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NEW ZEALAND

Reader's Digest

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Oceans Apart

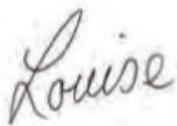
SO MUCH ABOUT THE WORLD'S network of oceans and seas is a mystery. Part of this mystery stems from its power and beauty. This month we have two very special stories set in ocean waters: one in the Pacific and the other in the rugged northwestern Atlantic.

'The Seal Nursery' (page 102) takes a close look at the antics and habits of the families of harp seals that call the Gulf of St Lawrence off the Magdalen Islands in Canada home. The world came to know these cute furry white seals during the 1970s-80s when environmentalists waged a fierce battle to stop them being bludgeoned for their fur. Today, with numbers recovering, the species is battling for survival on another front – the impact of global warming. The intimate underwater photos (captured in a seasonally warm 1°C!) are sure to amaze as well.

Meanwhile, and closer to home and warmer waters, 'Lost and Found' (page 26) is an upbeat account of how two strangers became connected by a lost surfboard thanks to the power of the Pacific's network of currents. The happy coincidence led to one wave-loving surfer in Hawaii enriching the lives of a would-be surfer and his remote community in the Philippines. This amazing story is proof that miracles really do happen.

With a variety of in-depth and colourful stories to suit every interest, I hope you enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Happy reading,



LOUISE WATERSON
Editor-in-Chief



NEW ZEALAND Reader's Digest

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LETTERS

Reader's Comments And Opinions

Thank You, Miss Potter

So often it seems that beauty, creativity and resourcefulness are conceived in difficult times. Generations have benefited from Beatrix Potter's years of loneliness (The Most Unforgettable Character I've Met, January), and we are all richer for having had Peter Rabbit and his endearing animal friends in our lives.

EULALIE HOLMAN



Mango Ritual

I was born in southern India and in my childhood eating mangoes was no less than a ritual ('I am Mango', December). My grandfather had a penchant for mangoes and would prepare for mango season by filling three or four large barrels with rice. He would buy a sizeable quantity of not-completely-ripe mangoes as soon as they hit the market and then bury them in the rice. The warmth from the rice would assist the

mangoes to ripen uniformly over a couple of days.

We children were forbidden to touch the mangoes during this stage but would sneak into the store room to take a peak. When they were ripe, we would eat the mangoes after lunch – one per day.

Though my grandfather passed away 15 years ago, he left us with the best childhood memories and, needless to say, mangoes played a huge part in them. BRIJESH SRIKANTH

Let us know if you are moved – or provoked – by any item in the magazine, share your thoughts. See page 8 for how to join the discussion.

Walking Improves Creativity

‘Your Brain Was Made for Walking’ (The Genius Section, December) opened my eyes. As a doctor, I have always viewed walking as exercise and advised my patients accordingly.

After reading the article, I added the ‘creative inspiration’ aspect and am now an enthusiastic walker, so much so that I tell my patients to ‘enjoy’ their walks. I sympathise with those people who wear earphones and look down while they walk. They are missing out on what walking has to offer.

IRFAN KHAN

Nuts Are Good for Sleep

‘What Your Sleep Problems Reveal’ (Health, February) was of particular interest to me. I have tried



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MAKING DAD OVER!

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

The beauty of working from home.

EMMA O’MALLEY

When I said you need to make up, I meant....

JOSEPH BAKER

Daddy Day Care.

GAIL DENHAM

Working from home is child’s play!

MICHAEL KOJIC

Screen time always comes at a price.

TANYA PATTEN

Congratulations to this month’s winner, Gail Denham.



WIN!

CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with the funniest caption for the above photo and you could win

\$100. To enter, email

editor@readersdigest.co.nz

or see details on page 8.

READER'S DIGEST

everything from chamomile tea and meditation to lavender and warm baths with absolutely no benefit.

At the author's suggestion, I have been including almonds, pistachios and cashews in my afternoon snack and I think it is helping. I am sleeping past 3am for the first time in years.

ANN VICKERS

Trapped

I was distressed after reading the article 'My Friend the Mouse' in the Classics edition (January). The author's acknowledgement that acquiescing to his parents' demands would lead to the mouse's demise was aggravating to read, and the conclusion of this article was dismissive of the mouse's suffering.

I understand that people would not want rodents in their home, but using a mouse trap is inhumane.

SAMANTHA TAN

Sharing the Love

I have enjoyed Reader's Digest from cover to cover for over 80 years. I have given them to relatives as subscriptions and have donated copies to charity tables at nursing homes. I leave copies at my hairdresser's and have been told customers pick them and leave other magazines behind.

Thank you for the many years of great reading and information that matters.

BERYL HARMER

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NEWS WORTH SHARING



Rare Dolphins Resurface in Hong Kong Waterways

Hong Kong's rare Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins are reclaiming their habitat as a result of the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Thanks to the drop in ferry traffic, this rare species, which can be either pink or white, has reappeared in the usually very busy Pearl River Delta that connects Macau to Hong Kong. Spotted splashing about on the surface, playing, mating and socialising, sightings of the dolphins have increased by 30 per cent since March 2020 when only 52 of the estimated 2000 entered the waterway. Their return has allowed scientists the opportunity to study

the marine mammals. According to marine biologist, Lindsay Porter, "Hong Kong dolphins normally live on the edges, they're stressed, they spend their time eating and resting." By dropping microphones into the water and listening to their vocalisations, Porter and her team have discovered that the dolphins quickly adapted to the decline in boat traffic. While she explains that local governments haven't yet moved to protect the dolphins, she hopes that the speed at which the population has recovered means that any conservation strategy could turn the decline into a comeback.

COMPILED BY VICTORIA POLZOT

Hero Dog to the Rescue

Staffordshire bull terrier -bulldog Max recently saved the life of a young boy who was just seconds from drowning at South Australia's Port Noarlunga. Max's owner Rob Osborn noticed the distressed child, who was swimming in the estuary, being pulled by a strong tide to a dangerous rocky area at the deepest part of the river. However, before he could jump in and head out from the river bank to save the boy, Max was already on his way.

Wearing a life-jacket of his own, the pooch swam out to the rescue. Rob encouraged the boy to call out Max's name and to hold on to the handle on the life jacket as he swam back to shore.

Max was able to successfully guide the child back to dry land completely unaware of his heroic act. "He's definitely a hero, he just doesn't know it," says his proud owner.

'Staffies' and bulldogs are often seen as aggressive in nature but hopefully Max's efforts will help change this perception.



Smart Curtains Keep the Temperature Constant

Concerned that cold winters and hotter summers are increasing demand for electricity, two students in Berlin have designed an 'intelligent' curtain that can regulate temperature in the home.

Anna Koppmann and Esmeé Willemsen from Berlin's University of the Arts designed the 'Plus Minus 25°C' curtains, which are screen-printed with a unique material called PCM (phase change material).

This material will store heat and release it when needed at night to keep room temperatures at a constant 25 degrees Celsius. In summer, the curtain has a cooling effect because it directly extracts heat from the incoming air.

"We looked at ways to control the temperature in a more sustainable way, without the use of electricity," explains Willemsen. The duo hope to attract investment so they can market their prototype product.

MY STORY

The Secret Child

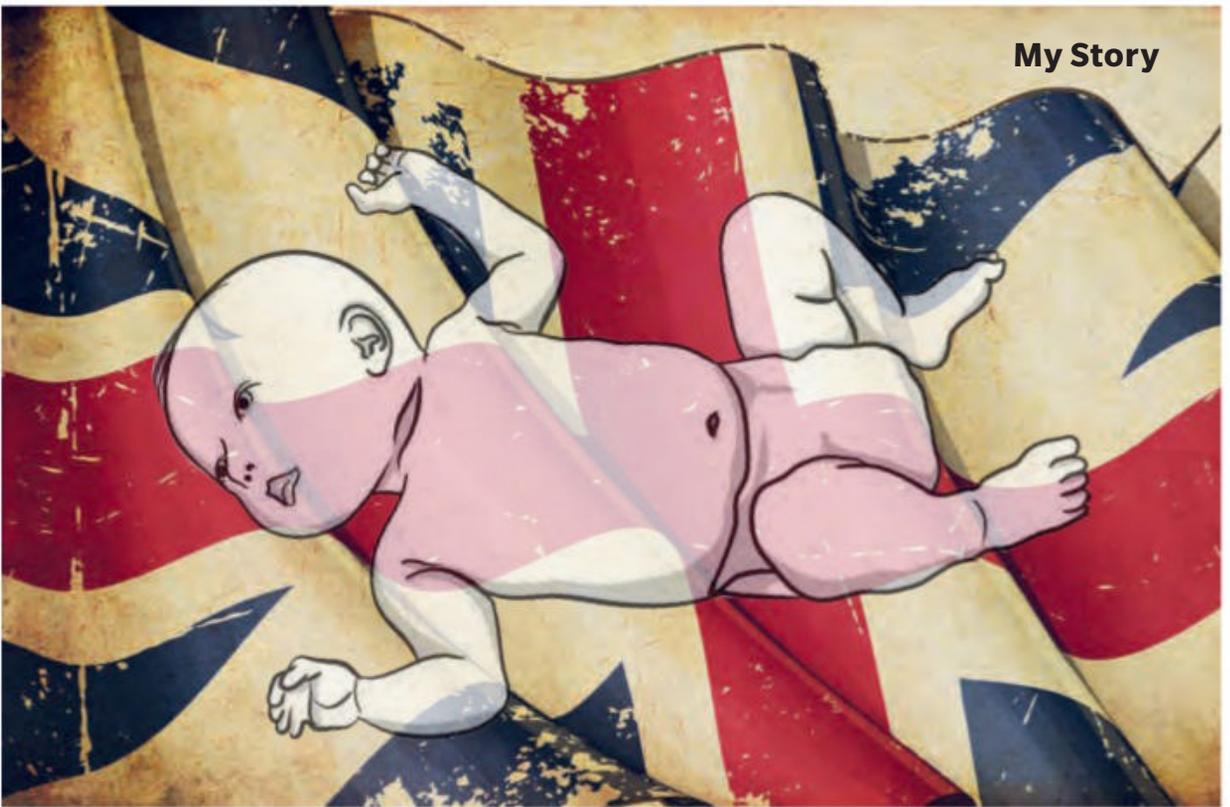
When a hidden past comes to light, it reveals a family's joy and heartbreak

BY Jessica Sinclair

My father was born in England under a veil of secrecy, amid the ominous air raids of the early 1940s in London. He was the illegitimate child of a naive English girl, Dotty, who at 17 had succumbed to the alluring charisma of a young, off-duty American serviceman visiting port during World War II. On realising her predicament, Dotty had gone to great lengths to hide her forbidden pregnancy from her old-fashioned and authoritarian parents. She took refuge on the outskirts of London with her eldest sister and creatively named the baby Philip, the same name as her sister's new-born so as not to draw suspicion.

However, as the charade was unfeasible to continue, my father was secretly adopted by Dotty's eldest brother and his young wife, Hilda, who was unable to have children. Hilda was a war bride separated too soon from her newly wed husband, who was deployed to serve with the British forces in Burma behind Japanese lines. She convincingly raised the child from a young infant as her own, under the watchful eye of his real mother, known to him as his aunt.

My father had never known of his real parentage or had ever wished to know; he adored his adoptive parents, unaware that his doting Aunt Dotty, and later his two cousins, were anything more than just that. Being one of the lucky



few to return from Burma, Dotty's brother however suffered recurring bouts of malaria until a heart attack took his life prematurely; but not before he had watched his infant son mature into a successful, young married man.

The secret of my father's adoption was only revealed many years later, when he was in his 60s, upon the death bed of his elderly mother, Hilda. With his 'Aunt Dotty' passing

With her family, Jessica Sinclair moved to Melbourne from the UK in 2008. As a teenager, she lived in South Africa with her parents, where she met her husband. With family spread over three continents, her well-travelled past provides inspiration for the short stories Jessica writes in her spare time, when she is not busy working or walking her beloved dogs.

away soon after, the mysterious web of unanswered questions went with her to the grave. Without fear of causing distress to the two women who had so vehemently protected their secret, my father finally took it upon himself to fill the gaps in our family history and to attempt to uncover the missing link.

A rather fortuitous DNA search via a DNA home kit from an ancestry website revealed an elderly half-sister living in America, whose lifetime had been spent searching for the name of her absent father. Eventually through a maze of genetic coincidences, we miraculously unearthed my real grandfather's identity; a biological revelation which carried part of the genetic code to my own children.

A man named Tom; a bit of a playboy it seemed, with a different woman in each port as he travelled the world as an American Navy serviceman, leaving a trail of progeny in his wake.

My father, it turned out, was just one of his many war babies.

The irony was not lost on us when we discovered that having finally settled after the war with an older American woman, it appeared they couldn't have children of their own and had in fact adopted a son.

Unaware of his trail of offspring, a post-war obsession with alcohol and depression eventually took its toll on Tom. A distant cousin provided a photo that proved the family resemblance and provided a visual insight into the mystery of the man who was partly responsible for my own very existence. Despite learning of Tom's rather volatile past, it was a considerable feat to put a face to his name and add the enigma to our family tree.

With or without his presence in my father's life, I would be forever thankful to the incredible connection between siblings that enabled my father to grow up in an adoring family, unwittingly

under the watchful eye of his real mother. It was an enormous secret that must have weighed heavily on all those who loved him, in surreal circumstances. I wonder about my grandmother's secrets, imagining her implicit strength of character.

The heart-breaking moment when

a young girl handed over her new-born son to her brother; the brave young woman, who took on the role of my father's mother so willingly and without judgement, to

raise him as her own without arousing any suspicion.

There are endless unanswered questions about the incredible secret that had given my father the chance to stay a part of his maternal family against all odds. I marvel at the opportunities and privileges afforded to me. I am profoundly grateful to those two women for the courage and resilience it took to raise their secret child, my very own father, and proud to think that perhaps they are partly responsible for the woman I am today.

THE ENORMOUS SECRET MUST HAVE WEIGHED HEAVILY ON THOSE WHO LOVED HIM

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SMART ANIMALS

Some animals are happy to benefit from human kindness



Feeding Time

RAFFAT ANSARI

Our kitchen in our old-fashioned house in Pakistan's southern Punjab had a small verandah with a fireplace which was no longer used. One morning I rushed out after hearing a dull thud from the verandah. A stray cat had pulled down a nest from the chimney, in which two baby hoopoes were nestled.

We gently placed the babies in a cotton-lined shoebox in the warm kitchen and my mother and brother gave them some water and mixed grains. The fledglings swayed on their shaky legs and chirped hungrily.

Sadly, the food we provided didn't suit them, and we were afraid they would die of hunger. About two hours later, there was a strange squawk outside the kitchen door.

A brown and black hoopoe stood there with a long worm in its beak, while another hoopoe was perched on the electricity wire nearby, as if on guard. The babies became excited, and as we opened the kitchen door a little, the bird came forward and

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fed her chicks the worm. Satisfied, the babies slept in the shoe box. Next day, there was Mummy Hoopoe with another worm for breakfast while Daddy stood by on guard. This ritual was performed about twice daily for three weeks.

One morning Mummy Hoopoe nudged them out into the garden and showed them how to fly. The young ones flapped about, trying out their wings, but returned to the kitchen. Gradually, they began flying higher till one day, with a loud “thank you” screech from the mother, they flew away into the blue sky.



Hideaway Cat

JASMINE SIMPSON

I began taking care of my tortoiseshell cat, Possum, 16 years ago. She was a rescue cat who proved too wild to rehome, but I related to her antisocial behaviour as I am also very much a recluse. Our bond was instant and Possum, unknown to herself, became my guard cat. If someone dared to walk up the driveway and knock at the door,

Possum would growl and hide which gave me ample warning to hide as well. We both suffered from various degrees of social anxiety.

The only time I could get near Possum was when I was asleep (or she thought I was asleep). She would snuggle up close to me in bed and purr.

Five years ago, Possum got spooked when I had tradesmen at my home doing some renovation work. She ran away and hid under a neighbour’s house.

After five nights away, I was beside myself with worry, so I asked the neighbour, Trevor, if I could sleep under his house in the hope that Possum might come and snuggle up next to me and I would be able to catch her. The chap was kind enough to disguise his thoughts and he let me bunk under his house in the middle of a New Zealand winter.

The plan to sleep under the house did work, though not the way I expected. Possum took exception to me finding her hiding place, so while I slept, under a dark house among spider webs on an old roll of carpet, she headed home.

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PETS

Dogs Alone at Home

Preventing and dealing with separation issues

BY *Dr Katrina Warren*



Our regular pet columnist, Dr Katrina Warren, is an established and trusted animal expert.

IN RECENT TIMES people are working from home more than ever and, as a result, many pets are enjoying a lot more time with their owners. Our pets have never received so much attention and pet adoption rates have skyrocketed as people seek enjoyment from extra companionship. But what will happen to all these pets when life eventually returns to normal? Veterinarian Dr Katrina Warren shares advice about how to raise a puppy or train an older dog to be content when you are not around.

TEACH PUPPIES ALONE TIME Dogs are social creatures and need to learn coping skills to be comfortable being left unattended. Otherwise, they may become anxious when left alone and this can result in destructive behaviour. Teach your puppy to be comfortable alone right from the start, this will help you avoid separation issues down the track. As tempting as it is to let your cute puppy follow you around, this can lead to them becoming overly dependent and potentially anxious when left alone.

SET UP A PLAYPEN OR CRATE This helps keep them secure when you're not in the same room. Allocate some time each day to leave your puppy alone – after playtime is perfect. Allow them an opportunity

to toilet and then give them something safe to chew on to help them settle. If you are planning for your dog to spend time outside during the day, then it is essential that you set this up from the beginning.



