said, "Give it." Then I blinked, and when I reopened my eyes, he was gone, but the imprint of someone sitting on my bed was present.

Fast-forward five years and my girlfriend came over to do homework. After she finished, she took a nap while she waited for her parents. When they arrived, I tried waking her up. She opened her eyes suddenly, looking up at a corner where the wall met the ceiling. She pointed there and went back to sleep. I shook her again. She came to full consciousness, and I explained what she'd done. She said, "Up on the wall, I saw a little boy with no eyes. He was there in a Spider-Man pose, staring at me." I freaked out and told her my story about the same kid.

Fast-forward another five years. I was with the same girlfriend, and we had a two year old. We were living in my parents' house, in my old room. My daughter started waking up at the same time every night, and she'd talk. After a while, I noticed she had almost the same conversation every night. I asked her once whom she was talking to. She said, "It's a little boy. He's nice. He's lost and looking for his mommy."

My daughter's nightly conversations continued until we got our own place later that year.

Reddit.com contributor KMENDO4

Do you have a ghostly experience to share? Write to us. Address details on page 6.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS, REDDIT.COM

* *

WASHING DISHES CAN BE DRAINING

I hate housework! You make the beds, you do the dishes and six months later you have to start all over again. JOAN RIVERS





FACE PRESSURE

Nothing tests the mental strength of a sportsman like the pressure of the crowd

BY MATT BURKE FROM KICKING IT AROUND THE GLOBE

ormer Wallaby coach Bob Dwyer used to describe goal kickers as special beasts. He once said that "Kickers have the responsibility of kicking the goal, and that denies up to 14 other people in the team the opportunity to do that. But I can tell you that most of the other 14 guys don't want the opportunity. It's the guy who has the talent and belief in his ability and the courage to stay composed under pressure to score those points who can become such an important member of your side."

Thanks, Bob, no pressure at all.

Ever since I can remember, I wanted to be that bloke who stood up there and took the kick. I've always enjoyed absorbing the pressure, whether that

be in my early days of playing soccer taking the penalty kicks or through my rugby career shooting goals for my school, my club, my state or my country. And just about every time I wasn't given that opportunity, I'd be asking the question why.

I've been in some pressure situations, where the final roll of the dice was in my hands. I remember chatting to some journos after one situation where I had the opportunity to seal a win and told them, "It's a pretty simple equation. You kick it, you're a hero. Miss it and you're the villain." And that's what it comes down to.

On those occasions, your ability to keep calm counts for so much. You don't want your mind racing, thinking





about scenarios of what could be and. worst case, what could have been

My days at club rugby were very infrequent: as a matter of fact, in the professional era it was predominantly a means of getting back to fitness after injury. I did, however, get my 50 games for Eastwood Rugby, something I'm very proud of.

Early in my kicking career I felt I had to hit every goal kick over the top of the posts, sometimes losing that finesse and accuracy. On one particular afternoon at T.G. Millner Field, I was having a rather off day. Fortunately for us, we were scoring tries and not having to count too much on my services.

One of the great things about playing club rugby is that the supporters are just there - right in your eye line and right in earshot. This afternoon, as I was lining up an attempt at goal, I was getting some advice from one particular patron in the crowd.

"Hey, Burkey, take this one a little left," he said on my first kick. I missed the shot right and all I heard was: "I told you to aim left!" The crowd got a good laugh out of that.

My next shot at goal was met with: "Hey, Burkey, listen to me, mate, take this one a little left as well." I went through the motion and missed it right a second time.

Here we go again, I thought.

"Burkey!" he called out. "Come on, mate, listen to me - I'll get you home." The crowd got an even bigger laugh.

I was starting to regret having to take the next shot at goal. This time. though, it was in the middle of the park and my friend surely couldn't give me any advice - or so I thought. How wrong I was.

"Hev. Burkey!" he velled. "I can't help you on this one, but I reckon it's straight."

I nailed it and the applause went up, but more for 'old mate' in the stands

I hit a couple more successful conversions and was starting to get back some confidence. We then scored a try on the right-hand side of the field and my first thought was not of excitement but trepidation, knowing that my friend was going to be right hehind me

"Hi Burkey, it's me again," he said.

Oh, come on, I thought I'd kept you quiet by getting a couple of successful kicks

"So are you going to take my advice this time?" he asked

I tried to ignore the bloke - I was determined to put him out of my mind. Right, go through the process. You know exactly what to do, but learn from your other kicks.

I took five steps back, paused, started my run-up and whack. It sailed right of the posts again. No way! I shut the comments out of my head, but all I could hear was laughter... at my expense.

Apart from my errant kicking, would you believe I played a solid game? Having already won, we had one last shot at our opposition. It was



"DON'T TRUST ME. MATE I'M IUST A GUY IN THE CROWD"

a beautiful piece of counterattack starting from near our own line, pushing down the field. The interchanging of passing between the forwards and backs was something to be proud of. It felt like a training run and I got the last pass. Yours truly dived over in the corner, and, you guessed it... on the right-hand side of the pitch. Here comes my mate again. As I walked back to the mark, the chat started.

"Righto, Burkey, let's nail this last one, mate, and when you do we'll go have a beer in the clubhouse. Remember this one goes to the right, so aim further left, champ."

I took aim with my usual set-up. I stepped back to make sure I'd lined it up right and thought, This is it. Be confident. Strike it well and...

"Hey, Burkey, further left," came the call.

What?

"Further left, mate," was his response.

So I thought, Just do it, I readjusted the direction of the hall. Stepped back to take stock and... it happened again.

"A bit more, mate," he called out, "Come on, trust me,"

At this point I was shaking my head and smiling at the same time. The crowd around the bloke was starting to jump on the bandwagon with cries of "Come on, Burkey, trust him!"

So, with a shrug of the shoulder I went back for more and played up to the crowd. I crouched beside the ball and looked over my shoulder, asking for direction. There were cries of "Left. left, left!" So I obliged, pointing the ball way outside the left upright. Then I took my stance and struck the ball perhaps the best I had all afternoon.

The sound of the ball leaving the boot was like a cracking whip, setting sail for the posts. I'd done just what the fans wanted and stuck it outside the left upright - and wouldn't you know it, it didn't come back. It missed left. I looked up in despair. There was a massive sigh and one lone voice piped up.

"Hey, Burkey, don't trust me, mate. What would I know? I'm just a guy in the crowd"

Thanks very much.

This is an edited extract from Kicking It Around the Globe by Matt Burke © Matt Burke (Ebury Australia, August 2016). RRP \$34.99. Out now in print and ebook.



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Life's Like That

SEFING THE FUNNY SIDE





From the Archives

This 67-year-old letter from December 1949 is charming enough... but its origins are absolutely fascinating.

While riding in a taxi in Washington DC, I noticed a leatherette case full of small cards and asked the elderly driver what they were.



"Well, young man," he said, "you'd be surprised what a lot of fun I've had with those cards. I had a thousand printed when I first got the idea, and thought they'd last me years. That was just about a year ago and the ones you see are the last of my fourth thousand."

I took one of the cards. On it was printed: "Please, dear God, help me to mind my own business." SUBMITTED BY KARAN SINGH, Prince of Kashmir

(Ed's note: At the time, a cheque for \$100 was sent to the taxi driver, in accordance with the request of the then Prince of Kashmir. Today, Mr Singh is a decorated member of India's Upper House of Parliament, the Raiya Sabha. One wonders if he recalls this letter he wrote as an 18-year-old regent.)

MAKES SENSE

A little while back, our family decided to move into a larger house. Though we started our real-estate search around November, it was very clear that our six-year-old son, Thomas, already had Christmas on the brain.

As we drove away after touring a potential new home, Thomas pointed at the building next door. "Why don't we buy that one?" he asked. "It has two chimneys. That

means we can have two Santas!"

SUBMITTED BY COS VAN WERMESKERKEN

DO NOT PRESS

My 14-year-old son decided to wash his favourite T-shirt. After a few minutes of staring at the washing machine dials, he asked me, "What setting should I use?"

"Well, it depends," I told him.
"What does it say on your shirt?"
He looked at it and said, "NIKE."

SUBMITTED BY LORETTA JENKINS



BI FNDING IN Some people really can adapt to any situation ... Source: boredpanda.com











The Great Tweet-off: Superhero edition

Everyone's a movie critic. At least everyone on Twitter. But are they all funny? These ones sure are.

I think the bad guvs have the right idea, aiming their weapons directly at Captain America's shield. That's probably his weak point.

@MARKLEGGET

Hello, oh vou don't have a ramp I guess, okay well let's talk in the driveway my name is Professor X and I run a school for monster habies @KIBBLESMITH

Billionaire I'd like to do something about crime.

Butler Being poor, I've got some great ideas ...

Billionaire I want to dress as a bat. @REALLUCASNEFF

There are 400 billion birds in the world, 250,000 planes and one Superman, So, in answer to your question - probably a bird.

@AMATEURADAM

My favourite part of any superhero movie is the 1-3 months they spend learning how to sew.

@SHELBYFERO

@DAVEDITTEL

What if Spider-Man has to stop a crime in the countryside?







Thrown off-kilter by dizziness or vertigo? Treating these conditions may help

SPIN CONTROL

BY SAMANTHA RIDEOUT

ILLUSTRATION BY SÉBASTIEN THIBAULT

GAYDA JACKSON WAS VISITING a cathedral in Avignon, France, while on holiday last year when she was suddenly unable to keep her balance enough to walk or even stand. To Jackson, then 68, the room seemed to be spinning – a sensation she'd never experienced before. Somebody called an ambulance, but when the

paramedics checked Jackson's vital signs, all was well.

Later that same week, Jackson was overcome by another wave of violent vertigo. "I stumbled towards my husband, who was in a café next door," she says. "He called a waiter to give me water, and I sat there for a few minutes until I felt better."





Back home after her two-week trip abroad, Jackson endured two more spells within a 24-hour period. She called an ambulance and, once at the hospital, was given an intravenous drip to prevent vomiting (she was struggling with severe nausea). "I had no idea what was wrong with me and I was terrified," she recalls. Then, a few weeks after they'd begun, her vertigo attacks suddenly ceased. While Jackson's family doctor couldn't con-

firm what had caused the attacks, she was confident her patient was perfectly healthy.

ACCORDING to a 2015 University College London systematic review of 20 previous studies, up to one-tenth of the global adult population will develop vertigo at some point; between 17 and 30 per

cent will experience dizziness. (These numbers refer to people who have significant dizziness or vertigo, not just the fleeting discombobulating aftereffects of riding a roller coaster or watching a 3D movie.)

Medically speaking, vertigo means that your perception of your body's movement doesn't line up with reality. What Jackson experienced was called 'external vertigo': when she had the sense that she was inside a spinning cathedral, her surroundings

seemed to be moving, not her body itself. Dizziness, on the other hand, refers to spatial disorientation without a false or distorted sense of motion. It might involve unsteadiness or feeling faint.

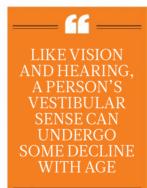
There are dozens of possible causes for dizziness or vertigo, such as low blood glucose, drug-related side effects, dehydration or a stroke. (In the case of a stroke, dizziness is often accompanied by other symptoms,

such as slurred speech or sudden numbness in the face, arms or legs, and immediate medical attention is recommended.)

Frequently, however, the problem is rooted in the inner ear's vestibular system, which is essential for balance and orientation. Its components detect the head's movements and

how those relate to the pull of gravity. The system sends this information to the brain, helping you to stabilise your gaze and move around without falling over.

Like vision and hearing, the vestibular sense can decline with age. According to a 2009 estimate published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* and based on a sample of more than 5000 Americans, around 35 per cent of adults over age 40 experience dysfunction in this system.



A Common Culprit Is BPPV

One of the most frequently diagnosed vestibular conditions is benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). There are tiny bits of calcium, called otoliths, that roll around in the inner ear, pushing on sensory hair cells. BPPV starts when one of those bits breaks loose. The dislodged calcium floats about, stimulating receptors that monitor the movement of inner-ear fluid and sending confusing messages to the brain. The result: bothersome spells of vertigo that typically last for a few minutes or less.

BPPV tends to go away within a few weeks or months, possibly because the calcium crystal is dissolved into the inner-ear fluid. If the condition doesn't resolve, it can usually be cured by quick, painless treatments that involve repositioning the particle. The most studied approach is the Epley manoeuvre, which results in immediate relief in 70 to 80 per cent of cases. With this technique, the doctor moves the patient's head into certain positions - 45 degrees towards the affected side, for instance - that are each

For reasons that aren't entirely clear, there's a good chance BPPV

held for 30 seconds or so. The

goal is to slide debris out of the

ear fluid and into another area.

where it won't cause trouble.

will come back: estimates of the recurrence rate have ranged as high as 50 per cent over three years. The good news: repeating the Epley manoeuvre will probably solve the problem again.

While particle repositioning is simple enough to perform by yourself at home, neurologist Dr Alexandre Bisdorff cautions that you should confirm a diagnosis first, in case you're overlooking a more serious problem. In situations where this non-invasive particle treatment doesn't work after repeated attempts, surgery may be the way forward.

Chronic Disorders

Not every vestibular problem can be solved as readily as BPPV. When Melanie Simms developed dizziness and an earache in August 2007, it was only the beginning of a frustrating

medical ordeal. The then 20-year-old student from Yorkshire, England, was told she had an inner-ear infection. The symptoms should have stopped once Simms's immune system killed off the virus, but in this case, there was lasting damage. "For about a year, I kept

telling my doctors I wasn't getting better," Simms recalls. Stimulating settings, such as the supermarket, left her nearly debilitated; at times, she needed another person's help to walk. Finally, during an appointment in 2009, an otolaryngologist



asked, "When the car stops, does it feel like it's still moving?" Simms was overcome with relief that somebody seemed to grasp her condition.

She was diagnosed with uncompensated vestibular neuritis, one of several

disorders that cause dizziness or vertigo on an ongoing basis. (Another one is Ménière's disease, which results from an abnormal amount of fluid in the ear and may also trigger tinnitus and hearing loss.) While there isn't always a cure for chronic vestibular disorders, treatments can minimise symptoms. Depending

on the diagnosis, these might include medications, surgeries and vestibular rehabilitation therapy (VRT), which is based on exercises.

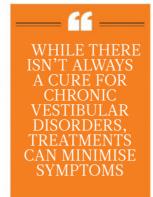
VRT can be tailored to specific complaints, according to Lena Kollén, a vestibular physiotherapist in Gothenburg, Sweden. She and her colleagues design plans that involve a patient's entire balance system. "These could

include anything from head movements to balancing in one place with your eyes closed," she says. For Simms, it initially meant moving her chin up and down while focusing her gaze – first on a static pattern, then on the

TV. The hope is that the brain will slowly learn to compensate for imperfections in the signals it receives by learning to rely on other senses, such as vision and touch, for orientation.