CREATE A ROUTINE It's important for adult dogs to also spend time alone. When you are home, put your dog outside for short periods while offering a chew toy or encourage them to settle on their bed or in a crate while you move around different parts of the house. Dogs like routine as it makes them feel secure. Setting up and maintaining an exercise routine will be important once you start leaving the house more, or your dog may become bored and possibly destructive. This is especially important for adolescent dogs and

Provide your pet with a comfortable place to rest while you are out

active breeds. Think about the amount of exercise you are giving your dog now and ask yourself how much exercise you will be able to maintain if circumstances change.

ESTABLISH GOOD CHEW HABITS

Teach your puppy or dog what is acceptable for them to chew. Only give them toys that are clearly distinguishable from household items. Toys stuffed with food are a good option. When you want your dog to have some quiet time, give them a safe chew toy so they learn to associate this time with something positive. When you leave the house, give them a chew toy to help them relax and keep them occupied.

TRAINING This should include teaching the basics of sit, stay and drop but also teaching them to go to their bed and stay in position when requested. Trick training is also a wonderful way to use any extra time to develop the bond you share.

PUPPY ESSENTIALS

- ◆ Don't let your puppy follow you from room to room.
- ◆ Confine your puppy if you can't actively supervise them.
- ◆ Teach them to lie on a bed or mat at your request.
- ◆ Encourage them to use food-dispensing toys to help keep them occupied.



10 Causes of Persistent Coughing



Got a chronic cough that just won't go away? One of these medical reasons could explain what's going on

BY *Marissa Laliberte*

HERE are some possible causes of a nagging cough.

REFLUX Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or acid reflux, causes stomach contents to leak backwards into the oesophagus. Typically this causes heartburn, but in some cases, it can trigger persistent coughing and wheezing.

“Acids that are supposed to stay in the stomach come up the oesophagus and trigger a cough from the underside of vocal cords,” says

respiratory tract specialist Dr Jason Turowski.

WORSENERD ALLERGIES Irritants in the air during spring and autumn cause seasonal allergies in many people. If your usual allergy symptoms get worse or aren't responding to your usual medications, your underlying allergies might require different treatment, says lung expert Dr Albert Rizzo. “A doctor might suggest inhaled steroids to help control the airwaves,” he says.

TWO INFECTIONS If you thought you were over a virus but your cough isn't getting any better, you might have developed a second infection. “Someone who has a cough or runny nose and suddenly has green drainage might have a bacterial

infection on top of it," Dr Rizzo says. Check with your doctor, who might prescribe antibiotics.

POST-VIRUS COUGH After a virus, some people develop a cough that sticks around because their airways overreact to a virus. The smooth muscle tissue that lines the airways clamps down and traps secretions in the wrong place, Dr Turowski says. "Anybody and everybody, after a severe respiratory condition, can develop a chronic cough," he says.

ACE INHIBITORS Taking ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitors for high blood pressure could cause a cough, probably because they disrupt histamine pathways and inflame airways in some people, according to Dr Rizzo. Even if you've been taking the medication for a while, check with your doctor to see if it could be causing your cough.

BETA BLOCKERS Not only does your heart have beta receptors, but your airways have them, too. "If activated by beta blockers, lungs can clamp down, and when they restrict, they cause a cough," Dr Turowski says.

POOR AIR QUALITY Persistent coughing is most common in people who live in cities or near a lot of air pollution. But working in an old office space for years could also start

to irritate your lungs. "Sometimes people in old office spaces or dirty, dank environments where mould or mildew builds up develop an allergic, infectious kind of cough," Dr Turowski says.

LUNG SCARRING Up to 40 per cent of people who have rheumatoid arthritis also have pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease that scars lung tissue, according to the National Institutes of Health. Rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic connective tissue disease, which means it can damage the lungs and lead to persistent coughing, Dr Turowski says. In fact, a cough might be the only early symptom of pulmonary fibrosis. "It's difficult to detect but involves a dry cough that persists for a number of months," Dr Rizzo says.

MISCOMMUNICATION FROM THE NERVOUS SYSTEM In rare cases, the nerves might send the wrong information to the lungs, triggering a cough. "There's some discombobulation and disregulation in feedback with the nerves and the delicate respiratory system," Dr Turowski says.

DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING If you feel like you're choking when eating or talking, swallowing problems might be behind your persistent coughing. Dr Rizzo suggests practising swallowing exercises.

HEALTH

How to Soothe a Stiff Neck

Simple remedies to relieve a pain in the neck

BY *Alison Wilkinson*

TRY A GENTLE STRETCH

Physical therapist Shelly Coffman recommends gentle stretching of the neck muscles to get blood flowing and relieve inflammation. Lying down flat, with a rolled towel behind your neck, rotate your head slowly as if saying 'no.' Then nod your head slowly as if saying 'yes.' Do two sets each of 20 reps, two to three times a day.

APPLY HOT AND COLD

COMPRESSES Applying heat to your stiff neck helps to relax the muscles and bring fresh blood to the sore spot, Coffman says. You can get the heat you need with a warm face cloth. Alternate with an ice pack to numb the pain and bring down inflammation. Continue using both for up to ten minutes each,

several times a day and up to every hour if your neck is particularly sore. If you are experiencing a lot of pain however – not just stiffness – stick with the ice, cautions Coffman. Heat can make pain worse by increasing inflammation.

TAKE A SOAK A warm Epsom salt bath does double duty as a stiff neck remedy. The warm water helps to relax the muscles, while the magnesium and sulphates in the salt help reduce inflammation and improve blood flow and oxygenation.

CHANGE YOUR SLEEP HABITS

To avoid neck pain in the morning, it's best to sleep on your side or on your back and never on your stomach as this can lead to twisting your head one way or the other, which can hurt your neck. You may also consider buying a pillow that supports the natural curve of your neck.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



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WORLD OF MEDICINE

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SAVES MILLIONS OF LIVES Insufficient exercise contributes to around 3.2 million deaths worldwide, according to calculations by Australian, UK and French researchers. On the flipside, physical activity prevents an even bigger number of deaths, including 3.9 million that would have been considered 'premature' (before age 75). The researchers believe that we should celebrate what exercise is already accomplishing, as a way to encourage even more people to get moving.

HYSTERECTOMY IS NOT THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR FIBROIDS They're not normally life-threatening, but uterine fibroids, which typically arise between the ages of 30 and 50, are a source of recurring pain for roughly one in six women. These non-cancerous tumours in the womb can also cause bloating, painful sex, a constant feeling of needing to urinate and difficult, heavy periods. For years, hysterectomy (surgically removing the uterus) has been the one-size-fits-all treatment. But with

many women choosing to conceive after 30, there's a need for other treatments. UK scientists have found two newer womb-sparing alternatives: myomectomy (cutting out the fibroids) and uterine artery embolisation (blocking the blood flow to the fibroids) have both proved effective at providing relief, and women were able to give birth afterwards.

A SINGLE INDULGENCE MAY NOT HARM YOU For a UK study that sounds more fun than most, healthy young men ate as much pizza as they could. On average, they stuffed in about 12,550 kilojoules – far more than most adults need in a full day. Yet, their blood sugar didn't climb more than it would after a normal meal, and fat levels in the bloodstream were only slightly higher than usual. Of course, frequently eating too much can lead to obesity, diabetes and other health issues. But an occasional overindulgence isn't enough to make people suffer metabolic consequences.





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EVERYDAY MIRACLES



Lost and Found, an Ocean Away

BY *Emily Goodman*

Doug Falter returned home on the evening of February 3, 2018, teary-eyed and exhausted. The 33-year-old professional photographer had just run from one end of Hawaii's Waimea Bay to the other – just over 300 metres

– while frantically scanning the water like a starving seabird in search of a fish. Still not finding what he was looking for after more than an hour, he tried scaling some nearby rocks to get a better view. But by then, night had started to fall.

ILLUSTRATION: GEL JAMLANG

At home, Falter took his search online. “Was surfing tonight and lost my baby,” he wrote on Facebook. That ‘baby’ was a 3.2-metre-long baby blue surfboard that had been custom-made for him. Hours earlier, the crash of a big wave and the powerful swells of the bay had separated Falter from this prized possession.

“I caught the biggest waves of my life on that board,” Falter later said. “That’s why it means so much to me.”

He hoped it would wash ashore in the coming days and that whoever spotted it would have also seen his Facebook post. But instead of pushing Falter’s surfboard to shore, the currents of Waimea Bay swept it out to sea, away from Oahu and from the Hawaiian Islands altogether.

Weeks passed with no sign of the surfboard. Then months. Lyle Carlson, who had customised the board for Falter, told him of another lost surfboard that was found – four years later – after a fisherman hooked it. “That did give me hope,” Falter says, “but by that time I was like, *I just have to forget about it.*” He saved for months to buy a new custom surfboard, for US\$1500. “Those boards aren’t cheap,” he says.

But Falter never completely forgot about the board, which – six months later and more than 8000 kilometres

away from where it disappeared – floated by the remote island of Sarangani in the southern Philippines. The local fisherman who found it didn’t have much use for his unusual catch of the day, so he sold the board to Giovanna Branzuela, a 36-year-old primary school teacher. Branzuela hoped to learn to surf and one day share the skill with his students, who regularly accompany him on beach clean-ups.

“It’s been my dream to ride the big waves here,” Branzuela says. He bought Falter’s surfboard for \$40.

The once-blue board had faded to a pale straw colour during its journey, but its distinctive markings were still there: two elephants, one at either end, each framed in a diamond

emblem. Underneath the emblems were the words ‘Lyle Carlson Surfboards, Oahu, Hawaii’.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Branzuela said on realising how far the surfboard had travelled. He reached out to Carlson online last July and sent him a photo of the board. Carlson, in turn, reached out to Falter, who then contacted Branzuela directly to ask for more photos. Those extra shots confirmed the board was his. Falter was shocked to learn that his ‘baby’ had drifted across the world’s largest ocean – and survived.

**“THIS IS
THE COOLEST
WAY I COULD
HAVE EVER
LOST \$1500”**

READER'S DIGEST

"It was the craziest thing I had ever heard," Falter says.

He was ecstatic, but not only for himself. "When I heard this guy bought it because he wanted to learn how to surf, I thought, *This is the coolest way I could have ever lost US\$1500.*" Seeing interest in the sport grow means a lot to Falter. "I couldn't imagine a better ending to this story," he says.

But the story was far from over. Even now, months later, Falter and Branzuela are in contact almost every day. The coronavirus pandemic has delayed their plans to meet in person, but Falter knows his surfboard is in safe hands in the Philippines. "I told him I would take good care of it," Branzuela says.

In the meantime, Falter wanted to thank Branzuela with some surfing supplies, but the teacher asked for school supplies instead, such as backpacks for his students and materials to help them learn English.

"That fuelled me to raise money

for the kids," Falter says. So far, he has collected US\$2500, which he has used to buy and ship maps, puzzles, classroom posters, textbooks and workbooks, along with beloved children's titles like *Charlotte's Web* and *The BFG* as well as volumes in the Harry Potter series. "I'm just happy for the opportunity to do something good," Falter says.

As for the surfboard, Falter is delighted that Branzuela is using it, if only for splashing around in shallow waters, since he is a novice. When Branzuela bought the board, he had no idea it was made specifically for a man of his exact size. "It's pretty wild - we're the same height," Falter says of the happy coincidence. When the two men finally do meet for the handover, Falter plans to make it an even exchange by giving Branzuela a brand-new board. And before he leaves the Philippines, Falter wants to do what Branzuela hoped the board would do: teach him to surf. **R**



Bunkers Come Out From the Cold

Military bunkers built by paranoid Communist dictator Enver Hoxha, who ruled Albania from 1944 to 1985, are being given a new lease of life. The burrowed mushroom-shaped, cement-and-steel structures, a painful reminder of the country's difficult past, were constructed in secret between the 1970s and 1980s during the Cold War. The bunkers, which come in a variety of sizes, are scattered right across the country and resourceful Albanians are now turning the structures into more user-friendly purposes, such as restaurants, bars, cafés and museums. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.COM



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MONEY

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A look at the 'small' reasons your bank account might be running on empty.

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Warning indications that stress could be affecting you and your nearest and dearest.



PETS

13 BEST SMALL CAT BREEDS

The cute factor is out of control with these tiny and very friendly cats.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



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I REMEMBER...

JANE GOODALL



Primatologist and environmental activist Jane Goodall looks back on a life of discovery and shares how she became a champion for chimpanzees

BY Jack Watkins

...BEING BOUGHT A TOY CHIMP AS A TODDLER. It was made to mark the first chimp born at the London Zoo and was called Jubilee. People said it would give me nightmares, but he became my favourite toy. I took him everywhere. I still have him now, though he's in his 80s, and rather delicate, so he doesn't travel.

...MY MOTHER supported my ambition to work with animals. She was

the only one who didn't laugh at my ridiculous dream of going to Africa. She said I'd have to work very hard, take advantage of all opportunities, and never give up. That's the message I tell young people around the world, particularly in disadvantaged communities. I wish she was alive to know many people have told me that I taught them that because I did it, they could too.



Jane took her favourite toy, a chimp, everywhere as a child

...RUSTY, A BLACK MONGREL, taught me animals have personalities and feelings. I had other pets like guinea pigs and tortoises, and I knew they all had personalities, but Rusty was special. He was highly intelligent, and I thought of him when academics later told me that only humans have personalities, minds and emotions.

...MY FIRST TRIP TO AFRICA IN 1957. A friend invited me to her family's farm in Kenya. There were no tourist planes then, so I went by sea. It was the time of the Suez Crisis so the ship went all round the Cape and the first town I set foot in was Cape Town. It was beautiful but had 'Whites Only' signs everywhere, which was horrible. On landing at Mombasa, a train took me past herds of wildebeest,

which you don't see now. Then, as a car drove me up towards the farm an aardvark passed ahead of us. There was a giraffe at the side of the road, looking down with those long, curly lashes. The first morning when I woke up, outside my very own window were the fresh paw prints of a leopard. I'd finally arrived in the Africa of my dreams.

...LOUIS LEAKEY GAVE ME MY FIRST WORK IN AFRICA. There wasn't enough money for me to attend university, so I went on a secretarial course. A friend said that if I wanted to work with animals in Africa I should contact Leakey, a distinguished palaeontologist. By chance he needed a secretary, and allowed me to accompany him, his wife and one other English girl, Gillian, on his annual fossil hunting trip to the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania.

...BEING FOLLOWED BY A LION. After each day's work, Gillian and I were allowed to go out on the African plains in the evening. One time we looked round and a young male lion was following us. Scary, but exciting. Gillian said we should head down into the forest, but I said we must stay in the open, because in the thickets he'd know where we were, but we wouldn't know where he was. The lion eventually gave up, and Leakey told me I'd done the right thing. I think that convinced him to give me the job of studying wild chimpanzees.

...LEAKEY THOUGHT WOMEN MADE THE BEST OBSERVERS. He also wanted a mind uncluttered by reductionist scientific thinking. He felt that learning about our closest relatives would help him better understand the behaviour of the Stone Age humans whose fossils he was digging up.

...DAVID GREYBEARD SAVED MY OBSERVATION PROJECT. We only had six months' funding to begin with, and when I first arrived at the Gombe Stream Reserve, the chimps ran away. They'd never seen a white ape before. It wasn't until July 14, 1960, an event now commemorated annually as World Chimpanzee Day, that the chimp I'd named David Greybeard became the first to lose his fear, enabling me to observe him making tools to catch termites. If you saw that today, it wouldn't be remarkable. We know lots of animals use tools, but then it was thought that only humans did it.

...NAMING CHIMPS was deemed controversial in the scientific community. But I couldn't have imagined calling a chimp by a number. When the proof came back for my first scientific paper on nature – when I finally got a chance to do a PhD – all my 'he's', 'she's' and 'who's' were crossed out for 'it' and 'which'. I was furious. I reinstated them all and refused to back down. I won the argument.

...MEETING HUGO VAN LAWICK. He'd come to film and photograph me on behalf of *National Geographic*. This took the story of Jane and the chimps into the outside world. We fell in love and married in 1964. We set up the Gombe Stream Research Centre, the first of its type, which is still going strong today and discovering new things about chimps. Sadly, Hugo's photography took him to the Serengeti while I remained at Gombe, and we drifted apart. We divorced amicably in 1974.

...OUR SON HUGO, AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS 'GRUB', DIDN'T LIKE CHIMPS. He knew they could eat him. Chimps have been known to take human babies. Today, he finds them more interesting, but he still doesn't like them.

...'FEMINISTS' CRITICISED ME. It annoys me that people despise women if they stop their career to look after children. Chimps teach us that for the first two years of life, it's really

Goodall's discoveries about chimpanzees challenged the scientific establishment



READER'S DIGEST

important to have a nurturing three or four people who are stable, supportive and always there. It doesn't have to be the biological mother. But although I never saw myself as a feminist per se, I support women's rights. My favourite line came from the chief of a South American tribe, which he described as an eagle with one wing male, the other female. Only when the two wings are equal will the tribe fly.

...EXPERIENCING A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris. I walked in one morning just as the sun was coming through the great rose window. A couple were getting married and the organist was playing *Toccata and Fugue*. It just hit me. I thought of all the people who'd built the cathedral,

With her first husband, photographer Hugo van Lawick and son 'Grub'



who'd worshipped there, and of Bach who'd created that music. The world couldn't have happened by chance. Interestingly, although mainstream science doesn't support the idea of God, cutting-edge scientists are increasingly backing the idea of the intelligent design of the universe.

...GOING THROUGH A BLEAK PERIOD. It was difficult when my second husband, Derek Bryceson, director of the Tanzania National Parks, died in 1992. It didn't shake my faith, but I was grieving, wanting to be out in the forest. For me, it's the most healing, rewarding place, where you realise that everything is connected, and that every single species has a role to play.