Earlier this year, Simms finished attending VRT sessions. She's now able to work as a hospital receptionist four days a week. She

also helps run the Yorkshire Balance Support Group. One of this organisation's aims is to increase awareness of vestibular disorders so fewer patients will suffer needlessly and instead get the treatment they need. "A lot of people feel afraid and alone because they don't know what's happening," says Simms. "But these conditions are more common than you'd think."



NAME THE ANIMAL IN THESE EXPRESSIONS

Keeping the ____ from the door
A ___ in the ointment
Living high off the ___
There's more than one ___ in the sea
White ___ MENTAL FLOSS

Answers: Wolf, fly, hog, fish, elephant





Bailey – a Seagull's Foe

BY JANINE FLEW

THE SEAGULLS that frequent the foreshores of Sydney's Australian National Maritime Museum aren't happy. The museum has a new staff member who's making their once comfortable lives difficult. The newcomer, Bailey, is young, keen and also handsome. What sets him apart from the other folk who work at the museum is that Bailey is a dog.

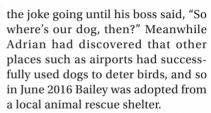
Three-year-old Bailey has been brought on staff to deal with seagulls. The museum's wharves and ships at Darling Harbour attract flocks of these birds. The mess they make is smelly and unsightly and damages the paint and varnish on the mu-

seum's historic vessels, leaving staff with the unpleasant job of cleaning it off.

Over the years the museum has tried many methods to deter the gulls: humming lines, ultrasonic devices, fake birds of prey, sprinklers

activated by motion sensors even hosing them – all have proved futile.

Earlier this year, security manager Adrian Snelling jokingly suggested getting a dog to do the job, then kept



He was already named Bailey when he came to the museum. He was then bestowed the surname of a recently retired head of security, and a job title fitting of his responsibilities: Assistant Director, Seagulls.

Bailey is mostly border collie and true to his breed, he has unlimited energy and drive, and loves to chase things. Pigeons, cyclists, joggers, skateboarders and even passing boats all spark his attention.

Bailey adapted quickly to his new role. Luckily for the museum, chasing birds is what he really likes to do. Before he was adopted, his foster carer often had to bring him inside to

> stop him wearing himself out chasing birds all day.

> In his first few days on staff, Bailey took the term 'salty sea dog' all too literally, launching into his new role with such gusto that he ended up in the harbour

several times. Clearly he didn't have much clue about workplace health and safety, and so he was fitted with a jaunty yellow life vest. As well as keeping him afloat, it has a handle on



He didn't have much clue about workplace safety, so he was fitted with a life vest



Bailey in action, doing what he does best: keeping the seagulls away

the back so he can be easily retrieved from the water. Wearing the vest also signals to him that he's working and needs to concentrate on the job rather than play.

Bailey makes his rounds several times a day with a handler: early in the morning, once or twice during the day, and then at dusk, when there is no longer much human activity to spook the birds and they start to roost on the wharves.

His presence soon began to make a difference in gull numbers, as Bailey

himself noted in his blog a few weeks after he arrived: "My enemies, the seagulls, have started to notice that I'm here to stay, and there aren't as many as there used to be. When I started we had seagulls everywhere on the wharves, but now we have maybe five at a time. Those birds who've decided to stay have learnt to sit high up on the vessels, out of my reach. So frustrating!"

According to Adrian, Bailey isn't exaggerating. "Normally when there are seagulls down here, Bailey will



spot them and I'll let him off the lead and say, 'Bailey, go!," he explains. "He automatically chases the birds and is perfect for the role. The highlight of his morning is to come down to chase seagulls. And if you don't take him down, he gets very upset."

When he isn't ruffling feathers, Bailey lives in the security office, where he has a cosy bed and round-the-clock company from the team of security guards. Pampering is part of his routine, too – every two weeks he is bathed and professionally groomed at the local vet.

Some days Bailey visits his twolegged friends in other parts of the museum's administration building. In the evenings, he gets to loll about behind the reception desk, or chase balls across the wooden floors. The two places he isn't allowed are the museum itself and the conservation laboratory, for the sake of the exhibits or artefacts.

As well as making a big difference to the state of the museum's wharves and vessels, Bailey has been a great morale booster for staff. His playful, friendly ways are a big hit with his colleagues. Staff are encouraged to book a walk and play session with Bailey using the office email system.

Apart from saving the museum's staff many hours of tedious cleaning, Bailey now has a secure home, a job he loves and plenty of new friends. This rescue dog's story has ended happily for everyone – except the seagulls.

Max to the Rescue

BY HELEN SIGNY

PETE ROY opened the gate and was turning round when something hit him in the guts. The pain was more excruciating than anything he'd felt before and he collapsed to the ground, struggling to breathe.

There was no phone reception and Pete, a farm worker and musterer in remote Takahue, in far north New Zealand, realised he was in trouble. He was alone apart from his dog, Max, a huntaway-collie cross who had been his best friend for the last ten years.

Max knew something was terribly wrong. He sniffed and licked his master as Pete squirmed in pain, as blood slowly filled his lungs.

Pete staggered a few metres but couldn't make it further. The pain was extreme and there was no way of accessing help. He turned to Max. "Go away back, boy," he said. "Go away back."

Max turned and headed off up the road, then a few minutes later came back, unwilling to leave. Pete sent him back, and after some time he again returned, alone. "Go away back, go get Angie," Pete pleaded.

Angela Rose-Collins, his former partner, lived about 500 metres down the road. Max was a regular visitor to her house and she thought nothing of



Pete Roy with Max, who saved his life, and Angela Rose-Collins, with Roxy

it when he ran into her house as she was doing some housework. She gave him a pat and sent him away. The third time, Max left with her little fox terrier, Roxy.

Pete watched out of the corner of his eye as Max returned to where he lay, pinning Roxy down with a paw and refusing to let the smaller dog go until its owner arrived.

By now nearly an hour had passed. Pete concentrated on keeping his legs straight and drawing in air through his nose. Max never moved from his position. Frantically watching Pete, Max kept

glancing at the gate, impatient for Angela to come.

Sure enough, eventually Angela arrived, looking for Roxy. She immediately called the ambulance and before

long Pete was being rushed to Whangarei Hospital, 150 kilometres away, where he was treated for a burst bowel. The ambulance officers said he probably would not have survived another hour had Max not gone for help.

"He's been with me so long and he knew I was in trouble. I reckon if I was drowning he'd probably jump in and save me," says Pete.



The ambulance officers said he probably would not have survived another hour





The Future of Flight

Flying in economy?
Get ready for an upgrade

BY PAUL SILLERS

IT'S BAD ENOUGH GETTING THROUGH THE SERIES

of queues at major airports - check-in, passport control, security and boarding. But the relief at finally getting to your seat can quickly evaporate with cramped conditions, full overhead lockers and the realisation that you should have brought your own sandwiches. Flying, for many of us, has turned from a thrilling experience into a tiresome ordeal. With global air passenger numbers set to double

Icelandair lighting (top) simulates the Aurora Borealis; an 'Economy Sleeper Class' seat aboard Kazakhstan's Air Astana





to more than six billion over the next 20 years, according to industry statistics, it's a challenge that airlines are trying to confront. And with some success.

When Jill and Jeremy Joseph from London flew from Heathrow to Nice to attend a medical conference in Monaco recently, they noticed a number of improvements to British Airways's economy cabin: contoured leather seats, with a fully adjustable headrest, a relocated magazine receptacle – now at the top of the seat back to free up some extra leg space – plus a tablet holder. BA's short-haul revamp also includes mood lighting, powered by ecologically efficient LED lights.

It's part of a global aero-industry trend towards using technology to put customers in their comfort zone.

Comfort is not just about ergonomic seats, of course. It's about creating a sense of wellbeing the whole way down the line – through crew attentiveness, cabin ambience and a sense of spaciousness. Catering and inflight entertainment are factors, too.

"I think BA exceeds the standard," says

Jeremy, whose work as an eye surgeon makes him especially appreciative of visual aspects, though his comment also applies to the quality of service and the crew's experience. Jill adds: "When we choose an airline, we want to feel we're in safe hands. Traditional airlines convey that sense of maturity and assurance. For us, that's a comfort factor."

NEW CONCEPTS

Successfully reconciling comfort for the maximum number of passengers with the built-in limitations of aircraft cabins is the Holy Grail of the airline industry. Though psychological factors have a role in building the comfort perception, the big challenge for airlines is simply how to maximise physical space for economy-class passengers.

Every spring in Hamburg, airline executives converge on the Aircraft Interiors Expo, where the latest cabin products are showcased by industry

suppliers. Adventurous concepts and prototypes are exhibited to excited executives

At recent Expos, seating in all kinds of unconventional configurations has been proposed. Airbus caused a stir in February when it filed a patent for a 're-configurable passenger bench' – a

seat that can be rapidly adapted for different combinations of passengers, from families with small children to people with restricted mobility.

It's not uncommon for the kind of cabin amenities enjoyed in first



The big challenge is how to maximise physical space for economy-class passengers





BA has introduced seat-back tablet holders for economy passengers

and business classes to filter down to economy as airlines leapfrog each other to provide more comfort at the back of the plane. We've seen this already on long-haul flights, where fully flat beds, once the preserve of first class, have become the norm for business class across Europe.

Beds are now starting to appear in economy, too. Air New Zealand got the ball rolling with its 'Skycouch', with a triple economy seat that converts into a double bed. It's a trend that's starting to be seen in Europe, with Air Astana launching its 'Economy Sleeper Class' on flights between Kazakhstan and London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Paris and Hong Kong.

For many airlines, reconfiguring the seating isn't an option, but might something be done with existing seating to improve comfort? Swiss textiles company Lantal has come up with the Pneumatic Comfort System (PCS), which lets passengers adjust the firmness of cushions.

The PCS cushions – which have been installed in some Lufthansa, Etihad Airways, Philippines Airlines and BA planes – are lighter than standard airline cushions, and this weight-saving could be exploited to add further amenities.

OVERHEAD SPACE

Cabin comfort is also about having adequate stowage space for the paraphernalia that passengers bring onboard these days.

Predrag Sasic is a petrochemicals trader who flies every week from Zurich across Europe and beyond, with various airlines – in both business and economy classes. "My everchanging work schedule and the fact that I have to hop on flights at short notice – sometimes with tight connections – means that there isn't time to check luggage into the hold. So a bit of extra overhead stowage space would be welcome."

That would suit airlines, too, as speedier stowage of 'carry-on' luggage helps shave valuable seconds when boarding and disembarking.

Boeing has unveiled its solution to the issue in the form of 'Space Bins'. These new-generation overhead lockers have 48% more capacity than previous versions of its 737; so 194 wheelie bags, rather than 132, can be



stowed. Alaska Airlines was the first to install them in October 2015, and United Airlines, Shandong Airlines and some European carriers are set to follow.

GETTING CONNECTED

All that extra gear that we're taking with us on flights includes the digital devices that have so quickly become part and parcel of our daily lives. Funnily enough, airlines are actually quite keen for us to bring our gadgets into the cabin. Personal electronic devices (PEDs) such as smartphones and tablets are improving at such a pace that airlines are struggling to upgrade their embedded seat-back entertainment systems fast enough.

Airlines are asking themselves why they should invest in costly entertainment systems that add weight,

Boeing's Space Bins boost storage capacity

become obsolete quickly and actually deliver inferior quality compared to their passengers' own devices. An aviation IT survey indicates that two-thirds of passengers want to be able to use their own PEDs for inflight entertainment.

Airlines haven't wasted time re-

sponding: International Airlines Group recently struck a deal with Chicagobased aviation technology provider Gogo to bring its satellite-based, high-speed broadband system to 118 BA, four Aer Lingus Boeing 757 and up to 15 Iberia long-haul aircraft. Installation starts early next year on the BA fleet, with completion scheduled for 2019.

So the drive towards connectivity is gathering pace – although for the time being it's up to each airline to decide exactly when and how passengers can access the mobile networks.

Passengers might appreciate internet access using their own devices, but Predrag Sasic cautions that there has to be a balance: "On short flights I listen to music, and on long-haul I watch movies. I guess it would be useful to read emails on long flights, so you are not missing anything. On

_APADANA

the other hand, sometimes it's nice not to be reachable"

APPEALING TO THE SENSES

Linking with our gadgets is one thing but airlines are also trying to connect with us through our emotions, via the touchy-feely elements of the inflight experience.

Those flying long-haul may have noticed a trend for using artificially sequenced LED 'mood lighting' that simulates the tones of sunset and sunrise, which, the makers maintain, can help reduce jet-lag; Virgin Atlantic and Emirates are well known for this.

Mood control lighting is spreading to short-haul flights: last year Icelandair installed an LED system on one of

its 757s, Hekla Aurora, that uses coloured lights to simulate the Aurora Borealis in the cabin.

They can even be adjusted to cast a warm orange glow to make inflight meals look more appetising. But the wellbeing effect isn't their only benefit: LEDs last ten times longer than previous lighting technologies.

Appealing to the senses takes in smell, too. Iberia has created its own cabin fragrance, called 'Mediterráneo de Iberia'. The scent is intended to give passengers a 'sense of wellbeing', with notes of fruit, flowers and wood.

WHAT'S COOKING?

Mealtimes are a key part of the inflight experience on any self-respecting airline. While the smell and ambience of a fine restaurant can whet the appetite, the food itself has to meet expectations. At altitude, cabin pressure reduces our senses of taste and smell by around 30%, so carriers are using new approaches to make food more palatable while retaining traditional presentation.

Travellers increasingly expect the kind of dishes they enjoy eating in a restaurant to be replicated at 30,000 feet. But much kitchen equipment is incompatible with onboard safety standards, and a niche industry has emerged making aeroplane-compat-

ible espresso machines, convection ovens, frying pans and rice steamers – to cater for the more adventurous and demanding tastes of the worldly-wise traveller.

When Predrag Sasic's wife, Mira, flew economy class from Zurich to Belgrade on Air Serbia, she felt the airline was recreating a sense of

nostalgia: "Stewardesses were dressed like Pan Am crew and they served food with proper metal cutlery. I thought I was in for a return to the days of traditional service."

So much for the interior. What about the planes themselves? There



Iberia has created its own cabin fragrance, intended to give passengers a 'sense of wellbeing'



are some subtle differences in the shape of planes these days. More and more of them have winglets – the pointy tips at the end of the wings. And if you're flying on Boeing's 787 Dreamliner, you may notice the zig-zag shaped trailing edge on the engines. These developments save fuel, reduce emissions, drive down ticket prices – and also reduce cabin noise.