...MY PRIORITIES CHANGED after the publication of my book, *The Chimpanzees of Gombe*. On the back of that, published in 1986, I helped organise a conference in Chicago on the subject. I walked into it as a scientist, and left as an activist. I'd been so isolated in Gombe but getting together with others who were studying chimps elsewhere in Africa was a shock. Each of us had the same stories, of falling chimpanzee numbers, the loss of the forest cover they depend upon, the growth of commercial hunting, the bush-meat trade, the shooting of mothers to steal baby chimps, and the training of them for entertainment. It was a shocking insight.

...FLYING OVER GOMBE I realised that poverty was causing Africans to destroy their own environment.

Gombe was once part of a great equatorial forest belt from East Africa to the West African coast, but by 1994 it was an island of forest surrounded by bare hills. There are more people than the land can support, and they're too poor to buy food from elsewhere so they cut down trees for new farmland.

Tanzania now only has about 2000 chimps left, and the population across Africa is about 300,000. A century ago it was close to two million. Through my Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research, Education and Conservation, we run a community programme that helps villages to grow plants and timber, allowing deforested areas to regenerate naturally.

...SCHOOL CHILDREN AND STUDENTS tell me that our generation has compromised their future, making them feel angry and depressed. And we have. There's a saying, 'We haven't inherited this planet from our parents, it's borrowed from our children.' But we've been stealing, and we are still stealing. We have a tiny, tiny window of time to do something about it, but if our youth lose hope, that's it.

...A CHAT WITH TEENAGERS in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, inspired me to set up 'Roots and Shoots'. It's now in 80 countries, from nurseries to universities and everything in



Goodall observing chimpanzees in Gombe, Tanzania, where she set up a research centre

between. The programme's message is that every individual can make a positive impact on the environment, animals and people every day. It's very strong in China, India and North America, and we are in 1700 schools in Britain. But we are short of funds and need all the support we can get.

...CLIMBING THE BEECH TREES AT MY BOURNEMOUTH HOME. The house has been in the family since I was five years old. My sister lives there now with her daughter's family, and in between tours it is my home, my roots and my stability.

A man recently approached me after I had given a lecture in Hong Kong and told me that he'd intended to buy a sports car, but had given up the idea and was giving the money to Roots and Shoots instead.

It was Gandhi who famously said the planet could provide enough for human need, but not enough for human greed. **R**

READER'S DIGEST

These following 22 facts are a perfect place to start your heart-health education.

1 Get screened early

Roughly one in five people with high blood pressure don't know it. "Your blood pressure can be high without showing any symptoms – that's why it's known as 'the silent killer,'" says cardiologist Dr Nieca Goldberg. Ask your doctor for a lipo-protein profile, which measures your LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, and total cholesterol. If left untreated, high blood pressure and high cholesterol can lead to heart disease, an aneurysm or even a stroke.

2 Manage stress and anxiety

Stress plays a role in 77 per cent of all health concerns, including digestive trouble, an inability to lose weight and heart disease, says adjunct psychology instructor Dr Nikki Martinez. "When you reach an age where your body is going through changes and is not bouncing back as it once did, stress and anxiety can start to become quite significant issues," she explains. "Learning solid coping skills, stress management, mindfulness and healthy outlets can truly impact each and every area of your functioning." Stress relief can come in many forms. Try taking a deep breath; massaging the palm of one hand with your thumb; reciting a

mantra, such as "I feel calm"; breathing the scent of lavender, peppermint or rose; or taking a walk.

3 Pay attention to your shoes

Oedema, the buildup of excess fluid in the body's tissues, can be the result of congestive heart failure. When your heart doesn't pump blood as effectively as it should, the blood collects and causes swelling, commonly in the feet and legs. "People may notice their shoes feel tight or their socks make lines on their ankles," says cardiologist Dr Gregg Fonarow.

4 Toss your plastic containers

Chemicals commonly found in plastic water bottles and food containers, such as bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates, leach into the contents of these containers. More than 50 medical papers link phthalates to cardiovascular issues. Use glass, ceramic or stainless steel containers instead. Or look at the recycling code on the bottom of any plastic container; if it is a 3 or 7, the container may contain BPA or phthalates.

5 Ask your doctor about new devices ...

The Barostim Neo System is a 'breakthrough device' inserted under the collarbone that provides patients who don't benefit from standard treatments an option to reduce their symptoms and improve their quality of life.



6 Mind the salt, whatever your blood pressure

“Even for people who don’t have high blood pressure, less sodium will significantly blunt the rise in blood pressure,” says Dr Goldberg. “It will also reduce the risk of developing other conditions, like kidney disease, which are associated with eating too much sodium.”

7 Vegetarians, be aware that you are not immune

“There’s a lot of hype around plant-based diets, and with good reason. Eating a diet low in animal sources of protein and fat and high in [fresh] produce has been linked to lower risks of cardiovascular disease,” says Dr Erin D. Michos, a specialist in preventive cardiology. “But not all meatless diets are healthy. You can

avoid meat and still load up on refined grains, simple starchy carbs, sugary beverages and dairy – thereby increasing your risk of heart disease.

8 Ladies, take note if you had a preterm pregnancy ...

Women who undergo spontaneous preterm delivery (before 37 weeks) may have a greater likelihood of heart disease, according to a Dutch study. Mothers of premies had a 38 per cent

higher risk of coronary artery disease, a 71 per cent higher risk of stroke, and more than double the risk of overall heart disease. Researchers say these women may be prone to inflammation, which is linked to preterm delivery and common among heart disease patients.

9 ... or passed a stress test but still have chest pain

Heart attack symptoms can present differently in women because there’s a difference in plaque buildup and blockage patterns between men and women, according to cardiologist Dr C. Noel Bairey Merz. Whereas men often have plaque buildup in the major arteries around the heart, in women it is the smaller coronary blood vessels that cease to constrict and dilate properly, creating the lack

READER'S DIGEST

of blood flow and oxygen to the heart, Dr Merz says. Thus, women can have normal angiograms and stress tests even if they have heart disease, leading doctors to dismiss even classic symptoms such as chest pain and shortness of breath. Women may also experience dizziness, light-headedness or fainting, upper back pressure or extreme fatigue, all of which can easily be mistaken for other issues.

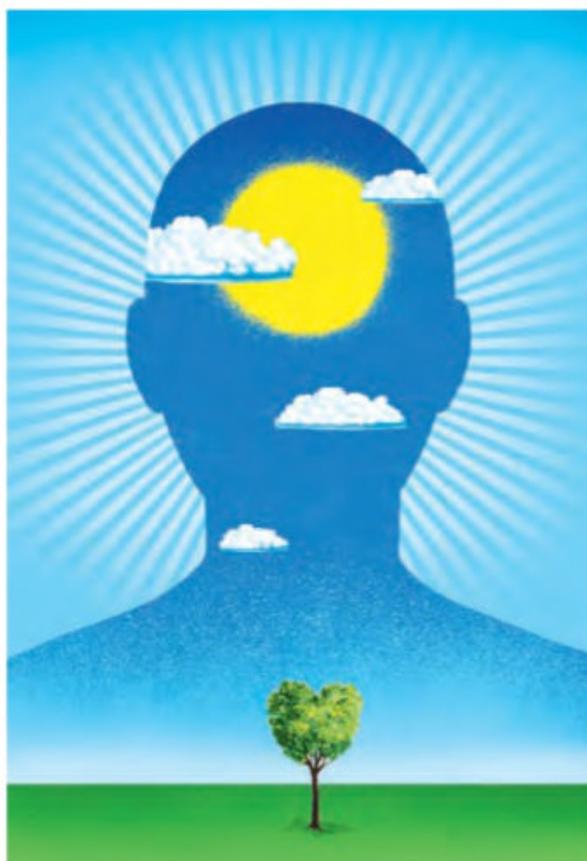
10 **Open the windows in your house ...**

The air inside your home might be more polluted than the air in the world's dirtiest cities. There are dozens of possible sources, including hair spray, candles, fumes from the non-stick coating on your cookware, or smoke from a woodstove or fireplace. While any of these might be harmless in small amounts, the caustic brew they create when mixed together can turn up inflammation, raise blood pressure and harden arteries.

Open windows and use a fan to circulate the air and reduce indoor pollution levels.

11 **... but keep them closed in the car**

This reduces your exposure to airborne pollutants. A Harvard University study found that exposure reduces something called heart rate variability (HRV), the ability of your heart to respond to various activities



and stresses. Reduced HRV has been associated with increased deaths among heart attack survivors as well as the general population.

12 **Prioritise sleep**

A sound snooze is good for your heart, but as you age, your brain and neurons begin to change and your 'sleep architecture' suffers, according to authorities on sleep. That means you're more prone to waking up during the night and less likely to get the deep sleep your heart needs to function properly. Women also have to battle the symptoms of perimenopause and menopause - hot flashes are notorious for wrecking slumber. "Shorter sleep duration and poorer quality of sleep

seem to be associated with increased stiffness of the arteries and increased cholesterol plaque, especially in the carotid arteries,” says cardiologist Dr Christine Jellis. A few tips for a better night’s sleep: avoid afternoon naps and caffeine within six hours of your bedtime.

13 Drink coffee
The recommendations for drinking coffee have been somewhat inconsistent over the years, but according to the American College of Cardiology, coffee might be helpful in reducing the risk of arrhythmias, heart disease and stroke. But don’t overdo it. Regularly consuming three to five cups of coffee a day – or 300 mg of caffeine (one espresso shot equals 100 mg while one cup of instant coffee equals 60mg) – may be protective against heart rhythm disorders, according to a 2018 study in the *JACC: Clinical Electrophysiology*.

14 Eat... yoghurt
Yoghurt and spreads containing plant sterols (substances similar to good cholesterol) can reduce blood levels of LDL cholesterol by up to ten per cent, says clinical dietitian Kristian Morey.

15 ... lean beef
Beef is loaded with zinc, iron and B vitamins, all of which help boost heart health. Stick to lean cuts like flank or 95 per cent lean

mince. Or look for cuts such as top sirloin or tenderloin – they have the lowest fat content. Limit your intake to 115 to 170 grams no more than three times a week.

16 ... kiwi fruit
“Eating two to three kiwi fruit a day can help reduce harmful blood triglyceride levels,” Morey says. The fruit also helps raise HDL levels. It is rich in vitamins C and E and minerals (potassium, magnesium, copper and phosphorous). And, “If you’re up for eating the skin, you can double the amount of fibre you get from this fuzzy fruit.”

17 ... cumin
Time for some curry in a hurry. According to Morey, this spice has been found to have powerful effects on heart health. A study in the journal *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice* found that overweight or obese women who consumed just half a teaspoon of this spice daily reduced their LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, as well as raising their levels of good HDL cholesterol.

18 ... chocolate
Dark chocolate (at least 75 per cent cocoa; 85 per cent is best) can be heart-healthy, Morey says. It is rich in healthful flavonoids, particularly flavonols that can help lower the risk of heart disease.

19 Urinate when you feel the urge

Research at Taiwan University found that a full bladder causes your heart to beat faster and puts added stress on coronary arteries, triggering them to contract, which could lead to a heart attack in people who are vulnerable.

20 Get some sun

Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity and even COVID-19, and the risk for many of these tends to increase with advancing age. While sunlight is a risk factor for skin cancers, it does stimulate your body's production of vitamin D. In general, scientists think five to 15 minutes daily is about right to get the most out of it without causing any health problems. You can also get vitamin D from food and supplements.

21 Don't let your heart harden

Starting at around age 50, the heart muscle begins to stiffen, making it tougher for it to pump blood efficiently throughout the body. The medical term for this phenomenon is diastolic dysfunction:

the muscle isn't able to relax after each beat, increasing wear and tear. For women, hormonal changes can make matters worse.

"When oestrogen levels decline, women often develop stiffening of the heart muscle," says integrative cardiologist Dr Regina Druz.

Regular exercise and a balanced diet can help. Don't delay consulting your doctor if you have any of the hallmark symptoms: shortness of breath; fatigue; rapid heartbeat; coughing up pink and foamy mucus; or swelling in the legs, ankles and feet.

22 Be active and be kind

People who spend a lot of time being sedentary are 73 per cent more likely to develop metabolic syndrome, a cluster of problems that raise heart disease risk.

Meanwhile, a study found that those who spent money on other people had lower blood pressure than those who spent money on themselves. To double your benefits, do something physically active on behalf of someone else: while you're raking the leaves or mowing the nature strip, perhaps mow your neighbour's nature strip, too. **R**



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LIFE'S LIKE THAT

Seeing the Funny Side



The Price of a Wife

A male colleague told us at work that it was his wife's birthday.

"What are you getting for her?" enquired another colleague.

"Make me an offer!" he responded.

SUBMITTED BY ANNA HAMMETT

Parental Guidance

Establish dominance by replying to your kid's 'Knock knock' joke with 'Door's open'. @SLADEWENTWORTH

Take Note

The waitress was not moving much from the other side of the café, so I waved at her to get attention. When she turned her head towards us, I gave what I believed was the universally accepted hand sign to signal that we wanted the bill - holding out one hand and using the other to simulate writing on it. A few minutes later she came to our table, smiled and gave us a blank notepad and a pen!

SUBMITTED BY OLIVER DUVAL

Silent Warning

My two sons were sitting next to each other in church. Tomos was giggling and fidgeting a lot. Finally, his big brother Ben had had enough.

"You're not allowed to be loud in church."

"Who's going to stop me?" Tomos answered cheekily.

Ben pointed to the back of the church and Tomos looked over. "See those two men by the big door? They're hushers!"

SUBMITTED BY JEENA SUMNER

The Wait is Over

At my best friend Natasha's 50th birthday party, her son, who was ten at the time, asked his dad why he had married later in life. He replied that he was waiting to find someone very special.

Natasha looked very happy, until her son asked, "And did you find her, Dad?"

SUBMITTED BY JILL COHEN



LATE MODEL

I was selling some vintage Grenadier Guards model toy soldiers on eBay. They were quite collectable and fairly valuable. In my hurry to get all the details down, I wrote on the description,

"Left to me by my Great Uncle Archibald, ten centimetres high."

I got an offer straight away which read,

"I want to buy them. How big are the soldiers?"

SUBMITTED BY ANDREW BERRY



THE GREAT TWEET-OFF: REVIEW FAILS

Twitter users construct the worst ways to describe some of our favourite films.



Star Wars – Daddy issues in space.
@MRHORATIOSANZ:

The Hunger Games – Girl ruins her sister's chance to be on television.
@JUSTICEFORDACK

Indiana Jones – The Nazis threaten world domination, so the US sends ONE MAN WITH A WHIP.
@SETHPANATTONI11

The Wizard of Oz – Women try to kill each other over a pair of shoes.
@JSWILLIAMS1962

Lord of the Rings – A group spends nine hours returning jewellery.
@SQUIRRELTHEPAM



I Am the
**FOOD
 ON YOUR
 PLATE**



Pistachio, the Happy Nut

BY *Kate Lowenstein,*
Daniel Gritzen
 AND *Diane Godley*

What is a colour, a nut and also a fruit? You guessed it, lovable me, pistachio. Most people think I'm a 'nut', but I am actually the seed of the tree's fruit. I grow in clusters, like grapes. When ripe my hard shell splits open with an audible snap, producing a pleasing smile. In fact, I am better known as the 'happy nut' in several cultures around the world due to my cheerful demeanour.

I have been grown for thousands of years, although countries outside the Middle East only twigged to my existence much later. Although my exact origins are not clear, I have been cultivated in the Middle East since before 7000 BCE. In fact, I was found at Jarmo, a prehistoric archaeological site (today located in modern Iraq), known to be one of the world's earliest farming communities.

However, I was little known even in my immediate area until around 2000 BCE, when a sharp increase in population forced the inhabitants to exploit foods which had, up until then, only been eaten during times of shortage. From that time forward, I was never neglected on my home turf again. I was grown in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and am one of only two nuts mentioned in the Old Testament - the other being the almond. Thanks to the Silk Road trade, I made my way into the cooking traditions of China and Italy around 6 CE.

The Persians ground my good self, along with the almond, into desserts and sauces to give them body. The Arabs, who had considerable influence in Southern Europe and North Africa in the Middle Ages, learnt this artform and spread the technique.

Today I'm prized in many cuisines, not only desserts, but savoury dishes, too. I star in Moroccan tagines (often paired with chicken or lamb and dried fruit such as apricots or figs), Middle Eastern knafeh (a fragrant salty-sweet dessert made from cheese and syrup-soaked shredded phyllo), and honey-drenched baklava.

Some have suggested that if it wasn't for my cheery green hue, I may never have moved beyond the Middle East – although I don't believe that for a minute! My colour comes from chlorophyll, a natural plant pigment which is found in, you guessed it, green vegetables such as peas, cucumber and celery.

The appearance of food is important, it seems. If it pleases the eye, it can influence the palate. And dare I say it, one of those factors is colour. When it comes to desserts, there was one colour missing: green – which is where I step into the spotlight.

Of course, I'm also an ingredient in snack mixes, cakes and, yes, everyone's favourite green ice cream. Though note that most pistachio ice cream is

flavoured primarily with less expensive almond extract; the specimens of me studded throughout are cover for the ruse. Not the Sicilian pistachio gelato from Italy though, which won the World Champion Gelato flavour in 2017.

My popularity as a snack food grew in the late 1800s with the arrival of Middle Eastern immigrants to the US, but it wasn't until the early 1900s that the Americans started growing me, producing my first crop in the 1970s.

New Zealand caught on in the 1980s, and I have been readily available since the 1990s. Most of the pistachios consumed are imported from the US, Turkey and Iran. My reputation for climatic extremes has

encouraged tree croppers in Central Otago and Marlborough to try establishing orchards.

The world annual production of me is more than one million tonnes. Dare I say it, I am one popular nut. So beloved that I have my own special day, International Pistachio Day, on February 26.

My appeal, as both a snack and an ingredient, is my mildly earthy-sweet flavour, fatty richness and crunch. I have the same amount of protein as almonds but a smidge less fat, add to that my fibre, plus the fact that you need to shell every single one of me, makes me a favourite among dieters.

MY APPEAL IS MY EARTHY- SWEET FLAVOUR, FATTY RICHNESS AND CRUNCH

READER'S DIGEST

Regardless of what country or what century, I have always been seen as something of a luxury item. I am three to four times more expensive than other nuts. But my exorbitant price has nothing to do with my exclusive colouring among nuts: it is the time it takes for my tree to produce me – around 15-20 years after first planting;

the amount of nuts each tree yields – a fully grown tree around 22 kilograms; and my favoured environment – I like arid locations that are freezing in winter and scorching hot in the summer. So, there are only but a few locations around the world I can tolerate, making me altogether rather exotic. **R**

PISTACHIO-AND-PARMESAN-CRUSTED RACK OF LAMB



- Preheat oven to 200°C.
- Combine 2/3 cup finely chopped pistachios with 1/3 cup bread crumbs and 1/3 cup grated Parmesan.
- Melt 4 tbsls unsalted butter with 1 tsp fresh or dried thyme leaves and 1 minced clove garlic over medium heat until foamy.

- Combine butter with pistachio mixture and stir until dry ingredients are evenly moistened; season with salt and pepper.
- Divide the lamb rack (about 1.5kg total) into about four cutlets, and season with salt and pepper.
- In a 30cm cast-iron skillet, heat 1 tbsls oil over medium-high heat until nearly smoking.
- Add lamb rack and sear until browned, about 3 minutes each side.
- Transfer lamb to a work surface and rub 1 tsp Dijon mustard in an even layer on the fat side of each rack.
- Sprinkle pistachio mixture over the Dijon coating, then press to form a compact crust.
- Return lamb racks to skillet, crust side up, and roast in the oven for about 20–25 minutes.
- Let lamb rest for 5 minutes, then serve whole or individual cutlets.



WHAT'S NEW IN RD TALKS

Sit back and enjoy the audio versions of the most engaging stories to have appeared in Reader's Digest magazine.

READ BY *Zoë Meunier*



THE DAY MY SILENT BROTHER SPOKE

Awkward and numb, I could not imagine how to reach our grandmother. But Page did. Listen to this heart-stirring podcast about a lesson in love.



WHAT IT'S LIKE TO RACE IN FORMULA ONE

"We've got the best people in the world working for us, and we all want to win," says Aston Martin Red Bull Racing team driver Alexander Albon.



DEATH GRIP

Rock climbing has a reputation as a dangerous sport. For two rock climbers, what started as friendly rivalry became a terrifying ordeal.



TO LISTEN GO TO:

www.readersdigest.co.nz/podcasts

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and dark shorts, is running through a tropical forest. She is seen from behind, moving away from the viewer. The forest is filled with tall palm trees and lush green foliage. The sky is bright and blue with some light clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of physical activity and nature.

DRAMA IN REAL LIFE

Don't Go Into the **VOLCANO**

A honeymoon hike to the rim of a jungle crater ends in a terrible fall. Now a young bride must get her severely injured husband medical care – all by herself

BY *Nicholas Hune-Brown*
ILLUSTRATION BY **MARK SMITH**





Acaimie, with Clay on their wedding day – a preview of her strength

ON A STEAMY morning in July, Clay, 25, and Acaimie Chastain, 23, arrived at the base of Mount Liamuiga on the Caribbean island of St Kitts, ready for their first climb as husband and wife. They had married just five days earlier back home in Indiana, USA after meeting at university. Clay – a handsome farmer’s son with charming, puppy-dog energy – was immediately

smitten by Acaimie’s beguiling smile. Like any good couple, they had their complementary differences. Acaimie had always been the worrier. “A realist,” she says. “A pessimist,” Clay replies. She liked order and structure. Clay, on the other hand, was a perpetual optimist – maddeningly care-free and easygoing, always certain that things would turn out just fine.

So it was Clay who wanted to use a day of their Caribbean honeymoon scaling Mount Liamuiga. The highest point on St Kitts, Liamuiga is also a dormant volcano that starts in the clouds and plunges down to meet the

PHOTO: SALLY JANE STEFFY

sea. Called Mount Misery by the British who colonised the island, it is a popular day hike for tourists looking for adventure.

The couple, dressed in T-shirts and running shoes, arrived for their hike in a rental car expecting to find more information at the site. Instead, they found an empty dirt car park with just a small plaque marking the trailhead. They made their way up anyway, the narrow path taking them through tropical growth so lush you couldn't see the sky. Vervet monkeys chattered in the trees; the air was thick and humid.

It took them nearly three hours to reach the peak, but the view – *the view!*

– made it all worthwhile. The island of St Kitts stretched before them; a carpet of lush, green rainforest cascading down towards the sapphire Caribbean water. They may have been tired and sweaty – Clay's red bandanna was soaked – but they couldn't have been happier as they ate their sandwiches, took a few selfies, and walked around the rim of the volcano completely alone.

THAT'S WHEN CLAY SAW IT: a small trail, semi-hidden beneath plant life, that led into the volcano's crater – a bowl of green with cloud forest giving

way to a grassy meadow. A series of screw eyes bolts had been drilled into the rocks, with ropes that led down. For Clay, the sight was unbearably inviting. It felt like a secret entrance to a primeval paradise. Acaimie was less enthusiastic. The trail was steep, and she was afraid of heights, but she gamely followed Clay's lead. After just a few minutes of descent, though, she'd had enough. She told her husband she'd wait on the rocks just off

the trail while he went exploring. "Just be quick," she said as she watched him set off on the precipitous path, zigzagging while clutching the rope.

A few minutes later, she heard a crash – a noise that sound-

ed like a large branch snapping, followed by the sound of something big rolling downhill. "Clay?" she called. Silence.

Acaimie fought back a flutter of panic. She hadn't heard anyone call out, after all. The sound might have been anything. A few minutes later, she heard something faint that could have been a human voice. She leaned forwards, craning her neck. Then she heard it again, and this time she was certain: it was Clay, speaking in an eerily childish tone she hardly recognised, calling for help from deep within the crater.

**SHE HEARD
A CRASH, THEN
THE SOUND OF
SOMETHING
BIG ROLLING
DOWNHILL**



Clay on top of the world, moments before his fall

As she looked over the lip of the volcano, she tried to suppress some of her worst worries. Her phone wasn't getting a signal, and her cries for help were met with only silence. "Clay!" she shouted as loud as she could. "Clay, are you OK?"

Acaimie gripped the rope and began scrambling down the trail. When the path became too steep, she slid on her butt, her legs and arms getting bruised and scraped in the process. Then, just off the trail, she saw a flash of red. It was Clay's bandanna. And next to it was his mobile phone.

She grabbed both and continued down, screaming for Clay all the way.

"Help," he said in that strange voice.

"I'm coming! Stay where you are," she said. Finally she spotted his white shirt through the trees. She wanted

to prepare for what she was going to see, worried that if he were badly injured the sight of him would put her into a state of shock. "Tell me what's wrong," she said as she approached.

"I don't know," he said weakly.

CLAY WAS SITTING HUNCHED over with his head in his hands, his back to Acaimie. When she got closer, she could see that he was bleeding from the back of his head, and his neck and shoulders were scraped. Walking around him, she saw that he'd been vomiting. Blood ran down his face.

Perhaps the rope he'd been holding had snapped, or maybe he'd just missed a step, but it was clear he'd fallen a long way. He was badly concussed. "Where are we?" he asked. She explained they were on a hike on St Kitts. "Why aren't you calling for

help?" he asked. Their phones weren't getting service, she told him. He seemed to take that in. Then, 30 seconds later: "Where are we?"

Acaimie tried to clear her mind. They were alone in the volcano without phone service. There was only one thing to do: she needed to drag him out somehow.

"Look at me, Clay," she said. He looked through her, his eyes swimming. "We're going to have to climb out of here, and you're going to have to listen to me."

Acaimie hoisted Clay shakily to his feet. He had no balance and couldn't support himself. The two of them stumbled forwards, and Acaimie put his hands on the rope. She told him to hold tight as she placed Clay in front of her and pushed him from behind. He lurched forwards, flailing like a drunk, but he seemed able to control his limbs just well enough to follow Acaimie's directions. When they reached a particularly steep section, she bent down, picked up his feet, put them in good footholds so he wouldn't slip, and pushed again.

Bit by bit, step by step, they climbed. After what couldn't have been more than half an hour but felt like forever, they reached the top.

"Help!" Acaimie yelled. She'd hoped that once they reached the top they'd find a group of hikers, but the trail was empty. There was no choice but to try to make it back to the trailhead alone. It was about 12.30. It had taken them three hours to reach the summit. *How long, she wondered, would it take them to reach their car?*

Putting her husband's arm over her shoulder, Acaimie led him back down the trail. It was sheer and winding as it cut back and forth through rainforest so thick she could never see more than a few metres ahead. Clay's legs flopped beneath him; at times he almost began running down the hill because of this lack of control and Acaimie had to struggle to make sure he didn't send them crashing into the

trees. In particularly steep sections, she sat Clay down, shuffled ahead of him, and had him slide into her arms.

As they made their way, the sun was sinking lower in the sky and Acaimie's mind raced. *What if they got lost,* she

wondered. Would Clay survive the night?

AFTER MORE THAN TWO HOURS, Clay seemed to be getting worse. He was losing what little control he'd had over his body. Every ten minutes

**CLAY
COLLAPSED
AND VOMITED
BLOOD.
"I WANT
TO SLEEP,"
HE MUMBLED**

READER'S DIGEST

or so he'd stop, collapse on the trail, and begin vomiting blood. "I want to sleep," he mumbled now, shutting his eyes. Acaimie urged him to keep moving. "You're doing such a good job. I'm so proud of you," she kept repeating, unsure if any of it was getting through to her husband.

It dawned on her that maybe she should leave Clay there and run ahead and get help. But one look at him and she dismissed that idea. She worried that in his state, he might wander off into the wilderness or stumble down the trail and injure himself. She needed him to keep going.

They continued on – Acaimie guiding Clay, Clay barely able to move forwards. After hours of painful and exhausting progress, they took a break. She instinctively pulled

out her phone to check for a signal. Yes! It was faint, but it might work. She dialed emergency services and heard the welcome sound of another person's voice. She described what had happened – the fall, the vomiting, the blood, the disorientation. The dispatcher, barely audible, asked whether they were able to make it to the trailhead, or did they need a helicopter? Acaimie looked around. With the thick covering, there was no way a helicopter could land anywhere near them. She told him they'd keep trying to make their way down.

But as they set off, she became more worried. Clay's condition was deteriorating quickly. He could hardly use his arms and legs. At one point, Acaimie couldn't support him and gravity took over, sending him flying out of her

A medevac plane transported Clay from St Kitts back to the US



PHOTO: COURTESY ACAIMIE CHASTAIN

arms and rolling down the hill, smashing into a tree. He lay there in a heap. Then he started vomiting blood again.

She dialled emergency services again. "If the paramedics are anywhere near the trail, they need to start heading up now!" she told the dispatcher. When she hung up, she looked down the trail, calling out for help as loudly as she could. Clay was cold and clammy. She didn't know whether they could go any further.

Then she heard something. It was faint and could have been almost anything.

"Hello!" someone called out.

Acaimie leaped up. "We're here!" she yelled as two paramedics came into view. "We're here!"

The paramedics wrapped Clay's arms around their shoulders, and then each took a leg. In this cumbersome manner, they carefully carried Clay down the mountain to the ambulance waiting at the trailhead. Acaimie sat in the front of the ambulance – she was hyperventilating, and her hands eventually became numb from lack of oxygen. She listened in horror as the paramedic in the back yelled to the driver, "He's still vomiting blood; we need to get to the hospital!"

IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM, doctors discovered just how vast Clay's injuries were. They included a bad concussion, a fractured vertebra, a fractured skull, and a spinal fluid leak.

Clay spent a painful week in a St

Kitts hospital recuperating before being medevaced to a hospital in Florida, where doctors placed a shunt in his spinal cord to drain excess fluid. After nine days, he flew home to Indiana for several months of physical rehab and visits to specialists. But he was alive. And as his mind slowly cleared and the enormity of what he had endured became apparent, Clay was amazed at what his wife had done for him.

Today, nearly a year later, the couple are settled in their new home. Clay has regained the balance he lost, but is now deaf in one ear. "It's really not that bad, a minor inconvenience at worst," he says, ever the optimist.

When Clay and Acaimie think about what happened in St Kitts, it's with a strange mix of emotions. A honeymoon is supposed to be a chance for connection – an island of time in the midst of a busy life for people to truly get to know each other. But even though their honeymoon had turned into a nightmare, it cemented their relationship. The words "in sickness and in health" were no longer just a quaint refrain said in front of friends. To see one's partner under the most awful conditions imaginable had created a kind of intimacy that was different from what they'd had before.

"We got shell-shocked, but in a good way," says Clay today. "You realise what you have. And you become so thankful." 

HUMOUR

A History of **HOAXES**



We humans like mischief, and not only on April Fools' Day

BY THE EDITORS
with Brandon Specktor



There's no question that April Fools' Day is an international phenomenon. But nobody really knows how it began. One possible predecessor is the Roman tradition of the spring festival *Hilaria* (Latin for cheerful, merry) that was held in March; it included games, processions and masquerades, during which disguised commoners could imitate nobility to devious ends.

It's hard to say whether this ancient festival's similarities to modern April Fools' Day are legitimate or coincidental, as the first recorded mentions of the occasion didn't appear until several hundred years later. In 1561, for example, a Flemish poet wrote some comical verse about a nobleman who sends his servant back and forth on ludicrous errands in preparation for a wedding feast (the poem's title roughly translates to "Refrain on errand-day / which is the first of

April"). And the first known mention of April Fools' Day in Britain comes in 1686 when biographer John Aubrey described the first day of April as a "Fooles holy day".

It's clear that the habit of sending innocent victims on a 'fool's errand' was rampant in Europe by the late 1600s. On April Fools' Day in 1698, so many were tricked into going to the Tower of London to watch 'The Washing of the Lions' (a ceremony that didn't exist) that the April 2 edition of a local newspaper had to debunk the hoax – and publicly mock those who fell for it.

From there, it's a pretty straight line between lion washing and spaghetti farming (on April 1, 1957, BBC's *Panorama* fooled some viewers into believing spaghetti grew on trees). And while we may not know the exact origin of April Fools' Day, it's clear it speaks to the inner joker in much of humanity – and is therefore here to stay.

WORLD'S BEST PRANKS

1400s

The Haunted Apple

Thomas Betson, the prankster monk who was the librarian of Syon Abbey in Middlesex, England, pulled off one of the earliest documented practical jokes when he hid a beetle inside a hollowed-out apple and fooled his fellow monks into believing that the mysteriously rocking apple was possessed.



1835 *Lunar Life*

The Great Moon Hoax may have been one of the media's first big tricks. The *New York Sun* printed an article claiming that astronomers had discovered life on the moon. More articles appeared over the next few weeks, and the US was gripped by moon fever.

1938 *The Ultimate War*

The 1897 H. G. Wells novel *The War of the Worlds* was about a futuristic Martian invasion on Britain. Orson Welles adapted the story for a notorious radio broadcast in the US that made it seem Earth was under attack by aliens. Although this hoax became infamous, with claims that millions of panicked listeners fled their homes in terror, in reality this was greatly exaggerated.

1978 *A Surprise of Titanic Proportions*

Residents of Sydney gawked at an iceberg floating in the harbour on April 1, which electronics entrepreneur Dick Smith claimed he towed from Antarctica. The Australian Navy even offered its help in mooring it. Eventually, when it started to rain, everyone realised what it really was: just a barge covered in white plastic sheets, shaving cream and firefighting foam.

1980 *Time Change*

The BBC World Service reported that each of Big Ben's four clock faces would be changed to a digital display, and its iconic hands would be given away to the first four people to call in. While most listeners were shocked and angry, one Japanese seaman immediately called to claim his prize.

1997 *Killer Compound*

The chemical compound dihydrogen monoxide (DHMO) is "colourless, odourless and kills thousands of people every year" through "accidental inhalation", read a widely circulated email, calling for a ban. Furthermore, it was now "a major component of acid rain" that's "found in almost every stream, lake and reservoir." But the controversy was soon cleared up: DHMO is actually a rarely used chemical name for water.

1998 *Burger Switch*

Burger King announced it was introducing a new item: the Left-Handed Whopper, specially designed for southpaws. According to the company, the new Whopper would have the same ingredients as the original version, but all the condiments would be rotated 180 degrees, so that the weight of the burger skewed to the left side.