CARBON IS COMING

All of these features are made possible by the increasing use of carbon composite in aircraft construction. It's an incredibly tough and resilient material, composed of carbon fibres that are bonded and reinforced with polymers, and is superseding aluminium alloys and steel.

The latest Boeings and Airbuses, the Dreamliner and A350XWB, are around 50% carbon composite, providing strength and weight advantages. Aesthetically, composite material also enables design in the cabin to be more fluid. A new cabin design concept called Airspace by Airbus has already been incorporated into the company's new A330neo.

Airbus says that Airspace cabins will be "more relaxing, inspiring, beautiful and functional". The improvements will include larger overhead storage bins, more spacious lavatories, wider seats and aisles, and unobstructed under-seat foot space.

But the biggest improvement in the inflight experience ushered in by carbon fibre is that its greater structural flexibility allows for increased cabin pressure. Airlines have traditionally avoided raising cabin pressure because over time it puts greater stress on aluminium hulls, leading to metal fatigue and a shorter working life of the plane.

Why should passengers care about increased cabin pressure? A study conducted by Oklahoma State University found that reduced cabin pressure induces a general sense of discomfort and malaise, while greater cabin pressure promotes greater oxygen saturation, meaning that the body doesn't have to work as hard to keep the blood oxygenated. According to Medical News Today, lower levels of oxygen reaching the brain can greatly exacerbate jet-lag symptoms.

THE HUMAN FACTOR

There are some things that smart technology will never replace. On Jill and Jeremy Joseph's flight back from Nice, the pilot related the goal tally of the Liverpool versus Sevilla match as the Europa League final progressed. In an age when the pilots are locked out of sight behind the cockpit door, "it's always nice to hear from the captain," says Jill, who appreciates that "pilots seem to have that mastery of understatement". Today's crew image is about assurance, personal service and a gentle sense of humour.

Jeremy recalls, "I was flying back to London from Namibia in June just



as results of the UK's Referendum on Europe were starting to come through, and the captain quipped through the cabin PA system that he wasn't sure whether or not we would be landing in the European Union that evening".

Mira echoes that appreciation of the human factor: "It's just so nice to step aboard an airline from your native country and feel a sense of being back home already." She observes that "Swiss crew consistently strike the right balance of service with a smile."

The next trend in cabin crew service will be the use of 'big data,' as airlines continue to capture more passenger A sense of spaciousness is central to Airbus's new Airspace economy cabin

information and use it to ask if you want your favourite drink, as they address you by name.

Some of this data comes from passengers subscribing to airline loyalty programmes. Preferences are also tracked from online questionnaires and passenger feedback on social media. So don't be surprised if, in the near future, crew have an idea of your musical tastes.

Let's hope that the personal touch is one thing that doesn't change about the inflight experience.



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An idea whose time had come

Contact Lens

BY DANIEL ENGBER FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

N 1887, A GERMAN DOCTOR named Theodor Saemisch saw a patient whose lower eyelid had been destroyed by carcinoma, leaving his cornea exposed and desiccated and his lashes curling inward. To preserve the patient's vision, Saemisch contracted with two brothers who

specialised in artificial eyes. They made a protective shell of hand-blown glass, transparent in the middle and opaque around the edge, with reddish threads for blood vessels. "I have worn the glass supplied by you continuously, day and night," the patient wrote the brothers 21 years



later, "and my eye has always felt very well with it."

The idea of using rounded glass for vision problems had been around since at least 1827, when John Herschel proposed that a glass capsule filled with animal jelly could correct

an irregular cornea. But no-one put it into practice until 1887. That was also the year that a medical student named August Müller asked a microscope maker in Berlin to create a glass device, cast from a cadaver's eye, to correct his severe myopia. And the Swiss physician Adolf Eugen Fick was testing contact-lens designs on rabbits, colleagues and himself, "It's a bit like London buses," says Timothy Bowden, a Brit-

ish optician and contact-lens historian. "Nothing happens for ages, and then they all come at once."

The early lenses were much bigger than what we have today, and much less comfortable. Wearers could abide them for only a few hours at a time. Eventually, a lack of oxygen to the cornea would fog their vision and make lights appear to have coloured halos. At the first signs of this condition, known as Sattler's veil, patients were advised to remove their lenses for an hour.

Softer plastic made these problems less intense. In the 1950s, a Czech chemist named Otto Wichterle in-

vented a polymer called HEMA and used it to create a more pliable contact lens. Wearers still suffered from too little oxygen and Sattler's veil, but they no longer had to remove their contacts for lengthy periods. Instead, they could slide the flexible lenses to the sides of their eyes to give their corneas a break.

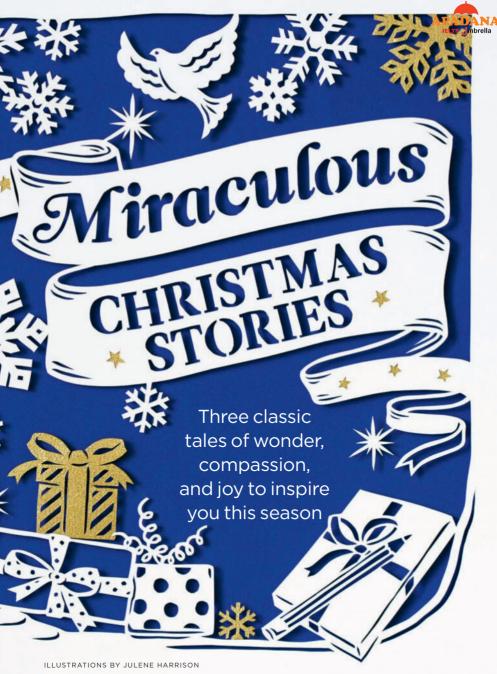
Finally, in the early 1980s, a Danish ophthalmologist named Michael Bay devised a

way to make lenses disposable. Until then, people kept their contacts until they were so dirty and degraded as to be unwearable. Bay's invention made the contact lens safer and more appealing to the average patient, Bowden says. "Johnson & Johnson bought that technology and made him a multi-millionaire, thank you very much."



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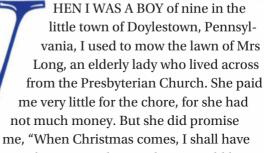






The Christmas Present

BY JAMES MICHENER



a present for you." I spent much time wondering what it would be. The boys I played with had baseball gloves and bicycles and ice skates, and I was so eager to acquire any one of these that I convinced myself that my benefactor intended choosing from among them.

"It would hardly be a baseball glove," I reasoned with myself. "A woman like Mrs Long wouldn't know much about baseball." Since she was a frail little person, I also ruled out the bicycle, for how could she handle such a contraption?

On my last Saturday at work, Mrs Long said, "Now remember, because you've been a good boy all summer, at Christmas I'll have a present waiting. You come to the door and collect it." These words clinched it. Since she was going to have the present in her house, and since she herself would be

Published in Reader's Digest in 1967. handling it, unquestionably she was giving me a pair of ice skates.

I became so convinced of this that I

could imagine myself upon the skates. As the cold days of November arrived and ice began to form on the ponds, I began to try my luck on the ice that would be sustaining me and my skates through the winter.

"Get away from that ice!" a man shouted. "It's not strong enough yet." But soon it would be.

As Christmas approached, it was with difficulty that I restrained myself from reporting to Mrs Long and demanding my present. Our family agreed that the first of December was too early for me to do this. "She may not have it wrapped yet," someone argued, and this made sense.

On December 21, a cold snap froze all the ponds so that boys who already had ice skates were able to

use them, and my longing to possess mine, even though I could not open the package for a few days, became overpowering. On December 22 I could restrain myself no longer. I marched down the street, presented myself at the door of the house whose lawn I had tended all

"I've been waiting for you," she said, leading me into her parlour, its windows heavy with purple velvet.

summer, and said, "I've come for my

She sat me in a chair. disappeared to another room, and in a moment stood before me holding a package that under no conceivable circumstances could hold a baseball glove or a bicycle or even a pair of skates. I was painfully disappointed but so far as I can recall did not show it, because during

present, Mrs Long,"

the week, my advisers at home had warned repeatedly, "Whatever she has for you, take it graciously and say thank you."

What she had was an ordinary parcel about 23 cm wide, 30 cm long, and less than a centimetre thick. As Mrs Long held it in her frail hands, curiosity replaced my initial disappointment, and when I lifted it from her, the extreme lightness of the gift quite captivated me. It weighed almost nothing.

"What is it?" I asked

"You'll see on Christmas Day." I shook it. Nothing rattled, but I thought I did catch a sound of some sort - a quiet, muffled sound that was somehow familiar but unidentifiable. "What is it?" I asked again.

"A kind of magic," Mrs Long said, and that was all

Her words were enough to set my mind dancing with new possibilities, so that by the time I reached home, I had convinced myself that I held some great wonder. "She gave me a magi-

> cian's set. I'll turn pitchers of milk into rabbits."

How long the passage to Christmas was! There were other presents of normal dimension and weight. But Mrs Long's box dominated all, for it had to do with magic.

On Christmas morning, before the sun was up, I had this box on my knees, tearing at the

reused coloured string that bound it. Soon the wrapping paper was off and in my lap lay a flat box with its top hinged about halfway down.

With great excitement I opened the hinged lid to find inside a shimmering pile of ten flimsy sheets of black paper, each labelled in iridescent letters, "Carbon Paper Regal Premium". Of the four words I knew only the second, and what it signified in this context I could not guess.



On Christmas morning, I had this box on my knees, tearing at the string that bound it



"Is it magic?" I asked.

Aunt Laura, who taught school, had the presence of mind to say, "It really is!" And she took two pieces of white paper, placed between them one of the black sheets from the box, and, with a hard pencil, wrote my name on

the upper sheet. Then, removing it and the Carbon Paper Regal Premium, she handed me the second sheet, which her pencil had in no way touched.

There was my name! It was clean, and very dark, and well formed and as beautiful as Christmas Day itself.

I WAS ENTHRALLED! This was indeed magic of the greatest dimension. That a pencil could write on one piece of paper and mysteriously record on another was a miracle that was so gratifying to my childish mind that I can honestly say that in that one moment, in the dark of Christmas morning, I understood as much about printing and the duplication of words and the fundamental mystery of disseminating ideas as I have learned in the remaining half-century of my life.

I wrote and wrote, using up whole tablets until I had ground off the last shred of blackness from the ten sheets of carbon paper. It was the most enchanting Christmas present a boy like me could have had, infinitely more significant than a baseball glove or a pair of skates. It was exactly the present I needed, and it reached me at precisely that Christmas when I was best able to comprehend it.

I have received some pretty thundering Christmas presents since then but none that ever came close to the magnificence of this one. The average present merely gratifies a temporary yearning, as the ice skates would have done; the great present illuminates all the years of life that remain.

It was not until some years later that I realised that the ten sheets of Carbon Paper Regal Premium that Mrs Long gave me had cost her nothing. She had used them for her purposes and would normally have thrown them away, except that she had had the ingenuity to guess that a boy might profit from a present totally outside the realm of his ordinary experience.

I hope this year some boys and girls will receive, from thoughtful adults who really love them, gifts that will jolt them out of all they have known till now. It is such gifts and such experiences – usually costing little or nothing – that transform a life and lend it an impetus that may continue for decades.



Pennies from Heaven

BY JULIE BAIN



Y DAD LOVED PENNIES, especially those with the elegant stalk of wheat curving around each side of the One Cent on the back. Those were the pennies he grew up with in Iowa during the Depression, and Lord knows he didn't have many.

When I was a kid, Dad and I would go for long walks together. He was an athletic 1.9 metres, and I had to trot to keep up with him. Sometimes we'd spy coins along the way – a penny here, a dime there. Whenever I picked up a penny, he'd ask, "Is it a wheat?" It always thrilled him when we found one of those special coins produced from 1909 to 1958, the year of my birth. On one of these walks, he told me he often dreamed of finding coins. I was amazed. "I always have that dream too!" I told him. It was our secret connection.

Dad died in 2002. By then, I was living in New York, which can be exciting, or cold and heartless. One grey winter day, not long after his death, I was walking down Fifth Avenue, feeling bereft, and I glanced up and found myself in front of the

Published in Reader's Digest in 2007. First Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest churches in Manhattan. When I was a child, Dad had been a Presbyterian deacon, but I hadn't attended in a long time. I decided to go.

Sunday morning, I was greeted warmly and ushered to a seat in the soaring old sanctuary. I opened the programme and saw that the first hymn was 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,' Dad's favourite, one we'd sung at his funeral. When the organ and choir began, I burst into tears.

After the service, I walked out the front doors, shook the pastor's hand, stepped onto the sidewalk – and there was a penny. I stooped to pick it up and turned it over, and sure enough, it was a wheat. A 1944, a year my father was serving on a ship in the South Pacific.

That started it. Suddenly wheat pennies began turning up on the sidewalks everywhere. I got most of the important years: his birth year, my mum's birth year, the year his mother died, the year he graduated from college, the war years, the year he met my mum, the year they got married, the year my sister was born. But alas, no 1958 penny – my year, the last year they were made.



Meanwhile I attended church pretty regularly, and along towards Christmas a year later, I decided I ought to join. The next Sunday, after the service, I was walking up Fifth Avenue and spotted a penny in the middle of an intersection. *Oh, no way,* I thought. It was a busy street; cabs were speeding by – *should I risk it?* I just had to get it.

A wheat! But the penny was worn.

and I couldn't read the date. When I got home, I took out my magnifying glass and tilted the copper surface to the light. There was my birthday.

As a journalist, I'm in a profession where scepticism is a necessary and honest virtue. But I found 21 wheat pennies on the streets of Manhattan in the year after my father died, and I don't think that's a coincidence.



Last White Christmas

BY JO ROSS

N THE SUMMER of 1977 I was in my early 20s and about to go up to Edinburgh to perform in a play on the fringe. But three days before rehearsals were due to start, the director phoned to say that the play was off.

To ease my disappointment, he asked me if I'd like to work for Bing Crosby for a couple of weeks. The famous crooner was coming to London to record a Christmas Special at Elstree Studios. I gave a noncommittal answer and then forgot about it. All I wanted was a good mope.

Two hours later the phone rang and someone with an American accent asked to speak to Jo Ross.

"Speaking."

"This is Bing Crosby."

"Oh, stop it – it's not even funny. Anyway, he's been dead for years." Twenty toe-curlingly embarrassing minutes later I found myself employed as Mr Crosby's 'gofer'. My duties seemed to be remarkably light: take Mr Crosby to the set each morning, run errands for him, make sure his car was waiting for him at the end of the day.

I reported for duty in a dark green Mini Moke that I had borrowed from my boyfriend. It had long since lost its canvas sides and the petrol gauge did not work. It was a disgrace.

Elstree was huge. When I got there, the sound stage was being converted into the interior of a typical English manor house, with a drawing room the size of Westminster Abbey. In the rehearsal room, leaning against a piano, was a small, upright man with a pale blue trilby hat on the back of his head.

"Hi there," said Bing Crosby. "How you doin'? Gonna show me round? Can you show me where to get coffee?"

"Certainly," I replied. I hadn't a clue where to get a coffee. Bing was very relaxed and chatty, and pretended not to notice that I was lost. Eventually we reached a junction in the corridor.

With a wry smile, Bing suggested that we turn left. "What d'you think? Shall we risk it?"

Pretty soon I was having a ball. Bing was undemanding - and rather shy. I thought he was adorable and was thrilled when one day he asked for a lift back to his hotel. Twenty minutes later we were chugging along in the Mini Moke, when suddenly the engine cut out. I hopped out and started looking pointlessly under the bonnet.

A voice from the front seat asked.

"Could you have run out of gas?"

Of course, Bing and I stood by the side of the road waiting for someone to give us a lift to a petrol station

> Eventually, a little car heaving with children stopped. The driver, a middle-aged man, approached us, his eyes bulging.

"You... you... you..."

"Yep," said Bing. "We're out of gas. Can you give me a ride to a garage?"

"Me?... You?... Me... me... and you? Kids, out, get out... Get out of the car!"

Two minutes later I was standing by the road with four bewildered children. watching Bing Crosby disappear in a Ford Fiesta

When the car returned with petrol, the fan insisted on pouring it into the tank Then he bundled the now-furious children into the Fiesta and with a final "You... you...", drove off.

Bing ended his Christmas Special, unsurprisingly, with 'White Christmas.' The studio was packed for the recording. Bing asked to see me in the make-up room.

"Hey, Lefty," he said, using the nickname he'd given me when he discovered I was a southpaw. "Write me out an idiot board, would you?"

"Yes, of course. What for?"

"'White Christmas.'"

There was stunned silence in the make-up room. Could it be that Bing Crosby did not know the words? He



explained that he needed a cue card because he had trouble remembering the verse at the very beginning. Somehow I found some large white cards and a marker pen. I scrawled out the first verse and took up my prearranged position under the piano.

As the band struck up, Bing looked down and began to sing these lines:

The sun is shining
The grass is green
The orange and plum trees sway
There's never been such a day
In Beverly Hills LA

He was about to continue with "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas" when he faltered, took another look at the card and... stopped singing. The music cut out. Bing got down on his hands and knees and crawled under the piano. He took my hand and very quietly said, "There isn't a plum tree in LA."

Fearing one of us had lost the plot,
I gripped his hand and
said, "That's a pity."

Published in Reader's Digest in 2009.

A little less gently now, he stabbed at where I'd written the word "plum". "It's palm trees, palm trees."

It was awful. From my position under the piano I thought of what a useless gofer I'd been and how often I'd let Bing down, even forgetting to bring the clubs when he was playing golf. Yet he had always responded with

humour and grace. Now he'd fluffed his lines – all because of me.

The rest of the day was a blur of sets being taken down and costumes packed up. People were saying their goodbyes, making plans for farewell drinks

I wanted to say goodbye to Bring and to apologise, but I couldn't find him. Feeling oddly empty and depressed, I wandered outside, thinking that I'd never see him again. Then I heard a familiar voice.

"Hey Lefty! Can you give me a ride?" There was Bing in the front seat of the Moke, one foot perched on the dashboard.

"Absolutely," I said. "London?"
"Why not – shall we risk it?"

Five weeks later, Bing Crosby died of a heart attack while playing golf in Spain. He was 74 years old.







Laughter

THE BEST MEDICINE

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT

A panel of doctors was asked for their opinions concerning a proposal to add a new wing to their hospital.

- The allergists voted to scratch it.
- The neurologists thought the administration had a lot of nerve.
- The podiatrists thought it was a step forward.
- The ophthalmologists considered the idea short-sighted.
- The plastic surgeons felt it would give the building the facelift it so desperately needed.
- The morticians yelled, "Over my dead body!"
- The surgeons decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.
- The cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no. Source: guy-sports.com

SWIFT AND SILENT

As Teddy came thundering down the stairs, his father grew annoyed.

"Teddy!" he called. "How many more times must I tell you to come down the stairs quietly? Go back up and try again, but less noisily."

There was a silence, and Teddy reappeared in the front room. "That's much better," said his father. "Now, will you always use that approach?"

"Suits me," said Teddy. "I slid down the banister." Source: broadcaster.org.uk



"Can you think of anyone the victim may have had a falling-out with?"

UN-UNITED NATIONS

Back in June, the United Kingdom voted to split from the European Union. 'Brexit' – as in 'British Exit' – was the catchy nickname

for the break-up. Here are the handles for other countries should they make a similar move, be they in Europe or not:



- Czechout
- AufWiederSpain
- Boltswana ■ Fleeii
- Scootland
- Outdia
- DubaibyeAfghaniscram
- Farewales

Source: humorlabs.com





澳门 ACCUL Pearl on the Delta

This city's rich Portuguese and Chinese heritage will delight visitors



NONE OF MACAU'S MOST FAMOUS -

and most photographed – landmarks, the splendid Ruins of St. Paul's façade is all that remains of the 17th-century Church of Mater Dei and adjacent St. Paul's College, which were destroyed by fire in 1835.

THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED

region in the world, Macau's estimated 653,000 residents live and work shoulder to shoulder in an area just a shade over 30 km². A vibrant mix of Chinese and Portuguese heritage makes this an unforgettably vivid and colourful place to visit.





▲ ST. MICHAEL'S CHAPEL in Macau's Old Town is a wonderful example of Gothic-Catholic architecture. The still-functioning building guards the entrance to a cemetery full of intricate tombs, sepulchres and headstones.

MACAU IS A SHOPPER'S PARADISE,

thanks to its tariff-exempt status as a free port. Among the big-brand clothing labels and electronic gadgetry you'll find plenty of handicraft stores selling traditional wares.

NEON SIGNS AND FLASHING LIGHTS

helped Macau earn its reputation as the 'Las Vegas of the East'. Yet beyond the glitz and glamour hides a uniquely 'Macanese' wealth of food, culture and architecture just waiting to be explored.









- name. Portuguese sailors took the local term 'A-Ma-Gau' (Bay of Goddess A-Ma) and bestowed it upon the peninsula.
- **◆ HAGGLING FOR DELICACIES** at a traditional meat-seller's marketplace.
- **◆** THE HOLY HOUSE OF MERCY, part of the Historic Centre of Macau. which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has served as an orphanage, a medical clinic and a refuge for widows of sailors lost at sea.
- **◆ THE BEAUTIFULLY PRESERVED**

St. Francis Xavier Church in Coloane is a favourite with visitors due to its baroque style and cheerful yellow exterior.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK

Great Songs Almost Ruined by Their Original Titles

BY BRANDON SPECKTOR

THE BEATLES

'HEY JUDE' WAS

'HEY JULES' When John and Cynthia Lennon split in 1968, Paul McCartney felt so bad for their five-year-old son, Julian, that he drove out to the suburbs to console him. By the time he arrived, McCartney had written the boy a ballad called 'Hey Jules' – a name he later obscured before sharing the song with the world.

'MRS. ROBINSON' WAS 'MRS. ROOSEVELT'

While scoring *The Graduate*, director Mike Nichols turned his lonely eyes to Simon and Garfunkel. Paul Simon was too busy touring to write, but he had been tinkering with a tune called 'Mrs. Roosevelt', a tribute to Eleanor

Roosevelt and the glorious past. Nichols agreed to use it if Simon agreed to change the title. He did.

'TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE HEART' WAS 'VAMPIRES IN LOVE'

Bonnie Tyler's wrenching ballad about "love in the dark" was almost much darker. According to lyricist Jim Steinman, "I actually wrote that to be a vampire love song ... Its original title was 'Vampires in Love' because I was working on a musical of Nosferatu."

'TUTTI FRUTTI, AW ROOTIE' WAS 'TUTTI FRUTTI, GOOD BOOTY'

Frustrated in the studio one day, struggling artist Little Richard started hammering the nearest piano and belting out a raunchy tune he used to play in southern clubs. Producer Bumps Blackwell liked what he heard but eventually swapped 'good booty' for a slang expression meaning 'all right'. The rest, as they say, is aw rootie.

'IRON MAN' WAS NEARLY 'IRON BLOKE'

Black Sabbath guitarist
Tony Iommi had just
written one of the
greatest rock riffs of
all time, but he needed
lyrics. Ever inspired,
vocalist Ozzy Osbourne
posited that the riff
sounded just like "a
big iron bloke walking
about." For months, 'Iron
Bloke' remained the
song's working title.



Quotable Quotes

The most difficult thing is the decision to act.
The rest is merely tenacity.

AMELIA EARHART,

SUCCESS SHOULD BE WORN LIKE A T-SHIRT, NOT A TUXEDO.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA, actress



IF WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO BE ALONE, WE'LL ONLY KNOW HOW TO BE LONELY.

> SHERRY TURKLE, professor of science, technology and society

Nothing is scarier than the people who try to find easy answers to complicated questions.

MARJANE SATRAPI, graphic novelist



One good thing about music, when it hits, you feel no pain.

BOB MARLEY, musician

BEING FUNNY IS BEING AWAKE TO THE ABSURDITY OF NORMALCY.

BOB MANKOFF, cartoon editor

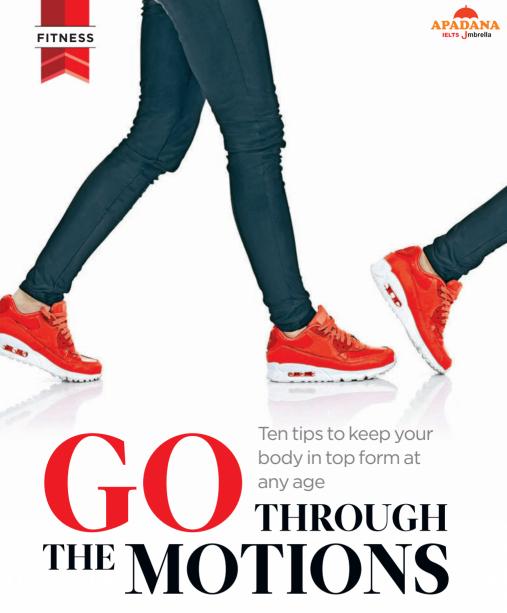
The older I get, the greater power I seem to have to help the world; I am like a snowball – the further I am rolled, the more I gain.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, women's rights activist



A family can be the bane of one's existence. A family can also be most of the meaning of one's existence.

KERI HULME. New Zealand author



BY IAN MACNEILL FROM ZOOMER



WHEN IT COMES TO physical activity, the more you do, the more you can do. Perhaps you're already aware of that because you've incorporated exercise into your daily routine and revel in the way it makes you look and feel. Or maybe you believe those days are behind you, and you simply remember how wonderful life was when you were vigorous and active.

Even though we know we need exercise to remain healthy, most of us don't get the necessary amount, and we're paying for that in countless physiological and psychological ways. The cost of this exercise deficit is enormous, for both individuals and society. Many of us are ageing faster than we should due to poor diet and exercise habits. We're also getting sicker more often and for longer periods. We're also constantly fending off, if not depression, then at least a low-grade sense of guilt over the fact that we are neglecting our bodies.

But we don't have to accept a lapse into lethargy as inevitable. There are many easy, enjoyable ways to



incorporate exercise into even the most sedentary lifestyle, and the benefits of doing so are enormous. Regular physical activity can significantly lower the risk of heart disease and stroke: it can prevent and control risk factors for a variety of conditions, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer. It can control obesity. boost energy levels, reduce stress and improve both sleep and digestion. Exercise also releases endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals, leading to a sense of wellbeing.

> **HOW MUCH** PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS RECOMMENDED?

WHO recommends that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, or at least 75 minutes

of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderateand vigorous-intensity activity

throughout the week.

For additional health benefits adults should increase their moderate-intensity physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or equivalent.

Muscle-strengthening activities involving major muscle groups should be done on two or more days a week.

WHO Physical Activity Fact Sheet, June 2016

There are social benefits as well For a host of reasons – living far from family members, an inability to drive. disabilities - growing older is often accompanied by a sense of isolation. which can trigger depression. Exercise can bring us into contact with other people, who are able to provide motivation and emotional support and broaden our social networks

Seniors may cite a host of excuses for avoiding physical activity: I'm too old to benefit from it now: I need to save my strength; I might fall and injure myself; I'm wheelchair-bound and can't do anything. While it's true that many ageing people have health problems and legitimate concerns about injury, the biggest barrier to getting enough exercise is often psychological. Individuals of any age can benefit from moving around. In fact, because exercise increases strength and stamina. slows down the loss of hone mass and improves balance, it can significantly reduce the risk of falling ill.

If you've been sitting on the sidelines for a decade or more, the prospect of getting started can be intimidating. To help you over that hump, here are some ways to integrate exercise into your daily habits.

1. GET A PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Check with your doctor if you have concerns. Discuss the kinds of activities you'd like to engage in and the potential impact they could have on any pre-existing conditions.

- 2. START SLOW Overdoing it at the beginning is the major reason why people give up. Pay attention to signals your body is sending you. If it hurts or makes you dizzy, don't do it. Don't underestimate the power of walking: it's inexpensive and therapeutic.
- **3. FOLLOW YOUR HEART** Choose activities you enjoy. Hate the idea of a treadmill? Step off. Despise running? Try swimming. If you ride your bicycle for pleasure or just to get around, you could wind up fit by default.
- **4. MAKE IT A HABIT** Establish a routine. Commit to exercising three to four days a week for a few months. The practice will become second nature you may even look forward to it.
- **5. MANAGE EXPECTATIONS** The objective is not to look in the mirror and see the person you were 20 years ago; you need to imagine the best person you can be right now. You won't drop 20 kg in a few sessions at the gym this is a long-term project.
- **6. TEAM UP WITH OTHERS** Having a little company can be inspiring and make things a lot more fun. There are

groups dedicated to almost everything you can imagine, from cycling to hiking and birdwatching.

7. ENROL IN COURSES Contact your local community centre. Most have exercise programmes ranging from swimming and aerobics to tai chi and walking groups. These programmes are affordable and can help establish positive habits.

8. CONNECT WITH A GOOD COACH

Consider working with a personal trainer. He or she can assess your needs and tailor a plan to your specific strengths and limitations, while providing encouragement and guidance.

9. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

Make sure your fitness equipment is visible and accessible. For instance, keep a tennis ball beside where you sit to watch TV, because it's easy to squeeze it while you're relaxing.

10. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF Over time the benefits of fitness will reveal themselves, and you'll enjoy discovering them. Exercise may not be a cure for ageing, but engaging in it will get you to the finish line in style.

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WHO PUT THE X IN XMAS?

Long story short - the Greeks. The popular greeting card abbreviation derives from the Greek word for Christ: Xristos.





All in a Day's Work

HUMOUR ON THE JOB

ONE-TRACK MIND

While I was working as a department store Santa Claus, a boy asked me for an electric train set. "If you get your train," I told him, "your dad is going to want to play with it, too. Is that all right?"

The boy became very quiet. So, moving the conversation along. I asked. "What else would you like Santa to bring you?"

He promptly replied, "Another train."

Seen on the internet



BROKEN DECORD

Most of our music store customers have a story about their old vinyl collection. Once, a man asked how much a record cost. My colleague quoted him the price, then added: "But there's a surcharge if we have to listen to how your mother made you throw out all your old vinyl records."

SUBMITTED BY LINDA NEUKRUG

DIFFICULT CLIENT

Complaint from a design client:

"That letter 'i' looks a lot like an upside-down exclamation mark."

Source: clientsfromhell.co

PROOF OF LIFE

When a young woman came into our urgent-care clinic, I asked to see her insurance card and photo ID. The insurance she had, but not her driver's licence. "That's OK, though," she said, pulling out her phone. "I can show you my Instagram if that helps." SURMITTED BY DANA THAYER

MISERABLE MILESTONE

A work colleague had just celebrated his 50th birthday at the weekend and I was aware he wasn't very happy about reaching this milestone in his life.

He came into the office on the Monday looking glum. When I asked



him why he was down, he retorted, "Put it this way – I had a party on Saturday night and my neighbours didn't even realise."

SUBMITTED BY MAXINE COOPER

EJECTION SLIP

While my brother, a helicopter pilot, was attending a training exercise, another chopper pilot prematurely released his payload 100 metres above the ground. No-one was hurt, but the next morning this label was placed next to the release switch on all the copters: For Desk Iob. Push Here.

SUBMITTED BY VIRGINIA SPENCER



My colleague Candy burst into the office one morning and declared, "Well, here it is – the 16th anniversary of my having married too young."

SUBMITTED BY LYNNETTE COMBS

BATTLE OF THE SEXES

After months of fruitless searching, I ran across a job in the want ads that I knew I was qualified for.
The posting read: "Position may be filled by male or female only."

SUBMITTED BY RACHAEL DANIELS



"It's from the debating society."

MAKE THESE NEW TERMS HAPPEN

Hey, dictionary updaters. Looking for some new terms to induct? Try these on for size.

- Chairdrobe (n.) Piling clothes on a chair rather than putting them away in a wardrobe or dresser.
- Epipihanot (n.) An idea that seems like an amazing insight to the conceiver, but is in fact pointless, mundane, stupid or incorrect.
- Internest (n.) The cocoon of blankets and pillows you gather around yourself while spending long periods of time on the internet
- **Texpectation** (*n*.) The anticipation felt when waiting for a response to a text.
- Unkeyboardinated (adj.) When you're unable to type without repeatedly making mistakes.

 Source: viralthread.com







START AT THE BEGINNING

'Vaping' is the name given to electronic nicotine delivery systems, including e-cigarettes, e-pipes, e-cigars and e-hookahs. (Some e-cigarettes don't contain nicotine, but the majority do and they're our focus here.) Nicotine is one of the substances absorbed by the body when a tobacco cigarette is lit and the smoke inhaled. By contrast, e-cigarettes and their ilk don't use tobacco and nothing burns.

Vaping By HAZEL FLYNN



HOW DO E-CIGARETTES WORK?

Batteries heat a liquid containing alvcerine or propylene alycol. water, flavouring and nicotine. This creates a fine spray that, when inhaled. delivers a nicotine hit. Exhaled, the tiny chemically loaded particles disperse in the air as a 'vapour' (hence the term 'vaping', and 'vapers' for e-cigarette users).

www.apadana-ielts.com





HOW SAFE IS VAPING?

The answer varies enormously depending on which expert you ask. But all agree that vaping is less dangerous than smoking. Why? Nicotine is highly addictive and can be poisonous if enough is swallowed, but it's not considered risky if absorbed correctly, which is why nicotine replacement therapy is delivered through patches or gum. While cigarette smoke contains many carcinogens, nicotine itself is not a carcinogen.

"[We] desperately need advice on e-cigarettes that is evidence-based and free from any suspicion of influence by vested interests."

PROFESSORS MARTIN MCKEE AND SIMON
CAPEWELL in the British Medical Journal

BY THE NUMBERS 95%

Percentage by which long-term vaping is less likely to damage health than smoking, according to the UK Royal College of Physicians.

1066%

Percentage increase between 2011-2015 in highschoolers vaping, according to the US EDA

ARE E-CIGARETTES A QUIT-SMOKING TOOL?

This is the heart of the issue and it's key to whether e-cigarettes are legal from nation to nation. In many countries, 'therapeutic goods' are regulated much more tightly than 'consumer goods'. Australia, Belgium and Malaysia are among the countries where e-cigarettes containing nicotine don't have therapeutic approval and are banned, while in France, Germany and Ireland they are considered consumer products so don't have to meet health requirements. In New Zealand the government is currently calling for submissions on the issue. Laws vary because addiction specialists who advise health bodies are divided on whether vaping helps smokers quit or is a backdoor route to recruiting non-smokers. Even advocates acknowledge that vaping's long-term effects are not yet known. In short, the jury is still out.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK December • 2016 89





Glasses: \$1

There are 150 million people with poor eyesight who can't afford glasses.

One man wants to change that

BY FELIX HUTT

T'S LATE 2012, and a team of opticians is bicycling from village to village in Uganda. They invite people to sit on benches in front of a tree on which they have posted an eye chart. If a villager needs glasses, the opticians determine which lenses, measure the distance between their pupils and discuss what colour frames they want. They then fit the lenses into the frames, and hand over the glasses for the equivalent of one dollar.

"When I saw the first person wearing new glasses and beaming with

delight as he paid, it gave me a lot of inner strength," says Martin Aufmuth of Erlangen, Germany, who invented this inexpensive way of getting glasses to those who need them. At last, an old man could see his village properly for the first time. Children who had been regarded as disabled could attend school, seamstresses could sew again and taxi drivers could get back behind the wheel. Aufmuth now has hundreds of stories like this.

Aufmuth's terraced house in central Germany is hardly the sort of place from which you would expect a global



Seeing clearly at last thanks to the \$1 glasses invented by Martin Aufmuth (left)



revolution to be launched. Nevertheless, that's exactly what's happening in the upstairs office of the man with the grey ponytail who burns the midnight oil phoning people, winning them over to his cause, asking them for help to make the world a better place, and coordinating more than 100 mostly volunteer workers

The 42-year-old husband and father of three is taking a sabbatical from his job as a maths and physics teacher because his organisation, The OneDollarGlasses Association, is now as big as a medium-sized company. Aufmuth's goal is to bring into focus a world that appears blurred to many poor people. His invention could bring a revolutionary improvement in their lives.

There are 150 million people with impaired vision who urgently need glasses. "Many of us couldn't live without our glasses," says Aufmuth. "We can go to the optician and buy them, but for people in developing countries, not having them means

AS A CHILD, Aufmuth wanted to be an inventor, but believed that all the important inventions had already been made. He soon became upset at the injustice in the world. "I've always found

it unacceptable that we live such affluent lifestyles, while a few flight hours away people are dying of starvation or easily curable diseases." he says.

He has been making a difference, raising more than half a million euros for the aid organisation The Hunger Project, and founding CO2-Maus, which for years was one of the biggest

climate protection competitions for youth.

In 2006, Aufmuth read *Out of Poverty*. The author, Paul Polak, is a pioneer of the social enterprise movement, which aims to provide sustainable assistance rather than simply sending money. Polak writes that providing eyeglasses to people who live on a dollar a day or less would be a big step forward.

After all, how can someone get out of poverty if they can't see properly?

Aufmuth immediately grasped the significance of this. But he felt this must be a job for experts, and surely too great a challenge for one person.

A few days later, he noticed a bargain shop selling reading glasses for one euro (US\$1.12). So it was possible to produce glasses cheaply? He decided to try to invent something robust yet affordable to make the glasses with. His aim was also to train local people to use it so that they could make and sell the glasses, providing them with a



Aufmuth saw
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they are unable to work."

living, "It is important to trust people and give them responsibility."

Aufmuth built a workshop in his basement. He carried out experiments and became a regular at his local hardware stores. He found a type of spring steel for the frames so flexible it can survive being stepped on by a cow. A company in China cuts and grinds the lenses; they can easily be clicked into the frame by hand.

He also designed, with the help of engineers, a 30 cm x 30 cm box, or 'bending unit'. It contains the spring steel, lenses sorted by strength, and other materials for the glasses. Its operating instructions are colour codes that can be understood by anyone. On top of the box sits a device that its operator can use to make the glasses by hand in minutes. The cost to do so is approximately one dollar.

Aufmuth brought his boxes to Africa in 2012, when an aid organisation of ophthalmologists who perform cataract operations in Uganda invited him along on a trip. Describing the chaos - shipments of his bending units arriving late, village chiefs who had to be convinced to grant him an audience - Aufmuth just laughs and comments, "That's Africa for you."

It was his first time there, but he instantly fell in love with the continent "Africa is often more colourful and joyful than the world we live in." Aufmuth says.

Now that he was able to test his plan. Aufmuth could see demand was huge, both from people prepared to pay two or three days' wages for a pair of spectacles, and those who wanted to be trained to make them

After Uganda, the project gathered momentum. More volunteers joined and donations started trickling in. OneDollarGlasses established operations in Rwanda, Malawi and Burkina Faso. Aid organisations in South America have also expressed interest.

Aufmuth and his team have sold tens of thousands of pairs of glasses. But in addition to the 150 million people with impaired vision, there are half a billion who can't read without glasses. "If we can provide a significant proportion of them with glasses over the next five to ten years, I'll be happy." \mathbf{R}

To find out more about the project, go to www.onedollarglasses.org



THE TRUST FACTOR

At a restaurant, I never put the napkin in my lap. Why? Because I believe in myself.

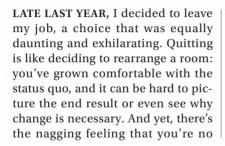
HANNIBAL BURESS, COMEDIAN



While You're Ahead

Why opting out can do vou good

> BY LISA COXON



longer entirely satisfied with your current circumstances, perhaps even that you're stagnating.

While it's not out of the question for feelings of regret to surface after a major overhaul, leaving a position, project or situation can reveal exciting possibilities, making you feel inspired and renewed.



Decide to Change Your Perspective

Because quitting can trigger feelings such as guilt and shame, we often do everything possible to avoid it.

"We're taught from our earliest days that if you quit something, it means you're a failure," says counselling psychologist Will Meek. He suggests we view quitting in a virtuous light instead – as a behaviour that involves considerable courage, foresight and trust. "Rather than shaming, I think we could teach the value of knowing when to stop."

The right time, he says, often comes after you've put a lot of effort into something but have seen no improve-

ment. A couple attempting to salvage a flagging relationship, for example, might have tried therapy or implementing regular date nights, to no avail. At that point, Meek says, you can reassure yourself that it makes good sense to go in different directions.

Once you decide it's time to opt out, remember: you're in charge of

how to deliver that message. Friends and family members may respond to news of a change with concerns. Meek suggests offering context and next steps. "Being able to say, 'I've decided to leave my job, and here's what I'm going to do about it' can alter how other people receive your message," he says. Not only that, but sharing future plans can bolster your own sense of resolve.

Improve Your Quality of Life

Quitting often happens in situations where we're unhappy, fearful or have determined we have no other choice, factors that can have adverse effects on our health. Perhaps you find your work unfulfilling, or you've jumped into a new relationship before you're

ready – and, as a result, you're operating under intense pressure.

"If stress is chronic and not managed well, it can start to take a physical toll," says Meek. According to the American Psychological Association, long-term, ongoing stress can increase the risk for hypertension, heart attack and stroke, so walking away from

whatever is causing it can deliver significant physical and emotional health benefits. "We often see a reduction in



Leaving
situations that
don't bring you
joy can leave you
with time to
explore where
your heart is
leading you



the stress hormone cortisol, which can lower blood pressure and may even decrease the heart rate," says Dr Alex Lickerman, a GP and expert on developing mental resilience.

Cutting ties can also have a dramatic effect on your mood. According to a 2011 study in the journal Human Relations, staying at a job you hate out of obligation or a perceived lack of options can leave you stressed, exhausted and emotionally burnt out. While it's not uncommon to experience momentary grief after a major life change, Mark Franklin, the president of CareerCycles, has observed positive effects in the long term. "When I see people start to do things they love, there's a lot of relief," he says.

Take Your Passion, Make It Happen

Leaving situations that fail to bring you joy can leave you with ample time to explore where your heart is truly leading you. In a study that was published in 1999, then Harvard University professor Herminia Ibarra looked at how bankers transitioned into different roles that required new skill sets – someone who spent a lot of time dealing with computers, for instance, was asked to take on personal interactions. Subjects were especially drawn to acting out a version of their future selves through 'imitation strategies' – a tactic they likened to 'trying on different clothes'

Franklin suggests a similar approach as a way to figure out what your true desires might be in your post-quitting life and envision your future self. "Pretend to be a certain kind of person, or go and meet others who are doing what you want to do," he says. "Try it on, see how it feels and decide if it's a good fit for you."

It may not feel like it at the time, but just moving on from a situation that's not quite right can help you get back on track.

That was definitely true in my case. In December 2015, I left my client-relations job and started working somewhere less than ideal. Not long after that, however, I was assigned this story, about the benefits of quitting, on the same day a dream editorial position fell in my lap. Life's funny like that.

R



WHY BRIDES STAND ON THE LEFT

In the old days of 'marriage by capture', the groom needed to leave his right hand free. Why? In case he needed to grab his sword and fight off another suitor trying to steal his bride at the last minute. Theknot.com





That's Outrageous!