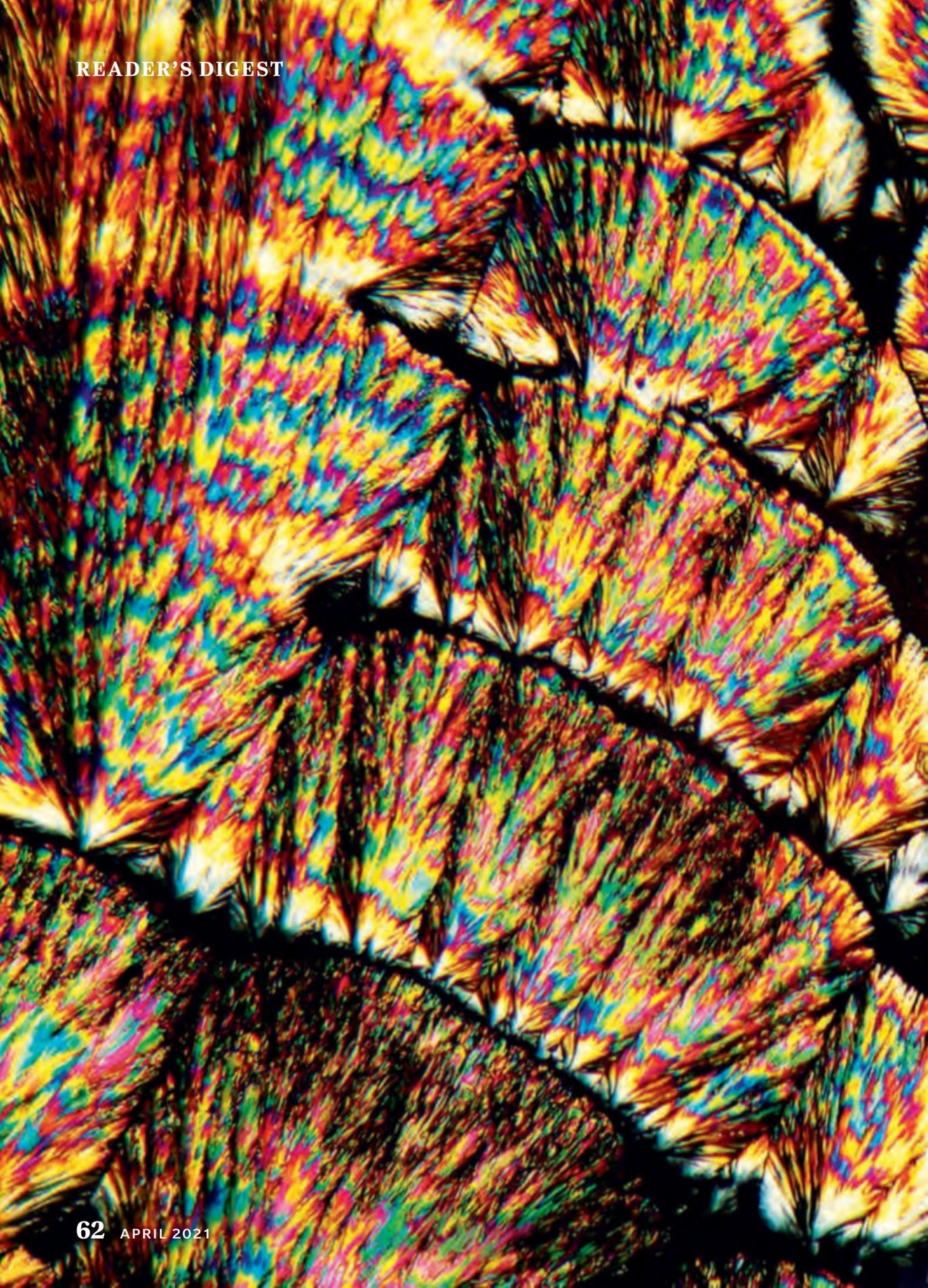


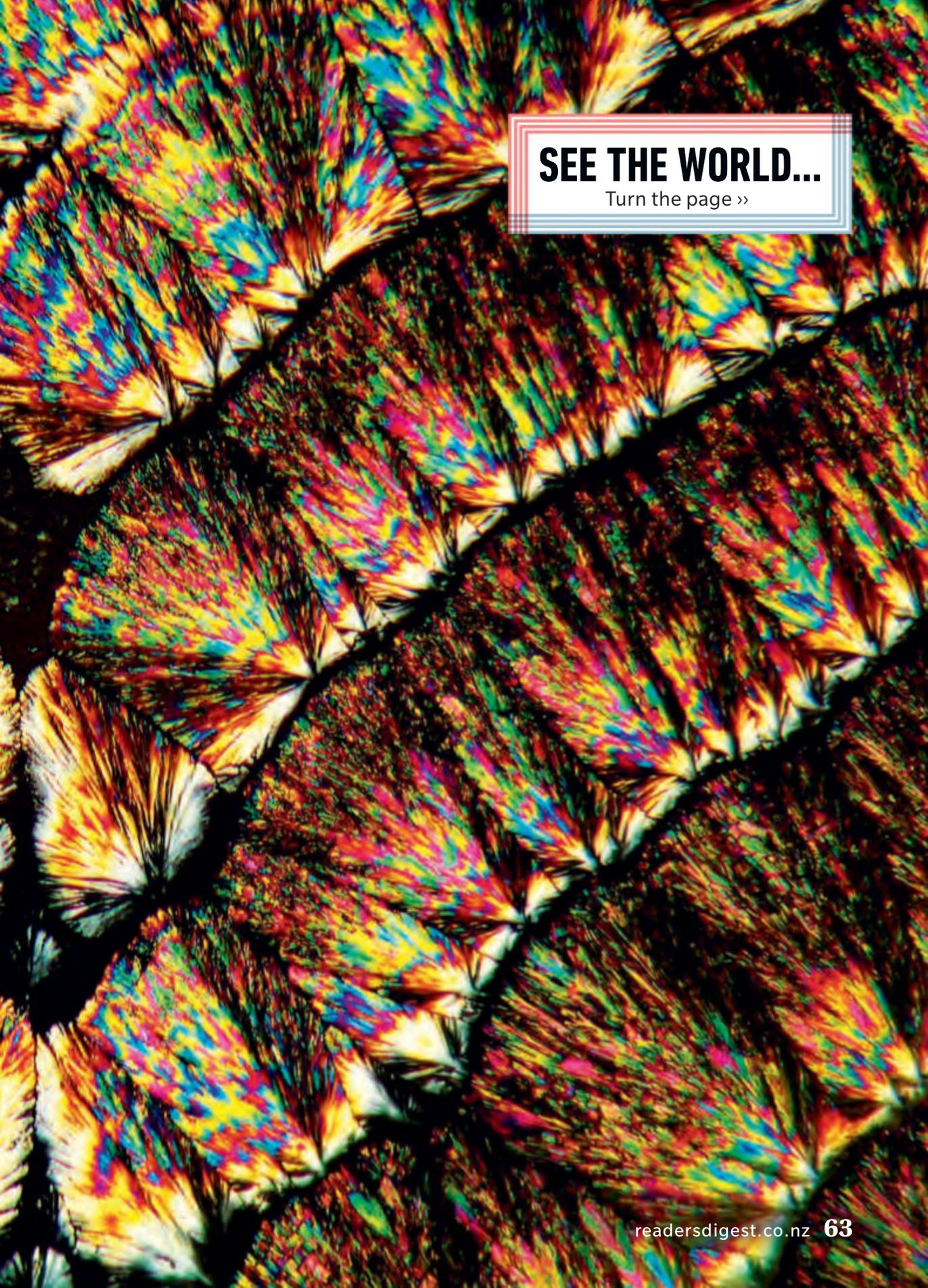
1959 *Horse Laughs*

US prankster and entertainer Alan Abel dreamed up a campaign calling for animals to wear clothing, and the Society for Indecency to Naked Animals was created. SINA president 'G. Clifford Prout' promoted the group's catchy slogan: 'A nude horse is a rude horse'. Eventually, 50,000 concerned citizens signed its petition – until it was discovered that Prout was actually Buck Henry, an architect of modern American comedy.

2007 *Wired Waste*

Google introduced TiSP (Toilet Internet Service Provider), which supposedly supplied free wireless broadband via the sewer system. Users would flush one end of a fibre-optic cable down their toilet; an hour later, it would purportedly be recovered and connected to the internet by a team of 'plumbing hardware dispatchers'. Chat rooms were filled with interested parties asking, "Can this be true?" 





SEE THE WORLD...

Turn the page »





...DIFFERENTLY

Polarised light waves, or light, that vibrates only in one direction brings the inner structures of crystallised substances to a spectacular glow – as the vitamin C in the photo on the previous spread demonstrates. The tiny crystals magnified under a microscope reveal the iridescent play of colours, more resembling abstract artwork than something you would expect to find in nature. Vitamin C itself is essential for survival, and can be found in sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*), blackcurrant (*Ribes nigrum*) and dog rose (*Rosa canina*). The highest concentration in edible plants, however, can be found in the Australian Kakadu plum (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*).

PHOTO: ZOONAR GMBH/ALAMY
STOCK PHOTO; GETTY IMAGES/
OKSANA KIIAN

LAUGHTER

The Best Medicine



"I like a man with a good, firm elbow bump."

Advanced in Gears

My neighbour was working in his garden when suddenly a car came crashing through his hedge and ended up on his front lawn. He rushed to help the driver, an elderly lady. "You appear a bit old to be driving," he said.

"I am!" she replied proudly. "I'm so old that I don't even need a licence anymore."

"Really?" he asked sceptically. "And how did you manage that?"

"The last time I went to my doctor," she explained, "he asked to see my licence. Then he said, 'You won't be needing this anymore,' cut it up, and threw it away. So I thanked him and drove home!"

Planet Proctor Newsletter

Stringing Along

A piece of straight, clean string goes into a bar and orders a gin and tonic. The barman serves the drink, the string downs

it and walks out. Ten minutes later a dirty, twisted, ragged piece of string walks into the bar.

"Are you that piece of string that was here ten minutes ago?" asks the barman.

"No" replies the string. "I'm a frayed knot."

Seen on the internet

Know All the Answers

Don't you hate it when someone answers their own questions? I do.

Running Joke

Sometimes I stay up so late that I hear go-getters leaving for their morning runs. It feels like the closest thing to getting lapped in real life.

Seen on Reddit

Facing Liquidation

I'm currently trying to sell a thermos with absolutely no capacity for any liquid. It's a tankless flask.

PAUL EGGLESTON, COMEDIAN



BIT OF A HOOT

Two owls are playing in the final of the Owl Pool Championship. It comes down to the last frame. One of the owls is just about to play his shot, when his wing accidentally touches a ball.

"That's two hits,"
says the other owl.
"Two hits to who?"
says the first.

Seen on the internet



HOPPY EASTER

These Easter jokes are sure to make every bunny laugh out loud.

What we tell our children 364 days of the year: Do NOT eat anything you find on the ground.

Easter: Go and search in the dirt for chocolate a strange giant bunny left for you, kids!

Q: What do you call an Easter egg from outer space?
A: Egg-stra terrestrial.

Q: How do you make Easter easier?
A: Replace the 't' with an 'i'.

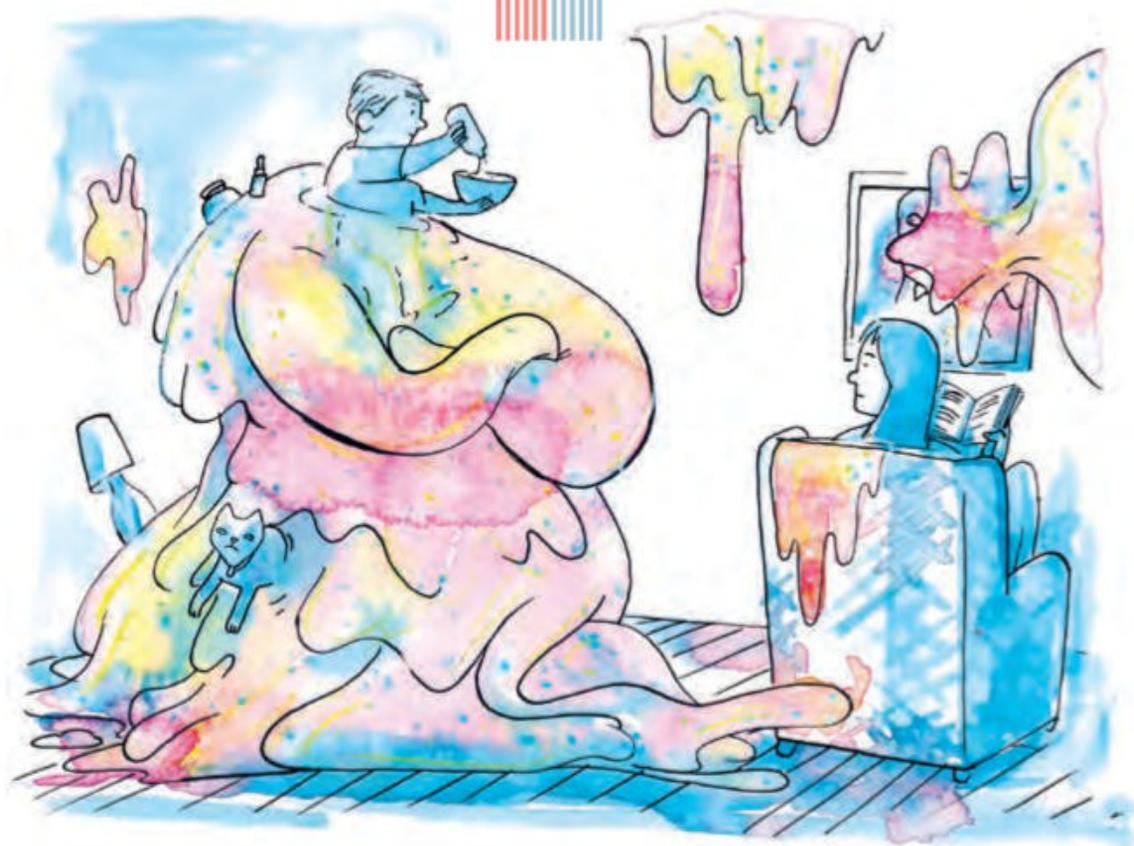
Q: Why did the Easter Bunny have to fire the duck?
A: Because he kept quacking the eggs!

Q: What do you call a line of rabbits jumping backwards?
A: A receding hare-line.

Q: What do you call a mischievous Easter egg?
A: A practical yolker.

Q: What do you call the Easter Bunny the day after Easter?
A: Eggshastated.

Southern Living, Scarymommy.com



He Slimed Me

My son's obsession with his gooey creations has been my undoing

BY *Olivia Stren*

"I HAVE AN IDEA!" my son, Leo, said to me about two years ago, with a wild look in his eyes. "Let's make rainbow slime!" It was not yet 8am, and I was hard-pressed to think of anything I wanted to do less.

"Maybe later," I offered my then-four year old, avoiding the more

flammable answer that sprang to mind (ie, "No").

"But I *neeeeeed* to make something!" he begged, as if he were Monet, had just beheld a water lily for the first time, and here I was denying him oils and a canvas.

At the time, Leo was six months

into his obsession with slime: we'd made fluffy slime, galaxy slime, clear-glue slime and retro *Ghostbusters* slime-kit slime. For the (blissfully) uninitiated, slime is a squishy, goo-like substance made from the viscous marriage of polyvinyl acetate glue, food colouring and some kind of 'activator' – saline solution, laundry detergent, liquid starch – whose chemical makeup transforms all the other ingredients into a slippery, malleable glob. If those ingredients are non-negotiable, others (glitter, googly eyes, gummy bears) can be tossed in for a certain textural or aesthetic *je ne sais quoi*.

Slime was first devised by Mattel in 1976 and sold in toy stores, but the real slimers make it at home. Slime-making, I've read, can prove as relaxing for young children – a break from the pressures of, say, kindergarten – as it is for their parents. The substance's popping, squishing and clicking noises, a sound the slime community (yes, there is one) has dubbed the '*thwock*', are allegedly soothing to the nervous system.

In 2020, slime expanded into an economy, an artform and a culture, with its influencers, trailblazers – and tragedies. An 11-year-old girl from the US sustained second- and third-degree burns on her hands in a DIY slime injury involving a

dangerously toxic activator called borax.

In Canada, Alyssa Jagan, an 18-year-old slimer from Toronto, just published her second slime book and claims 745,000 followers on Instagram, where she posts "new satisfying slime videos" every day.

All of this to say that if slime clung itself to my son's imagination, he was on trend. But if it's relaxing for many, it's deeply anxiety inducing

for me – I have found it encrusted on our couch and adhered into the fibres of our clothes (and our lives). At the height of what I can only call Leo's addiction, I noticed my husband had glitter (a souvenir from the weekend's gal-

PARENTHOOD IS A CONTINUUM OF PHASES, AND THIS SLIME ONE WAS A SINGULAR HELL

axy-slime enterprise) in his nostril. When I pointed this out, he replied that I had a fleck of it on my left eyebrow.

"It's so beautiful!" my mum said in an enabling way during one visit, as she spread out a glob of kaleidoscopic slime. "It looks like Notre Dame's stained-glass rose windows!" I'm all for appreciating beauty wherever it may hide, but – and forgive the slime pun here – that seemed a bit of a stretch.

Parenthood is nothing if not a continuum of phases, and this one was a singular hell. Partly because I didn't want to deny my kid something that

READER'S DIGEST

provides him such deep satisfaction, I leaned into it, waiting for the day that a mention of Elmer's glue wouldn't kindle in him such a gleam of excitement. It's messy, but it's creative, I'd try to convince myself as I climbed a ladder to scrape a remnant of sand slime stuck to the kitchen ceiling.

The summer offered relief: we spent more time in the sunshine and less of the day mixing blue food colouring with glitter glue and liquid corn starch. But just when I thought (hoped, prayed) that Leo's interest might be waning, COVID-19 arrived, demanding that we all stay at home. While necessity is the mother of invention, in my case, it was also the less proud mother of derangement.

We can never predict how we'll respond to a plague; it caused me, in a moment of diabolical instability, to say to my bored son, "I know, do you want to make slime?" He looked at me searchingly, as if even he couldn't believe the extravagance of

my misstep. "OK!" he chirped, clasping his little hands in anticipatory madness.

There we were, again, in production. Leo gleefully began to toss cloudlets of fluffy slime (made with shaving cream) onto the walls, and he wondered, "Do you think it sticks, Mummy?" For your information, it does. As the concoction cleaved to my walls, in my mind was a combination of regret, despair and this question: how can I, in this moment, self-distance from myself?