SO SUF ME



lawyer was hit with what he termed a "haseless" lawsuit "Fine", he said, before citing English common law, which he claims was never outlawed. to demand a trial by combat. While the plaintiff's lawyers did not find his bizarre challenge amusing, the lawyer said his weapon of choice would be a medieval war hammer

Source: New York Post

A SCHOOLTEACHER filed a workplace discrimination lawsuit against her employers for denying her a sought-after job. The fact that she can't speak or understand Spanish, the Florida teacher argued, should not preclude her from a plum job teaching Spanish. Source: Miami New Times

A TEXAS PLUMBER sued a Ford dealership for more than \$1 million after it gave him free publicity. The plumber traded in his old company pick-up and thought that was that. Then the truck showed up in news feeds from Syria - it was being



Source: CNN

USING BEDSHEETS

and dental floss, two cell mates rappelled 17 storeys down the

side of a Chicago prison, hailed a taxi, and escaped. They were caught within days. But one of the prisoners was so traumatised by the events, he sued the government. The convict said prison officials should have noticed they were preparing to break out and put a stop to it before they did something like rappel 17 storeys down the side of a federal prison using bedsheets and floss. The court tossed out the \$10 million lawsuit. Source: AP

A PARISIAN MAN'S JOB is so dull, he's suing his employer for more than \$405,000. After his responsibilities were slashed, the employee says, his job's extreme level of tedium actually triggered a seizure while he was driving. Source: atlasobscura.com

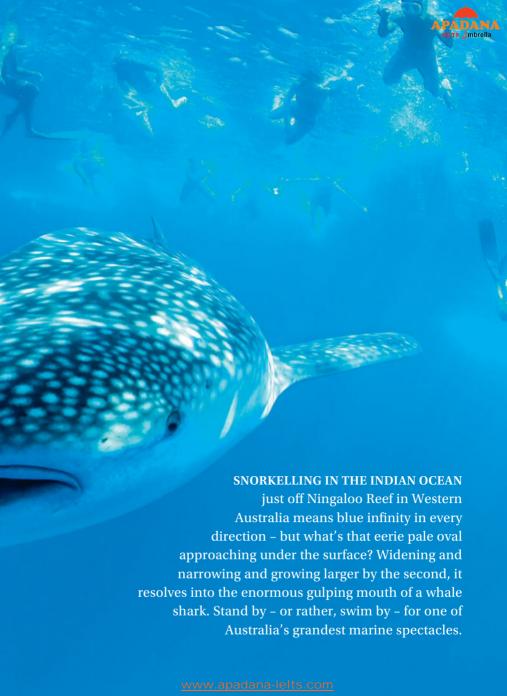




Swimming With 18 Whale Sharks

The largest fish in the sea are actually gentle giants

BY DAVID LEVELL





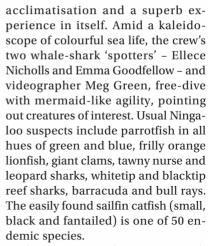
nsurpassed globally for regular, reliable and accessible whale shark encounters. World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef runs 260 km along Western Australia's remote North West Cape, about 1300 km north of Perth. Every year - from April to July - these normally elusive filter-feeders arrive for an annual mass-spawning of coral, which, aided by fortuitous currents, turns the outer reef into a nutrient-rich soup of plankton and krill. A relatively recent addition to this prehistoric dinner engagement are gatecrashing, snorkelling *Homo saniens*, drawn to feed their sense of wonder on sharing salt water with the largest of all shark species.

The adventure begins on very dry

land. Although flanked by vast tracts of water – Exmouth Gulf on one side, the Indian Ocean the other – North West Cape is an arid, baked wilderness bisected by the rocky heights of Cape Range, an extinct limestone reef from the region's deeper past. Anchored off a lonely desert boat ramp 38 km from

Exmouth township, the 17 m *Draw Card* is amid a tiny gaggle of whaleshark boats (there are eight Exmouth-based tour operators) ferrying their patrons aboard by inflatable Zodiac.

First on the agenda is a morning snorkel on the reef, a handy



The *Draw Card* cruises south through shallow turquoise waters, heading for one of only three navi-

gable passages to the open ocean – soon revealed by a gap in the white line of offshore surf. The shark-spotting plane radios success and the deck ripples with excitement. As we power into position several kilometres out to sea, the 19 tourists aboard are divided into two snorkel groups and

two snorkel groups and re-briefed on protocols – no touching, no duck-diving, keep 3 m clear of any whale shark (and 4 m from the tail).

Whale-shark watching works for one simple reason. "They're sun worshippers," spotter and marine biologist Ellece Nicholls says. On clear days



A casual overshoulder, underwater glance reveals a blue-grey speckled bulk the size of a van





plankton rises to the light, attracting whale sharks to the surface where they linger to hoover up the bounty. The biggest enemy is heavy cloud cover, rarely a problem at Ningaloo.

Think of it as a game of marine leap-frog. The boat stops ahead of a shark and the first snorkellers tag along as it passes, with the Zodiac deployed to aid any stragglers. Group two drops in further along the shark's probable path. After the whale shark

leaves its first escorts, the boat collects them and moves ahead of group two (now in shark conference) to repeat the process.

Group one don fins and stride off the duckboard, looking for the spotter's hand signal. Ellece points and faces go under – nothing. Then a casual overshoulder, underwater glance reveals a blue-grey speckled bulk the size of a van. Veering before reaching us, the silent giant had almost slipped by unobserved behind our backs.

Gentle titans

Wondrous as it is, there's no time to stop and wonder. Admiring a whale shark is not a passive activity. It's time to snorkel as fast as humanly possible, which inevitably falls short of any whale

shark in middle gear. But following its wake is unforgettable. The towering column of tail sweeps with effortless power, slowly shrinking and dissolving a gentle titan into the deep blue curtain of ocean ahead.

Minutes later, adrift in the open sea, we regroup for pick-up. Ellece says we saw a juvenile male, "only" 4 m long but with a barrel-like girth. While 12-m whale sharks have been seen here, the typical Ningaloo visitor is a 4-7 m male.





Far sooner than expected, we're ready for another dip into his world. "This is what we call a blind drop," Ellece says, meaning no-one knows exactly where the shark is. But in we go and there he is. Afterwards comes an unexpected bonus, a hefty green turtle flapping through the blue nearby, a marine bumblebee in flight.

Leaving our teenage shark to another nearby boat – the industry here is amiably co-operative – we shift closer to the reef wall for whale shark number two. Here the seabed is dimly visible, with shadowy coral clusters far below, the length of a tall building away. Festooned with remoras and trailed by a retinue of golden

trevallies, this slightly larger shark gives a clear view of its white-spotted, ridged back, the starlike pattern imitating sunlight dappling the surface.

The day's final shark is further out. Over the abyss again, a diffuse star of light beams from below, but it's only a trick of the sun. Our largest (5 m-plus) specimen's head-on approach is signalled by the flattened white oval of Exmouth's biggest mouth. Dipping gently up and down, feeding at a leisurely cruising pace, it scoops invisible fare with every rise. From the corner of the sack-like maw, a much smaller eye watches its watchers keeping pace for those few precious minutes. Afterwards on deck, we're

treated to a topside view when it skirts the boat ahead of group two, its broad head emerging from the deep like a submarine milky way.

Five swims with three individuals

filled an hour of shark time (the maximum allowed). The exhilaration of eye contact with our planet's biggest fish lingers throughout lunch and the post-shark reef snorkel. The lasting impression is one of great peace and beauty, the awe of approaching creation writ truly large.



From the corner of the whale shark's sack-like maw, a much smaller eye watches its watchers

Asian waters, as some experts contend, why do so many travel south along the reef? South is definitely the safer option for them right now, given their popularity as a soup garnish in several

Asian countries – a single whale shark can fetch thousands of dollars for its fins. In March 2016 the species' Red List conservation status was altered from vulnerable to endangered (a 'very high' risk of extinction). The example of Exmouth, however, gives hope that countries still slaughtering whale

sharks will be inspired by the economics of ecotourism – and the sheer wonder of the creature itself – to spare the world's biggest fish.

For more info go to www.whalesharkdive. com or www.visitningaloo.com.au

Endangered species

Plenty of mystery accompanies this majesty. While Exmouth is a leading centre for tagging and research, the whale shark life-cycle remains largely unknown – and if they really do migrate north from Ningaloo to breed in

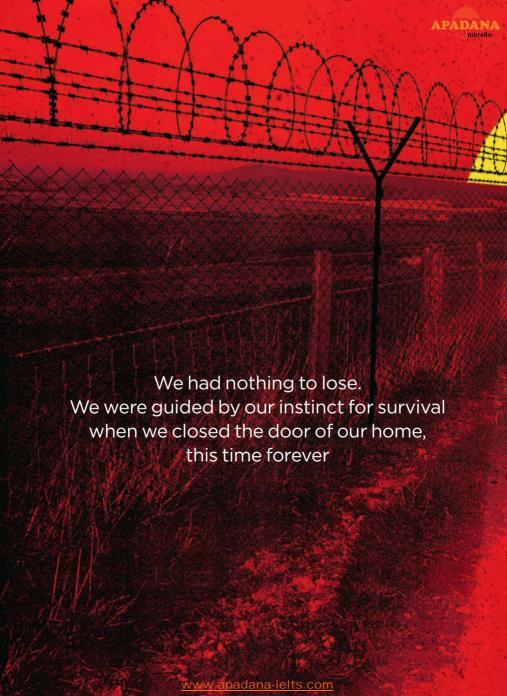
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Christian Willoughby spent the night in a prison cell for a misdemeanour - and decided to post a review.

CHEEKY CONVICT

"I've given this place four stars. It's the all-day breakfast that lets it down really. Apart from that, the staff are pleasant enough. Had my own ensuite room and butler ... who would come with tea and newspapers. Room was nice, the minimalistic idea was a nice touch. It was secure and safe ... quadruple glazing and security door. Ideal place for winding down after a hard day.

I'd definitely come back." HUFFINGTONPOST.COM





ALONG WALK TO FREEDOM

BY EUNSUN KIM, WITH SÉBASTIEN FALLETTI

FROM A THOUSAND MILES TO FREEDOM



FOR NEARLY A WEEK I HAD BEEN ALONE IN OUR TINY, FREEZING

apartment in Eundeok, the town in North Korea where I was born. My parents had sold most of our furniture to buy food. Even the carpet was gone, so I slept on the cement floor in a sleeping bag made from old clothes. The walls were bare, except for portraits of our 'Eternal President' Kim II-sung and his son the 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong-il. Selling these portraits would have been sacrilege, punishable by death.

There was no electricity or heat in our apartment. But I hardly felt the cold because I was exhausted after several days without food. I felt like the ground was going to open up and swallow me. I was sure I was about to die of hunger. I wasn't afraid any more. But I didn't want to leave the world like this, without a trace of myself left behind.

And so I started to write my last will and testament. It was December 1997. And I was 11 years old.

My mother and older sister, Keumsun, had left six days earlier for Rajin-Sonbong, a nearby city, to try to find food. I wanted my mother to know that I had waited for her, and to know I felt abandoned

I wrote: "Mum, I have been waiting for six days. I feel like I am going to die soon. Why haven't you come back?"

I started crying as the darkness of night began to envelop me. I lay down and closed my eyes, sure that I was never going to wake up again.

SINGING SONGS

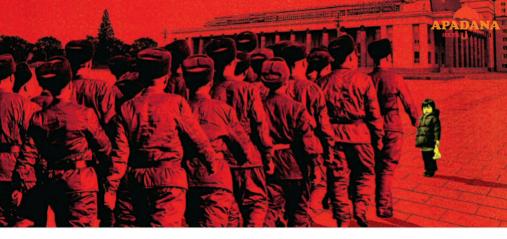
As a young girl I never could have imagined that my life would change so quickly and drastically. Up until I was nine years old, I was a happy girl.

Eundeok is located in the mountains of north-eastern North Korea, fewer than 15 kilometres from the Tumen River, the border with China and Russia. During the winter it is cold, and sometimes I walked to school through thick snow. My birthday was in the summer, the same day we celebrated the day Korea was liberated from Japanese rule in 1945. My birthday was always a happy time.

My hometown was not large. The army had several bases nearby, just like they do everywhere else in the country. You could make out a few trees on the mountains far away, but the nearby hills were all stripped bare, the forests razed for firewood.

In the middle of Eundeok flows a river crossed by a bridge. The biggest buildings in the city were of cement and had at most five floors. There were no advertisements anywhere. Walls were bare or plastered with propaganda praising our 'Dear Leader' Kim Jong-il and the 'socialist paradise' he had created for North Korea.

My father would pick me up after school. Sometimes we would stop by



the street vendors to buy noodles, or he'd take me to the movies, with tickets he got through his connections working at a weapons factory. My mother worked at the hospital; she sometimes brought food from the cafeteria, which kept us from going hungry.

I enjoyed school. Mum woke us up while it was still dark. I'd wash and get dressed in my blue skirt, white blouse and red scarf that signified membership in the Children's League. I'd meet my friends and we'd march to school singing songs in praise of our country's leaders. After the teachers inspected our uniforms, we'd read about Kim Jong-il. The lives of our country's leaders were one of the most important subjects, with maths, Korean language, arts and the communist ethic.

We were expected to sit in class silently. Even the tiniest bit of disturbance was met with public humiliation. I never got in trouble, but in front of the whole class the teacher would discipline a child by beating them with her pointer stick.

I was a good student, but that didn't excuse me from the self-criticism sessions that were mandatory for everyone in the country, whether factory worker or student. At the end of the day each person had to confess their misdeeds in front of the entire class. I remember one day I made a remark while toiling in the teacher's garden.

"What's the point of gathering all this corn if we won't be able to eat it?" I grumbled.

One of my classmates denounced me. and so the teacher called me over and sharply rebuked me: "That individualistic attitude is unacceptable in the socialist society of North Korea!"

PUDDLES OF BLOOD

One of my favourite songs was 'A Thousand Miles of Learning, which recounted the young Kim Il-sung's odyssey across the mountains in China after he fought the Japanese. I had no desire to criticise the dictatorship of our leaders. But one particular event started sowing the seeds of



doubt. One morning the teacher told us we would attend an important event in our education: the execution of a man guilty of committing 'serious crimes'

The teachers led us downtown. A crowd gathered near the bridge. Since we were little we were positioned on top of the bridge. We would get a clear view of what was happening, so we wouldn't miss this important lesson.

A car with tinted windows appeared.

towards these men who had been slaughtered so heartlessly.

After this first terrible ordeal, I became used to the public executions. Even so, I had my qualms. I remember a man who went to the execution pole for having 'insulted our Great Leader'. He had taken some bronze letters off an official inscription from Kim Jong-il. No doubt he had hoped to ameliorate his living conditions during the famine by selling the metal for a bit of cash.



"THE ONLY THING LEFT FOR US TO DO HERE IS DIE," SHE SAID. MY SISTER AND I HUDDI FD NEXT TO HER IN THE DARK

Policemen dragged out several men whose heads and faces were covered with scarves. The crowd started to shiver. After a symbolic interrogation, the accused men pitifully admitted their wrongdoings. Then they were tied to wooden poles along the river. I didn't understand how they managed to remain so emotionless when they knew they were about to die.

Then suddenly we heard a deafening noise. I jumped, startled. The gunshots seemed to last an eternity. And then all was quiet again. Through the smoke I could make out puddles of blood littered with pieces of flesh. It was there that I learned compassion for others; I felt an immense outpouring of pity

CRUCIAL DECISION

Although my body was thin as a twig on that December evening, I still felt like I weighed a tonne. I'd slumped onto the hard concrete floor as the darkness swallowed me. I no longer had the strength to continue. My mum had left me. My body remained completely still as I heard footsteps echoing from the staircase. On that cold December night in 1997, I knew I was going to die before even reaching adolescence.

Suddenly, a muffled sound reached my ears. I half opened one of my eyes. A dark silhouette appeared before me, its shadow growing larger and larger. Frightened, I lifted myself up to see

READER'S DIGEST mbrella

that the shadowy figure looked familiar. It was my mother, with Keumsun right behind her. I felt a rush of adrenaline jolt through my body, and my anguish started to dissipate. I didn't know it was possible to be as happy as I felt in that instant.

But my joy faded when I realised that my mother and sister had come back empty-handed. Mum looked exhausted and distraught. She drank a glass of water as her eyes swept the dark, empty room.

"The only thing left for us to do here is die," she said softly.

Silently, she lay down on the patched sleeping bag in the corner. My sister and I huddled next to her. Darkness surrounded us as I fell asleep. We were famished and helpless, but at least I wasn't going to die alone.

In the morning we were awoken by noise from the street, but we didn't move. Mum was still as a statue. She was our last hope against the malady that had struck our country and was growing worse each day: famine.

Since 1995 my family members had been slowly dying, one after the other, and now the three of us were next on the list. Within a span of two years my mother had lost my grandmother and then my grandfather. Then, just a month ago, it was my father's turn. His feeble body had already weakened visibly since the factories stopped handing out food rations. His face sank more and more into his skull. One night when he was bringing

home a load of coal, he collapsed from fatigue right before our eyes.

Shortly after that he collapsed once again, and this time he never recovered. We didn't even have the money for a proper burial. His tomb was just a hole dug in the mud, marked with a plank of wood with his name on it. A few weeks later, someone stole the plank, most likely to use as firewood – people were ready to do just about anything to ensure their survival.

Now Mum lay motionless on the sleeping bag. The trip to Rajin-Sonbong had been our last hope. She'd thought she would be able to bring us back food or money, and save us. But this last attempt had failed.

Now I felt like she was silently devising a plan in her head. Suddenly she stood up, a determined look in her eyes. She had decided to take action.

She walked towards the wall where the portraits of our leaders were hanging, reached up and took them down. She carefully removed the two sacred portraits from their frames. Our two leaders had watched us day and night since early childhood, like they did in every household in North Korea. The wooden frames were our last sellable items, but by taking them down my mum had just committed a crime punishable by death. She pulled the frames apart so no one would figure out where the wood had come from. To be safe, she burned the photos.

Mum sold the wood at the market, and we were able to buy ourselves a



meal. For the first time in three days I had something to put in my mouth.

As the winter of 1997–1998 progressed, it was often less than –15° C outside, yet we had no heat in the apartment. We were desperate for food. The neighbours said that the ghost of my father would come back to try to take my mother with him.

It was then that my mum started to think about the unthinkable: fleeing the country. She began planning to escape North Korea and head to unknown territory to save us. We were going to head to China.

THE FREEZING RIVER

Eundeok is located just one hour from the Chinese border, but we had never imagined taking such a risk. Illegally crossing this border, which was patrolled by armed guards, seemed insane. And yet, there was little chance for survival in North Korea. Friends had told us stories of families who had escaped to China and were doing fine.

My mother was convinced. After all, we had nothing to lose. So we were going to become defectors, traitors to our country. Our concerns at this point were far from political. We were guided by our instinct for survival, not by the idea of revolting against our regime. Our only goal was to find food and survive. It was only later, at the end of our long, perilous journey to freedom, that I understood the subservience of our lives in North Korea and began to realise

the horrors of that inhumane regime.

Night was falling over Eundeok. Spring was on its way, but I was shivering from the cold. Keumsun, Mum and I slipped outside. Mum closed the door of our little apartment forever.

I had a backpack with my most precious memories, including a photo of my father. My mother carried an axe and saw, which she had borrowed from a friend, saying she needed to chop some wood. She was not going to return them; these tools would be our way to obtain food during the journey.

It was pitch-black when we reached the village at the Chinese border, after an hour or so on the back of a truck. We hid in the bushes, and I saw a sign that read, 'Tumen River'. Beyond the river was China. Freedom – and what I longed for even more, rice – were waiting for us on the other side.

We stayed still and silent for several hours. Mum was calculating how much time we had between each coming and going of the patrolmen.

Around midnight, after a patrolman had passed, she gave the signal. She headed towards the sand, and Keumsun and I followed. When we reached the river, my feet sank into the freezing water. I didn't know how to swim, but my mum held onto me tightly.

The water reached our knees, and then my neck. I was so scared. When Mum realised the river was too deep for us, we headed back to the bank.

Mum told us to wait for her while she crossed the river by herself and

DEADER'S DIGHTS T mbrella

tried to find a path for us. My teeth chattered as I watched her fade into the darkness. I was scared she was going to drown and that we'd never see her again. My heart was pounding.

Suddenly Mum reappeared, dripping wet. She was shivering and could barely walk. She told us that a few metres from the Chinese side, she had slipped in the water. I felt helpless.

"So be it. Let's go to the border guards," my mum said in defeat.

photo of my father had been ruined it hadn't survived the trip through the river. The ink was smudged and the image of his face was gone forever.

We wound up at the port of Rajin, where the fishermen unload their cargoes. We sold the tools and bought some crab shells. We feasted without thinking about our future.

Nobody could help us in Rajin, so we decided to go to Chongjin where my mum had family. We snuck onto



GOING BACK TO FUNDEOK WAS NOT AN OPTION OUR NEIGHBOURS KNEW ABOUT OUR ATTEMPTED ESCAPE

The chief of police came to meet us at the patrol station. Mum told him we had left our home to chop wood, hoping to sell it for food, which is why we had the axe and the saw and why we were near the river. He didn't believe us for a second. But he brought us pancakes made of cornmeal and milk powder and let us sleep on the floor.

We were lucky. The next morning the border official let us leave without further questions. But our situation was still dire. Going back to Eundeok was not an option. Our neighbours knew about our attempted escape.

So we headed to Rajin-Sonbong instead. It was raining, we didn't know where we were going to sleep and we were full of gloom. Worst of all, the the back of a train and rattled along for two days, crouching in corners to avoid the conductors and thieves

When we knocked on the door of my mother's sister, she was speechless, seeing us like homeless people. We quickly understood that we were not welcome. There was no food. Her husband did not want us around. We returned to the train station and took the train back to Rajin-Sonbong.

LEFT FOR HOMELESS

And so we began our homeless life. Every night we had to find new shelter where we could escape the rain. After the merchants left, we would slip under an awning at the market. Often an official would tell us to leave. We'd



shelter in the staircases of nearby buildings. We went weeks without being able to bathe. Lice infested our heads and we scratched like monkeys.

When the weather got warmer and the rain stopped, my mother took us to the forest to sleep under the stars. We bathed in the streams, and collected wood to sell for a few won.

The weather dictated our daily lives. After a storm, we went to the beach to collect seaweed. We made soup to sell smoke rose into the air. We needed to get warm and walked closer.

OUR LAST CHANCE

Around the fire were two crouched figures: a man and a young girl. Seeing how desperate they looked, I thought maybe they were trying to do the same thing we were – escape the country. My mother started talking to the man, and he confirmed what we suspected.

"The ice is hard enough. I've seen



MY ANXIETY STARTED TO BUILD. I REMEMBERED OUR PREVIOUS FAILURE. WHAT IF THE SOLDIERS SHOT US DOWN?

at the market. I took fish that fishermen threw away. Once I found a crate of mostly rotten apples, abandoned by Chinese merchants. I took out the fresh ones and we gorged ourselves.

This life was exhausting, however. Autumn came and my mother realised there was no future for us in our country. The first frosts were here. Soon, it would be too cold to survive on the streets. But the cold provided us with an opportunity: the Tumen River would freeze over, solid enough to walk across.

That frigid night in February 1999, the winter winds slapped me in the face. At the top of the hill a wisp of grey people crossing," he told us. "But it's better to wait until morning. The guards don't patrol as much then."

The hill looked out across the Tumen River, a perfect spot to observe the border guards walking back and forth. Right in front of us, through the darkness, was China. Our last chance.

Hours passed. My anxiety started to build. I remembered our previous failure. What if the soldiers shot us down?

The five of us headed down the hill towards the Tumen. There were no guards in sight. The man tested the ice using his feet. It appeared solid.

We walked single file, several metres

FROM A THOUSAND MILES TO FREEDOM BY EUNSUN KIM WITH SÉBASTIAN FALLETTI © 2012 BY ÉDITIONS MICHEL LAFON. ENGLISH TRANSLATION © 2015 BY DAVID TIAN. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION BY ST. MARTIN'S PRESS apart, to spread our weight evenly. My mum was first, followed by Keumsun, then the man and the girl. I was last. Behind me, the ink-black night looked like it was going to snatch me away. I imagined a border guard appearing and shooting at us. We only had about a hundred metres to cross, but it felt like an eternity.

My heart was pounding, I started moving faster, Suddenly I fell, After I got up, we walked much slower. The light of dawn was starting to appear. We had to hurry. Just a few more metres to go. I caught up and thought we were safe, but we were on a small islet in the river. We still had to cross to the other side. where the ice looked less solid

We changed order. The little girl, the lightest, started off. Timidly, she approached the ice on the other side of the islet. Suddenly, we heard a cracking sound. The girl sunk through the ice before our eyes.

We panicked and began to head back. Her legs were submerged to her knees. She started screaming.

"Have you reached the bottom?" asked her father

"Yes," she said in a frightened voice. So, despite the cold, we started wading through the water. We moved forwards a few more metres, and my feet touched China. We had made it. I. stopped to catch my breath, but my wet clothes had started to freeze

We took a few moments of rest, but soon our fears overtook us. We had to get far away from the river, because if the Chinese police found us, they would send us back to North Korea, I didn't want to think about the punishments we would receive if sent back.

Fields of corn stretched as far as we could see. We had to pass through them quickly to reach the forest. But my leg was stiff and I couldn't run. Using all the strength I had left, I tried to follow my mum's pace. The hills felt so far away. After about ten minutes, we made it. I collapsed beneath the trees as the sky began to get light. It was my first morning outside my home country. The first dawn of my new life.

The three refugees found shelter at a nearby farm, where they were forced to toil for several years before the girls were able to escape to a nearby city, where their mother joined them. In 2006. Eunsun and her mum found their way to Mongolia, where they were taken in by the South Korean embassy and flown to freedom in Seoul, Keumsun followed two vears later. Eunsun now lives in South Korea, She works for an NGO promoting human rights on the Korean peninsula.

Puzzle answers

See page 122

THE DOMINO EFFECT

A. In each row, adding the value of the first card to the number of dots on the first domino gives you the value of the second card. The value of the third card is the difference between the value of the second card and the number of dots on the second domino.

STEPWISE CALCULATOR

9 ÷ 3 + 2 = 5

CIRCLE IN THE TRIANGLE 16.

HIDDEN MEANING

A. Svrup

B. Count me out

C. Down in the dumps

D. Looking after number one





Unbelievable

TRUE TALES TOLD TALL



King of the Road

Nury Vittachi gets in the driving seat - with mixed results

IMPORTANT NOTE TO **OTHER MOTORISTS: If**

I turn on the windscreen wipers of a rental car, this indicates that I am turning

right or left. Please memorise: there will be a test.

Mind you, I have just spent time in China, where the Highway Code appears to have only one rule: the

biggest vehicle has right of way. If an alien intergalactic mothership landed on a Beijing expressway, all car drivers would automatically be found guilty of breaking the Failing to Get Out of the Way of a Big Flashy Conveyance Ordinance.

Not long ago, the Chinese government promulgated a law requiring drivers to stop at yellow



lights. I hope one day they'll try to make motorists stop at red lights, too.

Yet a creative streak can be seen among the country's traffic cops. In the scooter-dominated southern Chinese city of Sanya, police don't just stop bad drivers. THEY FOLLOW THEM TO THEIR OFFICES. They then assemble the entire staff of the

company, from bosses to cleaners, before giving the motorist a severe scolding. The idea is to use the Asian horror of 'losing face' to scare drivers into behaving. If this happened to me, I'd be on my knees, stuffing bribes into the officer's pockets.

Removal of face as a social tool is also used in

India. That country has a legal third sex called 'hijras', people born male who grow up to wear make-up and saris. They have traditionally been paid to congregate outside the homes of tax-dodgers, who race to the inland revenue offices to pay up before neighbours question their masculinity. But hijras are becoming socially acceptable, which is surely a good thing, although some are annoyed at the loss of a fun, paid job, and you can see their point. Imagine receiving cash from the taxpayers to humiliate chauvinists!

This columnist once interviewed actor Michael Palin who said that one

of the most terrifying moments of his life was playing a humiliated Pontius Pilate facing a huge, laughing crowd. Instead of starting wars against despots, we should just send people to laugh at them, he said.

I know this happens in India, where people do gather to chuckle as a protest against powerful corporate

> evildoers. Note: only do this in large groups. Solo sessions of politically directed hysterical laughter will only get you labelled 'lunatic'. I know this now.

But going back to driving problems, it is a fact that motorists now have an extra chance to get on the right side of traffic cops.

Cop: We saw you driving erratically and holding your phone.
Me: Sorry, I was playing Pokémon
Go and saw an Articuno.
Cop: It is against the law to – you say you saw an Articuno? Where exactly was this Articuno?

Incidentally, please note that talking to traffic cops is an art in itself. If you remember nothing else from this column, remember this: when a cop says, "Do I look stupid to you?" it is a rhetorical question. I know this now. You're welcome.