'People reveal themselves in a crisis,' goes the truism, and I have revealed myself to be an idiot, with a talent for self-sabotage. However, I've also revealed myself to be a person who can expertly claim a position on what laundry detergent to use as an activator. And so this season of pestilence has bloomed into a season of slime - with moments of despair and longing, along with glittery flecks of hope, all mixed together, slime-like, as it were. 



Punk Turtle Nest Found

Populations of one of the world's most vulnerable reptiles, the Mary River turtle, have declined by more than 95 per cent since the 1970s.

So the discovery of a nest late last year in south-east Queensland was met with glee. The 'bum-breathing turtle', so named because it extracts oxygen from water through a gill-like structure in its cloaca, became infamous after an image of it donning an algae punk-style mohawk went viral a few years ago.

ABC.NET.AU

THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!

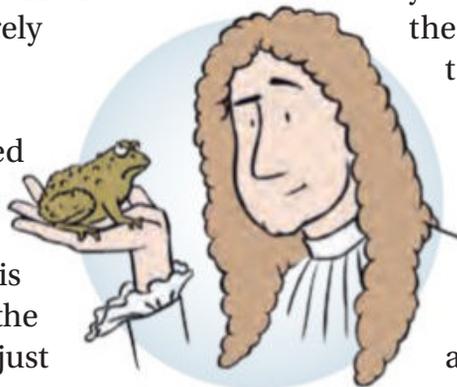
BY *Suzannah Showler*

FROG IN YOUR THROAT One lucky bidder recently took home Sir Isaac Newton's essays on causes and cures for the common plague written in 1669. The manuscript, which sold for \$108,083, is believed to have been written shortly after Newton spent nearly two years in self-quarantine to avoid the plague. The document is unlikely to be of much use during the current pandemic, however: it includes, among other things, a prescription for driving away disease with lozenges made from a mixture of toad vomit and powdered toad.

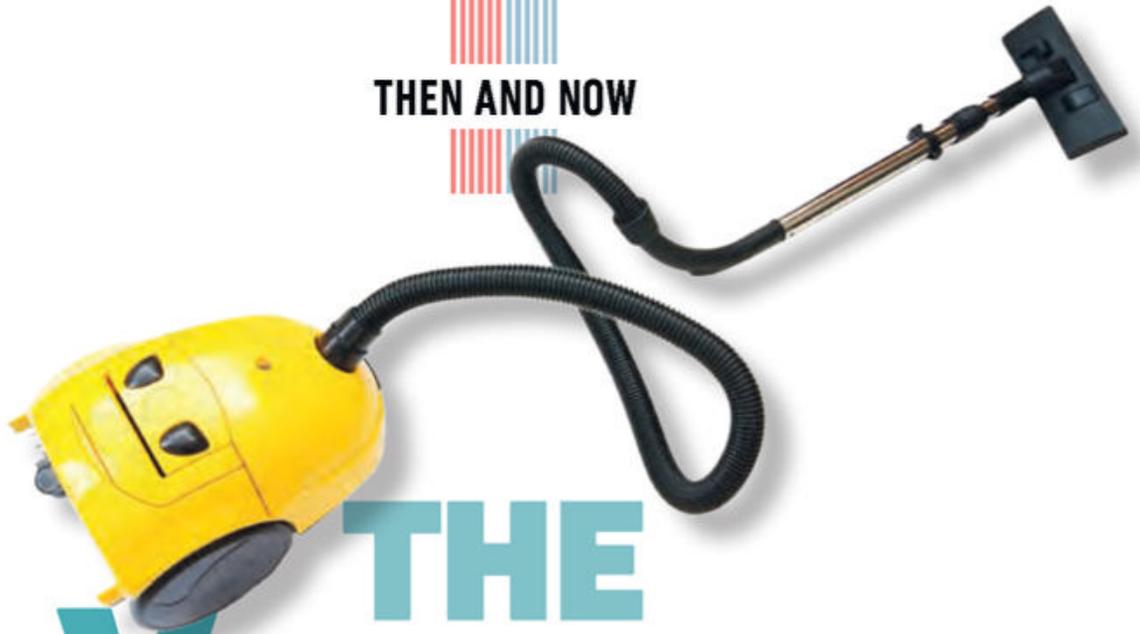
ON THE LAM(BO) When a police officer pulled over an SUV going about 51 km/h and drifting across lanes on a highway in Utah last year, he expected to find a driver who was either severely impaired or having a medical episode. Instead, he discovered a five-year-old boy perched on the edge of the driver's seat, his feet barely reaching the pedals and his head just

clearing the dashboard. The child, who had taken the keys to the family car while his teenage sister was napping, later told baffled officers that he was planning to make it to California to buy a Lamborghini. While he only had \$3 in his wallet, he was, at least, driving in the right direction.

I BELIEVE I CAN FLY On three occasions last year, Songshan Airport in Taipei allowed 60 passengers the chance to check in, collect their boarding passes, clear security and board a China Airlines Airbus. The plane's destination? Nowhere. The passengers were the lucky winners of a contest that let people, starved of the travel experience during the coronavirus lockdown, spend a day at the airport. Once the passengers boarded, though, their trip came to an anticlimax. After being greeted by flight attendants, buckling up and sitting on the tarmac, the fantasy travellers deplaned and went home.



THEN AND NOW



THE Vacuum Cleaner

The modern-day robotic vacuum cleaner may look different from the original, cumbersome incarnations, but the truth is, they've always sucked...

BY Zoë Meunier

For many centuries, removing dust and dirt from one's floor covering meant heaving it off the ground, hanging it up somewhere, and beating it into submission with a paddle. Eventually, people decided there had to be an easier way.

In 1860, an inventor from Iowa named Daniel Hess added a breath of (not so) fresh air to the

carpet-cleaning game, registering the patent of an invention “that consists in drawing fine dust and dirt through the machine by means of a draft of air.”

Problematically, the operator of this machine had to use a bellows to create the air needed to draw in the dirt, which rendered it little more than useless, but Hess's idea got other people's creative cogs turning



READER'S DIGEST

- manually, of course. And in the case of Ives McGaffey of Chicago, with a hand crank.

In 1869, McGaffey devised the 'Whirlwind', a machine that stood upright and used said crank to rotate a fan which moved the air around. At 25 dollars a pop (about \$450 today), Whirlwind owners found the machine so difficult to use that its time in the limelight lived up to its name.

St Louis inventor John Thurman then burst onto the carpet-cleaning scene with his 1899 offering of the catchily-titled 'pneumatic carpet-renovator'. While the first of its kind to be powered by a motor rather than a human, it actually did the opposite of what a vacuum does - dislodging dust from carpets by blasting them with jets of compressed air, which were blown into a receptacle.

As Thurman toured the UK touting his invention,

he caught the inspiration of Hubert Cecil Booth, who nonetheless saw the flaw in Thurman's design and thought how a sucking device would be far more effective.

Apparently, Booth was so intrigued that he placed a handkerchief on the plush velvet seat of a restaurant chair, put his mouth to the handkerchief and sucked the air in, choking on the dust he pulled out of the chair. When he saw just how much dust was gathered on the handkerchief, he knew his idea had merit.

His creation, a vacuum cleaner with an internal combustion engine powering a piston pump which pulled the air through a cloth filter, was patented in 1901 and became known as 'Puffing Billy'.

The machine's obvious drawback was its size. Enormous, red, and petrol-powered, it was pulled by a horse-drawn

**SUCK
IT UP!**
A clean
sweep over
the years



1900s



1910s



1920s

The Vacuum Cleaner

carriage, and due to its size, only its tubes were able to be inserted through the windows. Nonetheless, Puffing Billy was the talk of the town and soon became a common sight around the streets of London, where it was employed for some high-profile jobs, including cleaning Westminster Abbey for the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1902.

By then, Booth's device was being built right into the homes of the wealthy, in the form of a central vacuum. Due to their expense and size, vacuums were limited to society's upper crust. Everyone else had to deal with their own layers of crust via more traditional means, while new patents across the world tried to capitalise on Booth's innovation.

As is often the case, the one who succeeded was driven by necessity. Sixty-year-old Ohio department store janitor James Spangler had to clean

the entire building each night, a long, tedious task that also made his asthma flare. An inventor on the side, he devised his own contraption using a broom handle, a tin soapbox, a sateen pillowcase, and an electric motor he pulled out of a sewing machine, which powered a fan and a rotating brush.

While rough looking, the machine did an impressive job of sucking up dirt and blowing it out the back into the attached pillowcase. Spangler patented it in 1907 and quit his job, opening the Electric Suction Sweeper Company, with investors helping him try to produce his invention. But after buying 75 motors, obtaining factory space and using his own house as collateral, Spangler was so cash-strapped that he turned to his wealthy cousin Susan Hoover, wife of successful leather goods manufacturer William Hoover.

Buying the patent from Spangler in

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



1960s



1980s



2020s

READER'S DIGEST

1908, Hoover hoovered money into marketing, research and development, redesigning the vacuum cleaner by placing it in a steel box and designing attachments for the hose. He later added disposal filter bags and designed the first upright vacuum cleaner in 1926. The addition of door-to-door salesmen transformed Spangler's invention into a business success and the name Hoover into one still synonymous with vacuuming today. To think, if they'd honoured Spangler by keeping his name in the business, we might still be calling the action of vacuuming 'spangling', instead of 'hoovering'.

So how have vacuums changed since? Not a great deal, to be honest. They've gotten cleaner, thanks to the introduction of less porous cloth bags in the 1930s and the modern-day HEPA filters and bags. There was that lovely invention of the button that sucked up the cord in one satisfying swoop, only occasionally taking out an ankle along the way. At the same time, cords themselves started to become superfluous, culminating in Black and Decker's 1975 cordless vacuum patent and the 1978 introduction of the Dustbuster.



HOOVER HOOVERED MONEY INTO MARKETING AND RESEARCH

1978 was also the year a man called James Dyson found himself dissatisfied with his vacuum cleaner's sucking performance and realised that his machine's dust-clogged bag was to blame. Having just built an industrial cyclone tower for his building that used centrifugal force to separate paint particles from the air, he wondered if the same could be done for a vacuum, and five years later, the first bagless vacuum cleaner was born.

More recently, in 2002, the Roomba made its way into circulation, taking vacuuming into the robotic era. While

most of us thought robotic vacuums would look like the robot cleaner Rosie from *The Jetsons*, the automatic vacuum was a sleek little circle that sashayed under seats and into small spaces, and has a sensor to detect obstacles or sharp drops such as stairs. Current models also have a home base where it can empty itself. Now that's the kind of hands-off technology that really changes the game of domestic housework.

Even with all these innovations, though, a vacuum of today still does the job about as well as it's done for more than a century. It still sucks. **R**



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Guardians

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my Guardian?*



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**HIGHWAY
TO THE
HEART
OF A CITY**

TAXI



Visiting new places, for many of us, means taxis. If the airport is a city's socket connecting it to the world, taxis are the energy that feeds it

BY *Caroline Berdon and Michael Wayne*

FROM **AAP**

Cab drivers see travellers at their best and their worst. They see them alive and elated, on an adventure and re-connected with loved ones. They see them after teary goodbyes, or when they're jetlagged, grumpy and culture shocked. Some travellers forget the driver is there at all, subjecting him or her to intimate moments of love, or mean squabbles, or both.

For the lost tourist, the cabbie becomes – for a little while at least – the city itself.

And with the right combination of driver and passenger, the city can open up like a flower.

THE INSIGHTFUL HERO IN BUENOS AIRES

I'm feeling smug. I've got plenty of time for check-in for my flight from Buenos Aires to Santiago de Chile, and I'm looking forward to kicking back with my book in the bar.

Then confusion at the check-in counter. "Senora, you are at the wrong airport."

"Que?"

I'm told I need to be at Aeroparque Jorge Newbery, in the city. I'm at the Aeropuerto Internacional Ezeiza, 22 kilometres to the south.

I panic. I have just over two hours until departure. In peak-hour traffic, my airport is an hour and a half across town. I race to the taxi rank.

Enter Joaquin, my insightful hero.

Even though I'm moving, my panic's still in high gear. So is Joaquin: we're whizzing along nature strips, inching between buses and cutting onto freeways. I might end up a statistic, but I may just make it.

Oblivious to my chaos, Joaquin turns on the radio. The soundtrack of the city bursts incongruously from the speakers.

Tango may have a happy name but it's beautiful and unspeakably sad. Created by immigrants in the city's working-class slums in the early 19th century, the mournful tones and distressed lyrics cry of struggle and pain.

As the taxi radio wails, Joaquin shows me the streets and tells me the stories of his city. The music seems to voice today's pain in a country where 30 per cent now live below the poverty line. I see a tiny part of it.

Endless rows of shabby apartment blocks burst with life. Dirty air-con units protrude from the ugly buildings, a thankful relief for residents given most have no balconies. Teenagers loiter, looking bored and threatening.

My own immediate problem takes a back seat. By immersing me in his culture, Joaquin becomes my hero. Thank goodness I mixed up my airports.

"What's happened to Argentina?" I ask. We didn't see places like this on my half-day city tour.

I hear about rising living costs, unemployment, inflation and corruption. We were told by our guide that during Argentina's golden years, it was the fifth richest country in the world.

"It's the government. But we have a new one now," says Joaquin. All hopes are on the new president to turn things around.

But Joaquin seems jaded, resigned, helpless. I turn the conversation around. "Do you dance the tango?"

"Sometimes," he says, "to forget the day, forget problems. Portenos love to dance. Tango is a connection, it brings people close."

He's smiling as we pull up at the Aeroparque. My insightful hero flicks

off the tango's melancholy tune and, in a flash, my connection to Buenos Aires is severed in exchange for the airport's bright, sterile internationality. Oh yes, my plane!

As Joaquin unloads my luggage, I want to hug him, but consider this may cross the line.

It's a strange relationship. We don't know each other but in that dark car he saw me vulnerable, let me into his own head a little and he shared some of his city's secrets. He also risked his car, our lives and police fines to get me here.

To get me home.

But this is any normal day for him. I settle with a good tip, using the remainder of my pesos, and a huge smile. "*Muchas gracias!*"

Then I run.

THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR IN HONOLULU

My friend Richard and I need to get to Honolulu International, and thanks to an unexpected sleep-in, we need to fit a 45-minute taxi ride into 20 minutes.

We need a hero.

Enter the Man Without Fear.

He may have arrived at the taxi rank like a cool summer breeze, but once we explain our situation, the

Highway to the Heart of the City



Man Without Fear becomes the eye of a hurricane.

The flag drops, and we're hurtling through the streets of Honolulu. "I know a back way," he says with a smile. "We get there no worries!"

Taxi drivers know their cities like the intimacy of a lover.

From the way he glides around the coarse streets of Honolulu, the Man Without Fear seems an experienced and confident one.

He's still smiling when we tear around a corner to the back of a very long line of traffic. Beside us,

pedestrians saunter up the empty footpath unhindered. We won't catch them anytime soon.

The roads from the airport are designed to showcase Waikiki Beach. Going back the other way, however, through an unfinished jigsaw of urban decay, is an exercise in futility.

Up ahead, the light is green, but we're not moving.

TMWF is still smiling. I don't know why. It's now that Richard pipes up. "I need a toilet," he says. "I didn't get to go this morning."

TMWF's smile only broadens. "Toilet! I know the one," he says. We're jerked to one side as he tears out of the line and down a side street.

"Is this toilet far?" I ask, my eyes fixed on the clock because I can no longer bring myself to look at the meter. "It's good!" he replies as we turn a corner at speed.

Aptly, we stop at the Emergency Room of the local hospital. Richard bolts from the car. "We get there, you'll see," says the Man Without Fear. There's nothing reassuring about his tone or his smile, or the way he gets out of the car to have a cigarette - with the meter still running.

By the time Richard emerges from the hospital, we only have five minutes to get to the airport.

I alert my driver. He grins.

"We're already there," he says cryptically.

We scream out of the hospital car park and cross four lanes of traffic. He forces his chariot down a tiny, one-way lane that appears to be going in the opposite direction to the airport.

I'm ready to give up.

But I've committed the ultimate taxi *faux pas*: I didn't have faith in my pilot.

The lane spews us out onto Nimitz Highway, minutes from the airport.

How this is possible, I'll never know.

The Man Without Fear makes no further conversation.

He doesn't have to: by sharing with us his way with the city - fast and loose

- he's said more about both him and his cruel mistress than words ever could.

We blow into the departures drop-off point like a cool summer breeze, but Richard and I are both sweating. The fare is nothing to sneeze at, but we double it.

"You're a wild man," I tell him.

"I'm the man," he says with a wink. So he can blink after all. 

WE'RE JERKED TO ONE SIDE AS HE TEARS OUT OF THE LINE AND DOWN A SIDE STREET

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QUOTABLE QUOTES



EVERYTHING THAT'S
BAD FOR HUMANITY IS
GOOD FOR COMEDY.

SUGAR SAMMY, COMEDIAN

My comfort zone is outside of my comfort zone. I like to be a little uncomfortable.

BILLIE EILISH, SINGER



It's what we do when we don't succeed that determines whether we will succeed.

RETIRED ASTRONAUT, DAVE WILLIAMS

What does it take to see through the illusion of fear? To me, the answer is something spiritual. It's not facts or figures. It's a discipline – of finding hope and love, and maintaining it.

SHAD, HIP-HOP ARTIST



**NEVER STOP
LEARNING HOW
TO LEARN.**

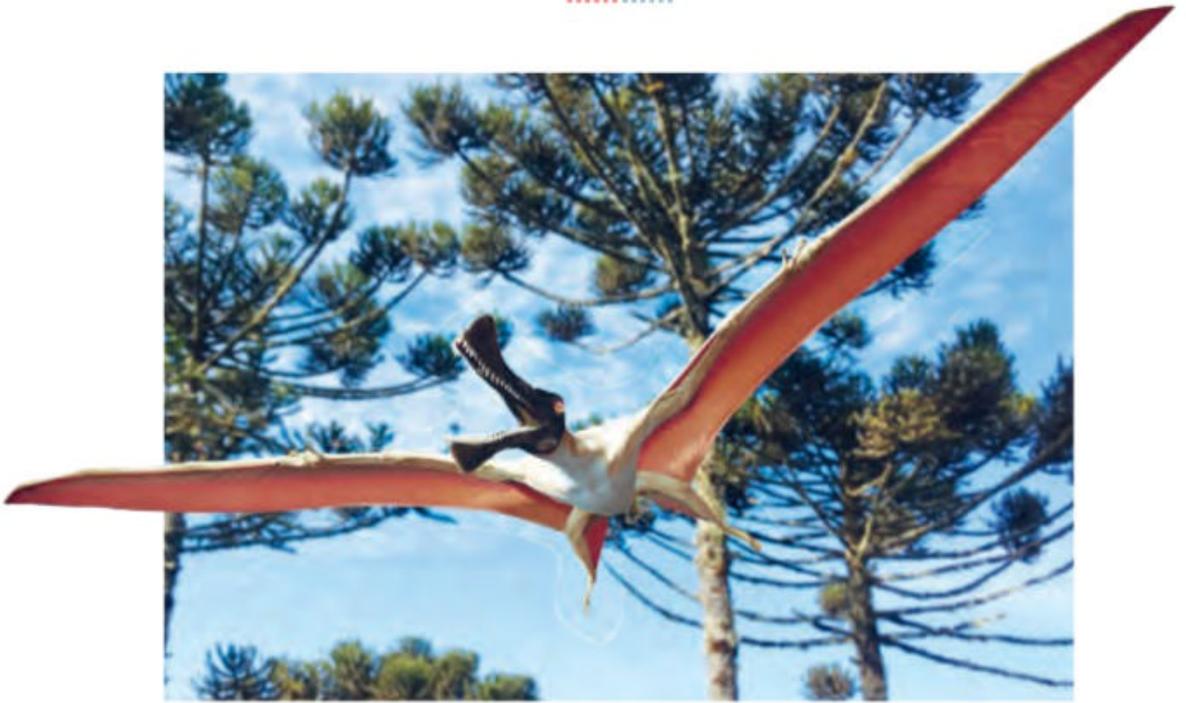
BILLIE JEAN KING, FORMER
CHAMPION TENNIS PLAYER

A DRAGON

On the Farm



Grazier Bob Elliott holding the fossils of the newly discovered pterosaur. Above right: An artist's impression



A prehistoric flying reptile that soared through the skies 96 million years ago is discovered by chance

BY *David Levell*

W eeding along Wardoo Creek was just one of grazier Bob Elliott's many jobs on Belmont station, his vast, 18,000-hectare sheep and cattle property on the western Queensland plains, about 100 kilometres from the nearest town, Winton. One day in April 2017 he set off early - about 7am - to drive the 15 kilometres from his homestead to the creek. It wasn't a particularly

hot day for the time of year, only 36 degrees Celsius or so.

Bob's task involved spraying burr with weed-killer while driving a quad bike along the dry creek bed, and pulling it out by hand in parts too narrow for vehicle access. Expecting a solid day's work, he packed lunch as well as 'smoko' (morning tea). But drought meant far less burr than usual; by 11.30am he'd finished a job that normally took two or three days. So he decided to do what he

often did in spare moments – fossick for fossils.

Finding dinosaur bones is something of a family tradition at Belmont. Bob's parents, David and Judy Elliott, found their first fossil here in 1999, and then founded the district's Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum (AAOD). Bob and his brother Harry grew up on a sheep farm that doubled as a centre for palaeontological discovery, regularly hosting digs. Naturally Bob and Harry caught the dinosaur bug too, and often went fossil-hunting with their parents. The boys soon developed keen eyes for telling bone from stone.

That part of War-doo Creek had always interested them, but the family had never found anything there. Its flat siltstone deposits bore prehistoric ripple marks from a shallow lake, or the long-gone inland sea bordering the area millions of years ago.

Figuring he might find a shell, or a scrap of bone, the 28-year-old grazier climbed out of the creek channel and looked for 20 minutes along a ridge. Looking back towards the creek, his eye caught a white piece of rock, about the size of an average knife-handle. *That's no sheep bone, he thought. That's fossil!*

At first he took it for something from

the Pleistocene (Ice Ages) epoch, but that didn't sit right. It was heavier than any Pleistocene fossil he'd handled before. In fact, it was completely filled in with rock.

And it wasn't a sauropod. Bones of those long-necked, elephant-dwarfing dinosaurs had turned up on Belmont several times over the years, including a find of his (nicknamed Judy after his mum) due to be excavated over the coming winter. This was clearly a smaller creature. Bob was getting very interested. *What could it be?*

Bob soon began spotting smaller pieces nearby. Before leaving, he noticed a larger piece about four metres away. Palm-sized, it bore a pointed oval tooth, about two centimetres long. A closer look revealed

PTEROSAURS — WINGED REPTILES — RULED THE SKIES FOR 160 MILLION YEARS

two more teeth.

A piece of jaw, Bob realised instantly. After marking the site, he took the jaw home and looked up all he could online. The tooth's shape had Bob assuming it was from a fish-eater, maybe a crocodile or plesiosaur (extinct long-necked marine reptile). But crocodile teeth are typically thicker, so he leaned towards a plesiosaur – a creature never found locally before.

A few days later he drove the jawbone to the AAOD where his dad worked, on a forested mesa just outside Winton. Together, Bob, David,

A Dragon on the Farm

Harry and Judy excitedly examined the find. A little more research sank the plesiosaur theory. The size of the jaw – “an inch wide, max,” Bob noted – seemed too small. Secondly, marine reptiles weren’t hollow-boned. After more discussion and research, David ventured a thrilling deduction. “It’s a pterosaur,” he said.

This had the whole family buzzing. Pterosaurs – winged reptiles – hardly ever turn up in Australia. None had ever appeared around Winton before. Only two Australian species from 15 individuals were known, from the merest fragments. Based on what Bob had seen, this one was already more complete than any of them.

Pterosaurs were the first vertebrates to achieve powered flight, millions of years before birds and bats. About 120 species have been found worldwide, ranging in size from sparrows to small planes. They ruled the skies for 160 million years in dinosaur days, but unlike dinosaurs – who are still with us, in a sense, as birds – pterosaurs have no living descendants. Their line has wholly vanished from the earth. Their fragile, hollow, flight-capable bones only survive as fossils almost by miracle.



Geosciences graduate Adele Pentland carefully preserving a section of the crest and upper jaw

This one, Bob realised, died in exactly the right place to be found. As David recalled, in 2000 floodwaters swept through the usually dry creek as high as where the pterosaur lay. Soil washed away, exposing the long-hidden bones. For 17 years they weathered on the surface, kicked, trodden on and scattered by livestock. A few years more and nothing may have remained. After 96 million years, Bob came along just in time.

Among AAOD staff thrilled by the discovery was Adele Pentland, 23 years old and partner to Bob’s brother Harry. A recent geosciences



Adele with the painstakingly reconstructed *Ferrodraco lentoni* jaw with spike-shaped teeth

graduate, she had been working as an AAOD tour guide for about a year. Her academic focus was prehistoric insects preserved in amber, but her career was about to fly in another direction. David offered her the job of scientifically describing the new find. Leaping at the opportunity, she took on a new PhD topic: pterosaur fossils from eastern Australia.

Adele's first task was to comb the creek for any more bits and pieces. With only a year of lab and field experience at AAOD, she suddenly found herself helping to run a dig.

It was a steep learning curve. Some things just weren't taught at university – such as finding the upper jaw tip broken up, yet fixed in place by grass tussock roots. Plagued by flies and the dry winter heat, a small

team collected most of the pieces in two days, though five weeks were spent on site between May and August. All the dirt was saved and then painstakingly sifted through, a job taking several months.

AAOD lab technician Ali Calvey prepared the bones – removing attached stone – and Adele settled into the patient work of piecing fragments together. Her scientific description involved naming the new creature. Wanting

something both scientifically suitable and easy for kids to say, Adele came up with *Ferrodraco lentoni* – Lenton's Iron Dragon. 'Ferrodraco' reflects the oft-noted resemblance of pterosaurs to winged dragons of folklore and heraldry, and the ironstone that filled this dragon's hollow bones. The rest salutes Graham Lenton, Winton's ex-mayor, a staunch supporter and friend of AAOD. His death just six months after Bob's discovery made the tribute especially timely and popular locally. The fossil had already been given his nickname, 'Butch'.

The results, published just over two years later in October 2019, caused a worldwide sensation. Adele was besieged with media and her scientific paper was one of the most read that year.

Ferrodraco's remains, Adele determined, were 10 to 11 per cent complete. That might sound meagre, but it's by far Australia's most complete pterosaur, tripling the total of bones from all finds.

Ferrodraco had lain on its left side, which was better preserved. Most of the 30 bones are from the crested jaw, neck and wings (Bob's first sighting was a wing bone). About 40 spike-shaped teeth and isolated tooth fragments completed the picture of an apex predator in Cretaceous skies.

The Cretaceous is a geological period that lasted from about 145 to 66 million years ago.

Only a mid-size pterosaur, *Ferrodraco* was still quite a monster, almost

twice as big as most pelicans with a four-metre wingspan exceeding that of any living creature. It probably played an albatross's role in the food chain.

Imagine a half-bat, half-crocodile creature, a flying fish-eater soaring on air currents above the southern shores of a long-vanished sea. Western Queensland wasn't dry plains country back then; it was lush forest and swamp. And it was much further south, about where Victoria's south coast is now situated – an effect of continental drift.

Were pterosaurs able to fly across oceans, like albatrosses? Scientific

opinion is divided on the question, which is important as a key factor in their evolution. *Ferrodraco* adds intriguing evidence that maybe they could. Adele was surprised to find it more closely related to pterosaurs from England than South America. Yet when *Ferrodraco* lived, Australia was part of the Gondwana supercontinent, joined to South America, Antarctica and other land masses – but not England. Without transoceanic flight, *Ferrodraco* should be most closely related to other

Gondwana pterosaurs it evolved in isolation with. But the English connection points to *Ferrodraco*, or at least an ancestor, being capable of long-distance

IMAGINE A HALF-BAT, HALF-CROCODILE CREATURE, A FLYING FISH-EATER

overseas migration.

Now engaged to Harry, Adele is still investigating *Ferrodraco's* place in the pterosaur family tree, and more surprises are sure to come. She's put those other prehistoric fliers – insects in amber – on hold while her burgeoning palaeontology career soars on dragon wings. *Ferrodraco* has now roosted permanently at AAOD, on display alongside local dinosaur discoveries. And Bob? He's still out there on the family farm, taking care of business and – as always – keeping an expert eagle eye out for fossils. **R**



HOW TO

Fine-Tune Your Metabolism

Adjusting over time will help you stay thinner – and healthier

BY Courtenay Smith

GETTY IMAGES: ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA AMADOR

Danielle Payton's metabolism was a mystery for most of her adult life. When she was 18, she weighed 75 kilograms, which made little sense to the 160-centimetre high school shot-put champion. "I was a very healthy eater – coming from a family of pescatarians and vegetarians – and an athlete, and I couldn't lose a single kilogram," says Payton.

Just before university, she was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), which causes imbalances in the hormones that regulate both the reproductive system and metabolism.

That solved part of the mystery – women with PCOS are prone to weight gain. But Payton continued to struggle. By the time she turned 24, she weighed 95 kilograms and had developed prediabetes. Her search for a solution

became more focused and urgent. "I had to find food and exercise that worked for my body," says Payton, an online fitness and wellness expert. For her, that meant giving up processed and fried foods, eating more animal protein, doing short daily bouts of walking (30 minutes) and strength training (five to 15 minutes), and taking a probiotic supplement. She also takes doctor-prescribed

medication for PCOS (metformin/spironolactone), which seems to help keep her weight in check. It took her four years, but Payton ultimately lost about 41 kilos and now is fairly steady at 55 kilos. "Mentally, I am tougher because of this process of standing up for my body and figuring out what worked for me," she says. "No one knows your body like you do, and listening to your body is crucial."

Most of us have heard that a good metabolism is the golden ticket to weight loss, but that seriously underplays metabolism's role in our bodies and in our health. Simply put, metabolism is the energy used

by the physical processes that keep us alive. We burn up to 80 per cent of daily kilojoules while at rest (referred to as basal, or resting, metabolism) by breathing, digesting, maintaining circulation, and more. But while that fact inspires comparisons of your metabolism

KEEPING YOUR BODY RUNNING EFFICIENTLY MIGHT BE EASIER THAN YOU THINK

to a fire-burning furnace, it's really more like a busy city transit system, delivering the right mix of chemicals to the right cells at the right times to extract energy from food and keep your body running seamlessly.

That's why the first sign of a troubled metabolism may be the faltering of one of these systems manifesting as rising insulin, cholesterol, triglyceride levels or fat deposits around

READER'S DIGEST

your waist – all markers of metabolic disorder, which heralds a higher risk of diabetes, heart disease or stroke.

But your biggest risk – the “most universal contributor” to metabolic decline according to an article co-written by age-related diseases specialist Dr Nir Barzilai – is ageing. Ageing naturally causes metabolic decline and also makes us more likely to require medications to address issues such as high blood pressure or depression that could slow metabolism. While there's obviously no fix for ageing, you can learn to fine-tune your metabolism as your body changes over time, priming it to deliver the right mix of hormones, much as Payton did. “Find what works for you – then do it consistently,” she says.

Here are some of the best small changes in habit that can help you boost your metabolism.

WATCH THE SUNRISE

“Simply basking in early morning rays can increase your metabolism naturally,” says Ken Ceder, executive director of the non-profit Science of Light. That's because our circadian rhythms, or master body clocks, regulate the hormones crucial to metabolism and hunger control, including insulin, cortisol and leptin. Our circadian rhythms work best when in sync with the sun, receiving bright light in the morning and diminishing rays towards sundown. To get your daily dose, spend at least 15 minutes

every morning outdoors in sunlight, without sunglasses so the sun reaches your eyes' photoreceptors. You will get the benefits passively, so don't stare at the sun.

SAFEGUARD YOUR SLEEP

Sleep is the reset button for your metabolism. Prepare your brain for bed time by dimming the lights a few hours beforehand – turn off bright overheads and turn on bedside lamps equipped with warm or amber-toned bulbs. Also, “if your slumber is constantly interrupted by light snoring, then you are missing out on kilojoule-burning benefits,” says Dr Bindiya Gandhi, a family doctor. The fix may be as simple as using a breathing strip on your nose to help open constricted sinuses at night. Just ask your doctor whether you should be tested for sleep apnoea, since snoring is a common sign of the serious disorder.

TRY INTERMITTENT FASTING

If changing your diet is too overwhelming, try a form of fasting. A 2020 review in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* concluded that intermittent fasting regimes can be a promising way to lose weight and improve metabolic health.

There are many approaches, such as overnight fasting (don't eat between 7pm and 6am) or the 5:2

method (eat about 25 per cent of usual kilojoules two days a week). Ask your doctor first. Trying it even once or twice may jump-start other healthy habits.

TRACK YOUR WATER INTAKE WITH RUBBER BANDS

Try this easy system: in the morning, put five rubber bands on your wrist. Every time you drink 475 ml of water, take off a band and put it on the bottle. German researchers found that metabolic rate jumped by 30 per cent for up to 40 minutes in 14 volunteers after they drank 475 ml of water. The researchers estimated



that over a year, increasing your water consumption by two cups a day could burn an extra 2.2 kilograms. Since much of the increase in metabolic rate is due to the body's efforts to heat the liquid, make sure the water you're drinking is icy cold.

FEED YOUR GUT

"Healthy gut bacteria optimise your metabolism by helping your body extract nutrients from your diet more effectively," says nutritionist Amy Gorin. A daily serving of probiotic-rich foods such as yoghurt, kefir and unpasteurised sauerkraut might help, though so far studies have been inconclusive on the total benefits. Yoghurt has an added advantage – dairy foods may lower the risk of metabolic disorder, according to an analysis in the *British Journal of Nutrition*. Preliminary studies have found that some probiotic strains help with weight loss (*Lactobacillus rhamnosus*) and body fat reduction (*Lactobacillus amylovorus*). "Ask your healthcare provider about a probiotic supplement," recommends Gorin.

QUASH CRAVINGS WITH PROTEIN

A number of well-documented studies show that high-protein diets may help adults lose weight while maintaining lean muscle mass (one of the main drivers of a naturally high kilojoule burn), according to a 2020 analysis in *Nutrition*. Protein also

READER'S DIGEST

unleashes a cascade of metabolic signals from the gastrointestinal tract to tell the brain that it's full. However, long-term high-protein diets can be harmful to the kidneys, so consult your doctor.

DON'T DETOX

Severe, long-term kilojoule restriction doesn't work, because your metabolism is mainly determined by your body composition; the more muscle mass you have, the more kilojoules you burn throughout the day. "When you lose weight quickly, your body is breaking down its muscle mass," says dietitian Susan Berkman. "When you resume eating normally, your metabolism is slower than when you started the plan because you have less muscle." Result: you gain fat.

CHILL OUT – LITERALLY

Cold weather is one of nature's most powerful metabolic boosters, helping increase your levels of brown fat, a type of fat that burns more kilojoules even when you're at rest. "Going outdoors in cold weather can increase your non-exercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT) score,

helping you burn kilojoules," says Kristen Koskinen, a dietitian nutritionist. "The metabolic act of staying warm is an easy way to boost your metabolism without breaking a sweat." Taking a cold shower or finishing a steamy one with a cool rinse-off might also give your metabolism a quick boost by forcing your body to shiver – which requires energy and kilojoules – to warm up. But since the long-term effects on weight loss are unclear, you'll have to decide whether the torture is worth it.