Nury Vittachi is a Hong Kong-based author. Read his blog at Mrjam.org

Remember this:

when a traffic

cop says, "Do

I look stupid to

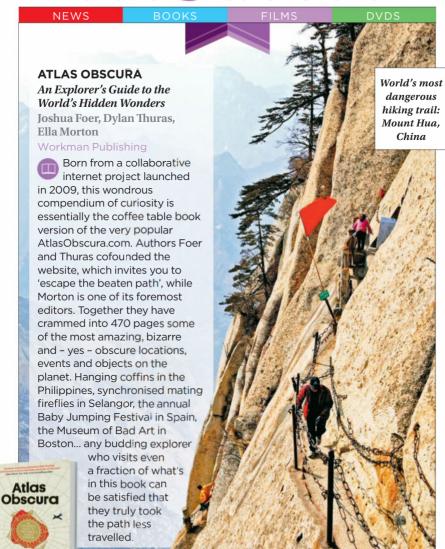
uou?" it is a

rhetorical

question



out&about





All Part of the Service

When an elderly woman in Wallsend. UK suffered a fall at home, she immediately called her daughter for help - or so she thought. In fact, she misdialled and instead called a local BMW car dealership.

Unsure what to do the front desk put her through to 34-year-old salesman Dang Vuong, who didn't hesitate. "I drove over there while our receptionist kept her talking on the phone." Vuong told a metro.co.uk reporter. After knocking and finding the door unlocked, he discovered the woman lying on the floor with blood on her face and the bath overflowing. He then helped her onto the couch, covered her with a blanket and waited for her family to arrive - before heading back to work.



PATERSON Comedu Drama

Paterson (Adam Driver) is a bus driver and poet. He finds happiness in the routine and rhythm of daily life. Each day he drives the same route, observing his city and overhearing the conversations that take place around him. He also writes poems, which are mostly odes to daily life and written for his own pleasure or sometimes to share with his wife. Laura (Golshifteh Farahani). At 6pm he returns home, walks his dog and goes to the local pub for one beer.

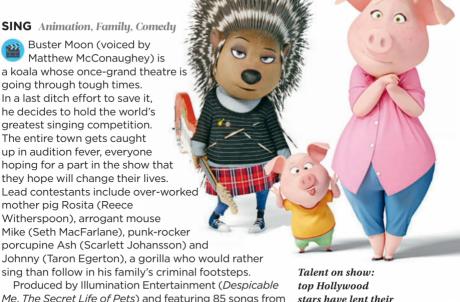
Laura, on the other hand, finds her rhythm in change and lack of structure. She does not work and fills her days with the new plans and dreams that she has for herself. Paterson is completely supportive of Laura's dreams and Laura recognises his wonderful gift for poetry. But then a disaster threatens to shatter their idyll. It is directed by independent filmmaker Jim Jarmusch (right).

www.apadana-ielts.com

SING Animation, Family, Comedy

Buster Moon (voiced by Matthew McConaughev) is a koala whose once-grand theatre is going through tough times. In a last ditch effort to save it. he decides to hold the world's greatest singing competition. The entire town gets caught up in audition fever everyone hoping for a part in the show that they hope will change their lives. Lead contestants include over-worked mother pig Rosita (Reece Witherspoon), arrogant mouse

Produced by Illumination Entertainment (Despicable Me. The Secret Life of Pets) and featuring 85 songs from popular artists, Sing will leave audiences delighted.



TTS Imbrella

THE GLASS **UNIVERSE:**

How the Ladies of the Harvard Observatory Took the Measure of the Stars

Dava Sobel HarperCollins

Unless vou are an astronomy nerd of the highest calibre, you'll likely not recognise the names of Williamina Fleming, Annie Jump Cannon. Dr Cecilia Helena Pavne-Gaposchkin or the host

of other women at the core of this fascinating historical account. But they helped shape how we view our solar system and beyond. Adept at maths and fans of stargazing. dozens of like-minded women were employed by Harvard University's Observatory in the late 19th century to pore over the half-million alass photographic plates amassed by the facility's telescopes.

Their discoveries within this 'glass universe' went largely unheralded at the time, yet are still depended upon today. New York Times bestselling author Dava Sobel shines a starry light on their scientific discoveries that is long overdue.

vocal cords to Sing





YouTuber Reunites a Family

Back on July 4, 19-year-old Brooke Roberts (above) from Adelaide, who runs a YouTube channel called Prank Nation, tried something a little different from his usual fun-filled clips. He made a video of himself wandering the streets of Los Angeles with bags of food and bottles of water for the homeless, hoping to impart a message of perspective and empathy to viewers. He did more than that

Ten-year-old Evan Olsen, idly watching the YouTube post from his home 4000 km away in Florida, realised with a shock that one of the

"Out of billions of people, her son found

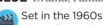
the video"

homeless people was his mother. Missing for months and feared dead Jaime Garlinghouse had been struggling with a mental disorder and was now living on the streets with no identification.

Olsen's father contacted Roberts through his YouTube page, and together they were able to track

Jaime down - and at the time of printing. Roberts had set up a GoFundMe.com page to raise money to help reunite her with her son and receive adequate care in Florida. "I'm so shocked that out of the billions of people in the world, her son found the video," Roberts told reporters.

RED DOG: TRUE BLUE Drama, Familia



Australian outback Red Dog: True Blue is the preguel to 2011's hit Red Dog. The remarkable kelpie-cross cattle dog 'Blue' is found by 11-yearold Mick (Levi Miller) after a cyclone. Young Mick has recently arrived at his grandfather's remote cattle station However, his life is changed forever by the friendship and adventure this one-of-a kind dog brings him. Shot in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, this coming-ofage story not only captures Mick's personal iourney but also the transition of the area

from pastoral to mining.





Lonely Planet Editors Lonely Planet

At first glance this seems like perfect fodder for backpackers touring the world and looking for ingenious ways to stretch their budget. But it is so much more. Drawn from the vast

experience of 41 Lonely Planet travel authors, the underlying message of this insanely useful guide is that unforgettable travel experiences often come without a price tag. From breathtaking views to bustling city squares, quality museums and sprawling natural wonders, more than 60 major cities and countless places are assessed from a best-value proposition. Packed with useful street maps and helpfully colour coded by experience (Arts & Culture, Food & Drink, Festivals & Events, etc), you'll find money-saving tips and inspiration galore.

THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS Drama



The adaptation of M.L. Stedman's novel of the same name is a heartbreaking story of love and sacrifice.

Tom Sherbourne (Michael Fassbender) is the lighthouse keeper on remote Janus Rock, which is half a day's journey from the mainland. There, he and his young bride Isabel (Alicia Vikander) live a quiet life. cocooned from the rest of the world. Years later. having suffered several miscarriages and grieving a stillbirth, Isabel hears the cries of 'a gift from God'. A boat has been washed up on shore and in it are a dead man and a baby girl. Isabel convinces Tom against his better judgement to raise the baby as their own. The consequences of this decision test their love and morality.





Locking Away CO2 in a Rock

Environmental scientists in Iceland are turning carbon dioxide into salt-like crystals, before locking them indefinitely underground. In a pilot project dubbed 'CarbFix', researchers at the Hellisheidi Geothermal Power Station dissolve CO₂ in water before injecting it into basalt rock – which chemically reacts to create a carbonate mineral. It was thought that such methods of 'underground sequestration' would take hundreds of years to prove useful but the CarbFix approach yielded positive results in just two years. While it's not clear yet how viable this method could be on a large scale, it could be an important addition to ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Airborne Siblings

Sisters Erum and Maryam Masood have made history by becoming the first sisters to pilot the same Boeing-777 aircraft. Erum and Maryam have worked at Pakistan International Airlines for some time, but Erum did not have the qualifications needed to pilot the Boeing-777 weight class, which holds up to 450 passengers. But a recent upgrade to Erum's credentials finally saw the sisters united on a long-haul trip from Lahore to London in August to create the record.

THE BFG Fantasy, Adventure, Family

Roald Dahl's tale of the Big Friendly Giant in the screen adaptation of The BFG. Ten-yearold Sophie (Ruby befriends the BFG (Mark Rylance). is initially scared of the seven-metre tall take her long to realise that he is gentle. But of bad giants Bloodbottler and Fleshlumpeater. Together Sophie and to help them rid the world of bad giants







TEST YOUR MENTAL PROWESS

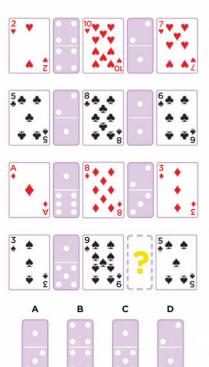
Puzzles

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 113.

BY MARCEL DANESI

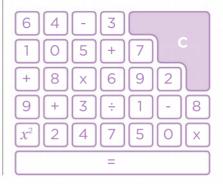
THE DOMINO FEFECT

Which domino is missing from the final row?



STEPWISE CALCULATOR

Imagine the calculator below is large enough to stand on. Starting from the 'C' key, you can step diagonally (for example, from C to 9, then 9 to ÷) or between two keys that are adjacent (such as C to 3, then 3 to +). You may not press the same key twice and the only way to get a final total is to step on the '=' key at the bottom. This calculator ignores the standard order of operations, instead doing each step as you enter it. However, it does accept numbers with two or more digits. Can you find a way to get a final total of 5 in just six steps?





HIDDEN MEANING

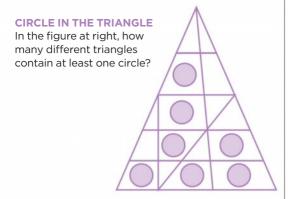
Identify the common words or phrases below.











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FRIXION ERASABLE PEN







TEST YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Trivia

- 1. Which language supplied us with the word 'pyiamas'? 2 points
- 2. What does the texting abbreviation VMMD stand for? 1 point
- 3. What playwright's only surviving handwriting samples are thought to be six signatures and the English words "by me"? 1 point
- 4. Why are unmarried women called 'spinsters'? 1 point
- 5. Who is Manchester United's all-time leading Premier League goal-scorer? 2 points
- 6. Which South American country's name is derived from the Latin word for silver? 2 points
- 7. Which grain is used to make semolina? 1 point

8. In 1888, tens of thousands of mummified cats were found in a grave in Egypt, Many were shipped back to Europe. What were they mostly

used for? 2 points

- 9. What flower is named after German botanist and physician Leonhart Fuchs? 1 point
- 10. Why is the traditional Irish Claddagh ring so named? 2 points
- 11. Bethlem Royal Hospital, a psychiatric facility in London. gave the English language what word meaning 'chaos'? 1 point
- 12. Actress Iamie-Lee Curtis is the daughter of which Hollywood actress? 2 points
- 13. The North Pole, said to be Santa's home, is located in which ocean? 1 point
- 14. The term 'Florentine' in a dish indicates it includes which vegetable? 1 point

16-20 Gold medal

11-15 Silver medal

6-10 Bronze medal

0-5 Wooden spoon

13. Arctic Ocean. 14. Spinach.

8. Fertiliser. 9. Fuchsia. 10. They originated in the Irish fishing village of Claddagh. 11. Bedlam. 12. Janet Leigh. was a pursuit carried out by unmarried women. 5. Wayne Rooney. 6. Argentina, from argentum. 7. Wheat. ANAMERS: J. Persian, via Urdu. 2. You made my day. 3. William Shakespeare. 4. Because traditionally, spinning



IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

Like Honey to a Bee

What makes a word beautiful? Is it a melodious sound? An exotic meaning? For whatever reason, the words below appeal to our sense of beauty – though their meanings may not all be pellucid (a pretty word for 'clear'). Answers on next page.

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

- **1. lavaliere** *n.* A: magma outflow. B: pendant on a chain. C: rider with a lance.
- **2. flan** *n*. A: pizzazz. B: custard dessert. C: mirror reflection.
- **3. panoply** *n*. A: impressive array. B: bouquet. C: folded paper art.
- **4. gambol** ν A: stake money on a horse. B: frolic about. C: sing in rounds.
- **5. chalice** *n.* A: goblet. B: ankle bracelet. C: glass lamp.
- **6. languorous** *adj.* A: of the tongue. B: in the tropics. C: lackadaisical or listless.
- **7. pastiche** *n.* A: thumbnail sketch. B: fabric softener. C: artistic imitation.
- **8. opulent** *adj.* A: right on time. B: pertaining to vision. C: luxurious.

- **9. penumbra** *n.* A: something that covers or shrouds. B: drowsiness. C: goose-feather quill.
- **10. tendril** *n.* A: wooden flute. B: spiralling plant sprout. C: clay oven.
- **11. imbroglio** *n.* A: complicated mix-up. B: Asian palace. C: oilpainting style.
- **12. dalliance** *n.* A: frivolous or amorous play. B: flourish on a trumpet. C: blinding light.
- **13. mellifluous** *adj.* A: having broad stripes. B: milky white. C: sweet sounding.
- **14. diaphanous** *adj.* A: marked by a fine texture. B: having two wings. C: romantic.
- **15. recherché** *adj.* A: elegant or rare. B: well practised. C: silent.



Answers

- 1. lavaliere [B] pendant on a chain. The lavaliere around the princess's neck caught the eve of her suitor.
- 2. flan [B] custard dessert. We went from one French restaurant to another, searching for the perfect flan.
- 3. panoply [A] impressive array. Elly was mesmerised by the panoply of dinosaur fossils at the museum.
- 4. gambol [B] frolic about. In their downtime. North Pole elves are known to gambol in the snow.
- 5. chalice [A] goblet. One chalice contains deadly poison; the other, an all-healing elixir - now choose!
- 6. languorous [C] lackadaisical or listless. The winter chill made Sara long for the languorous hours of her summer at the lake house.
- 7. pastiche [C] artistic imitation You call his work a pastiche: I call it a knock-off
- **8.** opulent [C] luxurious. During her first visit. Sally was overcome by the opulent entrance of Tiffany's.
- 9. penumbra [A] something that covers or shrouds.

Upon his first steps into the ancient chamber, the explorer fell under a penumbra of fear.

- 10. tendril [B] spiralling plant sprout. The alien pod wrapped its tendrils around the captain's ankle.
- 11. imbroglio [A] complicated mix-up. For my tastes, too many films these days are based around a muchexpected imbroglio.
- 12. dalliance [A] frivolous or amorous play. The couple's early dalliance was marked by subtle flirting and letter writing.
- 13. mellifluous [C] sweet sounding. Nothing is so mellifluous as the jingle of a bell on our Christmas tree.
- 14. diaphanous [A] marked by a fine texture. My wife wore a

diaphanous veil on our wedding day.

15. recherché - [A] elegant or rare. Alison wondered if her grandmother's bejewelled shoes were too recherché for the office party.

CELLAR DOOR

Among others, the fantasy writer JRR Tolkien maintained that the loveliest combination of sounds with the 'r's and 'l's that people find lyrical - is the phrase cellar door. Try repeating it aloud. It ends with an open 'o' sound. which Edgar Allan Poe called the "most sonorous" of the vowels (sonorous meaning 'full sounding').

VOCABULARY RATINGS 9 & below: Fair 10-12: Lovely 13-15: Word Power Wizard

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