CURL UP ON THE COUCH WITH A BOOK

Wait – being a couch potato can help your metabolism? If you're totally relaxed, then yes. "Stress increases the level of the hormone cortisol, which can cause metabolic dysfunction if it's constantly elevated," says Dr Gandhi. The cure is to do something daily that will help you completely de-stress, whether that's watching a movie, taking a long bath, or reading a book. **R**

With additional reporting from thehealthy.com



Hairy Situation

"I WANT MUMMY TO CUT MY HAIR," my six year old yelled, at once exercising his bodily autonomy and exhibiting absolutely dismal decision-making skills. ARIANNA BRADFORD



More Than Meets the Eye

The silence of the man on the plane taught this writer a crucial lesson

BY *Mohan Sivanand*

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

He must have had that nice window seat all the way from London. He looked under 40, medium height, slim and wore a blazer. It was October 2003 when I boarded the Emirates flight in Dubai and found that I had the aisle seat next to him. I attempted a smile as I sat down but his blank, distant look made me stop mid-smile. *One of those*, I thought.

Each time I take a flight, I try to chat with the passenger next to me. Most people are responsive when they're alone at 12,000 metres. Only those few, who barely even nod, make me keep to myself. So flying has helped me get to know perfect strangers. To a journalist, this could be the seed of an unexpected story or simply a chance to hear something different. In any case, with good company above the clouds, time flies.

In recent times I've flown while seated next to a young agricultural banker and a financial consultant. I've had conversations with a medical engineer from Germany who holds patents on heart transplants, an event manager from Paris, and a Mumbai grandmother on holiday. One time, I even flew with a couple of Iranian soldiers returning from Europe. You never know who you'll meet next, and they're usually interesting once you've broken the ice.

But the man wearing the blazer on my left, on that three-hour-long Dubai-Mumbai flight, was a puzzle. I glanced his way a couple of times but he just looked through me. *What do you lose if you just smiled at a fellow human being?* I wondered. Most of the time, he stared fixedly at the seat in front of him. *Why are some people so full of themselves?*

When the stewardess brought lunch, the unfriendly man had his eyes shut. She gave me a should-I-wake-him-up look. I didn't say anything, and he didn't get his lunch.

Serves him right.

He soon woke up and saw me eat. But he didn't ask for his meal. He could just have pressed a but-

ton. That's his problem.

WE STILL HAVE ALMOST TWO HOURS of flying time left. I read a magazine, I try to play a video game, I listen to music. He does nothing.

At times our eyes meet, but he

**YOU NEVER KNOW
WHO YOU'LL
MEET NEXT, AND
THEY'RE USUALLY
INTERESTING**

isn't all there. He's like no other passenger I've ever sat next to. By the time our jet lands in Mumbai, I find his presence almost uncomfortable.

As we taxi down the runway, the intercom doles out the usual closing messages. It ends with a request to keep all mobile phones switched off a little longer.

That's when I hear the man speak for the first time – on his mobile phone. The cheek! He seems to be discussing his connecting flight. About somebody receiving him ... it all sounds like some special arrangements.

I have half a mind to tell him to shut up and switch it off.

Just before the aircraft comes to a halt, he's the first to stand up. "Excuse me," he says to me. "May I leave? I can't miss my connecting flight."

Hmm ...! I get up to make way for him when he goes on mechanically:

"My wife and child died in a road accident in Delhi."

"Oh?" I exclaim inadequately. "I'm so sorry."

As I see the man rushing out before the other passengers could block the aisle, I'm shell-shocked by the revelation. Suddenly, everything falls into place. The tables have turned. I'm the bad guy for having judged him so hastily – and so wrongly.

I could have spoken first.

Despite his terrible loss and the torment he has been enduring, he was calm, controlled and dignified throughout. And, maybe, in the midst of his soul-crushing sorrow, he didn't want to burden a stranger with his pain.

That was a brave man, a fellow traveller from whom I learnt an invaluable lesson: to look beyond the façade and to never assume anything until you have walked in another person's shoes. **R**



Would You Like Fries With That?

Have you ever stopped to wonder what might go into a burger that costs the equivalent of NZ\$480 (£250)? Well, we have the answer for you – wagyu beef, caviar, whipped buffalo ricotta and cabbage that's been marinated in rice vinegar, all inside of a 24k gold leaf-covered ciabatta bun. Known as 'the billionaire', it was created by

Andrea Zagatti for the menu of his London-based business, Mr Z's Luxury Sandwiches. Zagatti is a former private chef who has cooked for a number of famous faces, including Kanye West and Anne Hathaway. *DAILY MIRROR*



Karen Stiller placed friendly notes in her window during quarantine

*As my city shut down during
the pandemic, I tried to be a good
neighbour – from a distance*

Next-Door Strangers

BY *Karen Stiller*

My kitchen window is above my sink. The washer of dishes and rinsers of celery and lettuce can look out and imagine doing other, better things. Our window looks into the kitchen window of our neighbour's house, so close to ours. Our houses are old soldiers in a row, shoulder to shoulder on a worn out street.

The view into our kitchen is often lit up, like a blaring, glaring movie set. But our neighbours, two young men who I only know in passing, never seem to turn on their kitchen light. Sometimes, as I do my dishes or rinse our apples, my eyes adjust. Shadow gives way to shape and bent

head and striped sweater emerge. Then I see them, standing at the sink, leaning in and down, washing a dish or rinsing a tomato. I am startled every time.

Though I don't know these men, on the first Saturday of the first weekend of the COVID-19 lockdown I still wanted to be a good neighbour. I made a sign that said, 'Have a nice day', and stuck it on my kitchen window, with a smiley face. A while later that day, they taped up a sign on their window with a message for us.

'Thank you. You too!'

We went on like this for a few days, back and forth, like an echo, and I thought of how this would be a nice story for us all: how we communicated by signs throughout the whole pandemic - every single day! - and moved from strangers at the beginning, to such good friends by the end.

"Mum, you're so cool," my 21-year old daughter said.

Somewhere around Day 5, I positioned Beaker the Muppet in the window, and they met him with a cute stuffed dog. Then, I raised the bar much too high with a fragment of a Mary Oliver poem about spring, and that was the end of that. Maybe I was showing off.

By this time, I was also running

into the guys in the driveway sometimes as we walked our dogs, so the notes had already started to feel a little silly. What if my notes were a chore to them, and not a charm? What if I was less like a mother, and more like an annoying weirdo?

So, I stopped. About a week later, my dog, Dewey, was barking at their dog in our backyards. I saw one of the guys when I went out to shush him.

"Sorry, we didn't find a poem," he said. "We meant to," he added, "And then we never did."

"That's okay," I replied. "DEWEY. SHUT UP!" And we both went back inside.

It is so hard to know what it means to be a good neighbour these days. None of the old tricks work. We can't show up and knock on a door, or even lend things. I've thought

about baking muffins and dropping them off, but that feels illegal.

Going for walks make me sad, or mad. I like what walks do for my health, but not what they do to my heart. I hate veering away from people, like we are all infected. It's depressing, and we avoid my favourite blocks in my neighbourhood. It's just too crowded with other veering, lurching people.

How do I love thee neighbour, like I'm supposed to? Love should pull in,

None of
the old
tricks work.
We can't
show up at
the door or
drop off
muffins

not push out. Love takes risks, not the side road to avoid a crowd. Love drops off casseroles and attends funerals, always. Love is best and easiest in person, up close and brightly lit, not hidden in the shadows. And sick people are for visiting, not avoiding.

I can't love like I've been taught. We are all just stumbling along.

So, like everyone I guess, I have been turning in, instead, and caring for my family with roast chicken and pineapple crumble and quite a few frittatas, as it has turned out.

Being only and always with my family means that kind of love is also stretched and challenged. There is no question that our neighbours on the other side, with whom we share the thin walls of our semi-detached 120-year-old house – a house that has stood and not fallen through two

world wars, a depression and the Spanish Flu – have now heard me yell. That's OK. Love is loud.

After this is all over, I have decided I will finally have our neighbours from both sides, the left and the right, over for dinner. I will pack our house with neighbours. We will sit on the couch together. I can't be a neighbour now, as I'd like to, but I can be a neighbour then. We will all have lived through this together. The pandemic might have knitted us together like an old worn sock, even after it's over – because it is finally over.

I will write this invitation on a piece of paper, and stick it on my kitchen window for them to read, for old, bad time's sake. Maybe we can have a little laugh together about how we tried to be kind, even during a time when we didn't really know how. **R**



Beetle Armour

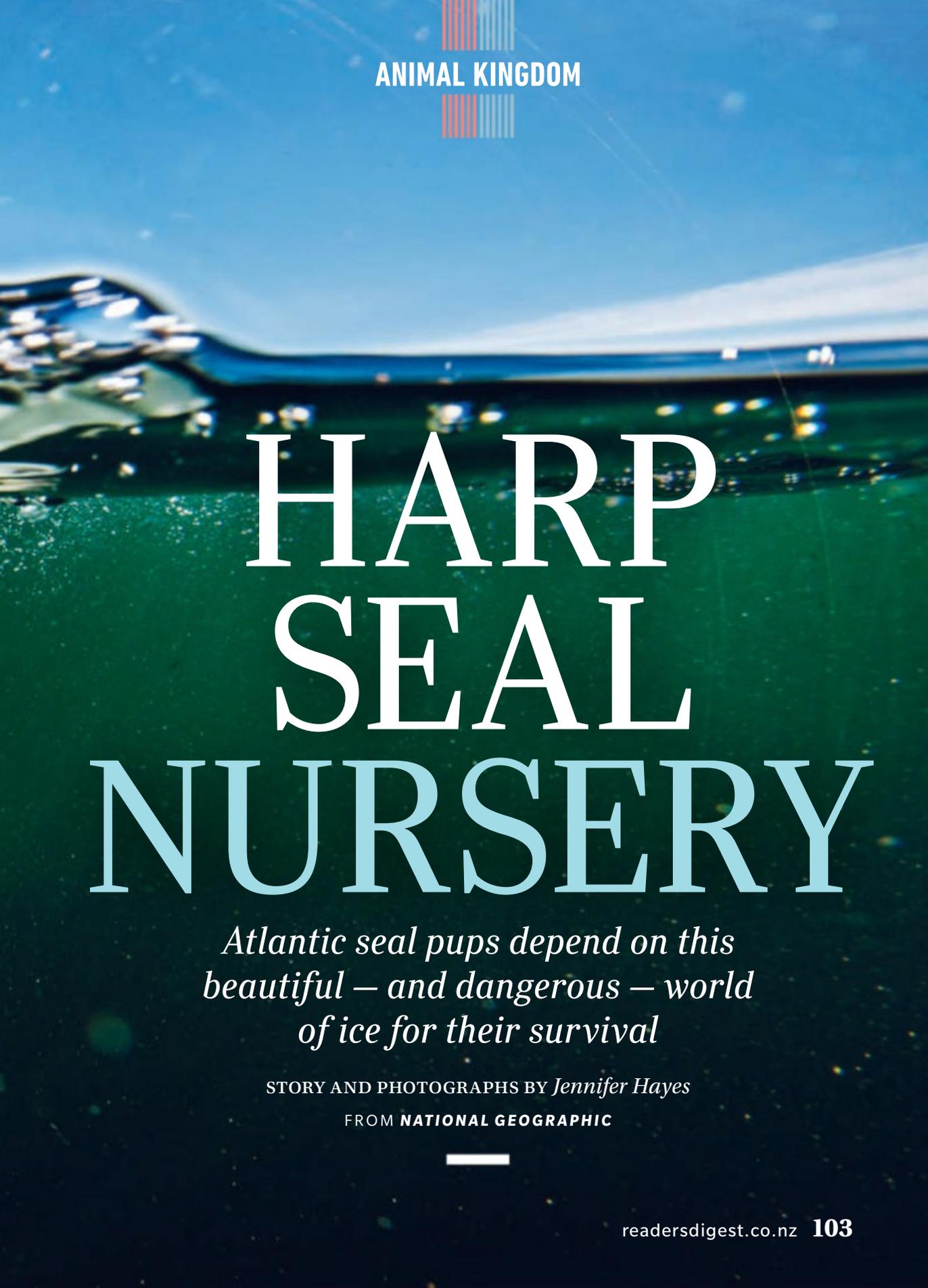
A species of beetle – aptly named 'diabolical ironclad beetle' – can withstand bird pecks, animal stomps and even being rolled over by a Toyota Camry. Now scientists are studying what the bug's crush-resistant shell could teach them about designing stronger planes and buildings. "This beetle is super tough," said Purdue University civil engineer Pablo Zavattieri, who was among a group of researchers that ran over the insect with a car as part of a new study. Analyses of microscope images, 3-D printed models and computer simulations revealed the secrets to its strength. It has an unusual armour that is layered and pieced together like a jigsaw, according to the study published in *Nature*.

And its design, they say, could help inspire more durable structures and vehicles. AP





ANIMAL KINGDOM



HARP SEAL NURSERY

*Atlantic seal pups depend on this
beautiful – and dangerous – world
of ice for their survival*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Jennifer Hayes*

FROM **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**



WHEN YOU WALK on sea ice, it's easy to forget that there's an ocean below you. This frozen world is stripped down to essentials: impossibly blue sky, bright sun bouncing off fresh snow, wind that vibrates like a cello, whiteness all around.

Then I hear the distant chorus of infant cries and I stand still, listening. It's a precious moment that I want to appreciate fully before I pull out my cameras. I catch a slight movement in a ridge of snow ahead – a gentle and clumsy wave of a tiny flipper. I see a pup nestled inside a small snow cave moulded by body heat and movement, protected from the wind. Its

Harp Seal Nursery



The world of ice and the continued existence of the harp seal are as fragile as a dream

colouring is still tinged with hints of yellow from amniotic fluid.

I choose a spot a polite distance away and kneel in the snow, watching and waiting, noting the date: March 8, 2019. I hear sloshing water and short grunting breaths before I see a whiskered face with big dark eyes rise and survey the surroundings from a nearby hole in the ice.

The female emerges, using curved claws to pull herself onto and across the ice to her pup. They meet with a nose-to-nose kiss of recognition that establishes kinship: are you my pup? Are you my mother? The female turns to gauge my presence, determines I am no threat, and settles onto her side, shuts her eyes, and begins to nurse.

Welcome to the harp seal nursery in the Gulf of St Lawrence off the Magdalen Islands (*Îles-de-la-Madeleine*), Canada, one of two Northwest Atlantic harp seal whelping grounds. Adult seals migrate here from the Arctic, the pregnant females searching for suitable ice on which to give birth. Harp seals are an ice-obligate species: they require a stable sea platform of ice for pups to survive. Born on the ice in late February and early March, the pups nurse for 12-15 days before being left on their own. The young seals are among the most captivating creatures on the planet, with obsidian eyes, charcoal noses, and cloud-soft fur.

As I scan the landscape, I see larger, more active pups in their white-coat phase. These older pups, born days earlier, have the distinct advantage of time in the increasingly unpredictable world of climate change and its impact on this ice. Late-born pups especially need an adequate period of stable ice to survive in a world where spring comes earlier every

READER'S DIGEST

year and, with it, increasingly strong storms that demolish the ice pack. A life born to ice is difficult, and natural mortality is high.

THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS are an archipelago of islets resembling ships at anchor in the Gulf of St Lawrence.

I had been here in 2011 for a story about the gulf's marine ecosystem. The boat we boarded then to meet the seals was a steel-hulled fishing – and seal-hunting – vessel.

Magdalen Islanders have fished and hunted seals off these shores since the 1600s. It's a controversial tradition that continues with strict quotas and regulations. The hunting of 'whitecoats', which refers to the soft, fluffy white fur newborn seals have until three weeks old is illegal. There has also been a substantial decline in the number of seals harvested due to decreasing market price and unfavourable ice conditions. "Given the market situation for hunting products," our guide, Mario Cyr, told me, "ecotourism and observation tours are the best alternative for most boat owners and hunters."

After two days of searching, the boat's captain nosed the vessel into a patch of sea ice supporting a herd of more than 10,000 seals. We drifted with the ice over several days.

It was extraordinary to pull on crampons and walk among this gathering of pulsating life on the ice and



Mother and pup establish kinship with a nose-to-nose kiss of recognition

then to put on a dry suit and mask, and snorkel and slide into their world with a camera.

Life at the edge of the patch can be a busy place, with mothers coming and going beneath a dark-blue cathedral of ice pierced by shafts of light, apprehensive whitecoats peering into the sea considering their first swim, and veterans gliding about



and exploring their new ocean world.

The 2011 assignment was a photographic success, and it gifted me with a life-changing moment. On our last day, as I floated respectfully near a mother seal and her pup, an aggressive male seal nipped at my ankles and scrabbled over my back, pushing me below the surface. The mother seal fought him off and then

nudged both her pup and me out of harm's way.

I was still processing this as our ship headed to port ahead of a low-pressure system. The storm tore across the gulf, whipping it to froth. By the time we made shore, we learnt that the sea ice had disintegrated beneath the herd and the pups had been lost.

READER'S DIGEST

THE STORM had made my encounter with the mother seal bittersweet and I knew we were now facing a new truth – that the world of ice was as fragile as a dream. The realisation galvanised my resolve to return each year that ice conditions would allow, to track the harp seals' lives and connect others with these creatures and their diminishing realm.

Fast forward to 2019. The boat charter for our annual visit to the seal-nursery was cancelled; the fishing boats were 'iced in'. But it was looking like a good year for seals, so we joined a helicopter ecotourism trip that takes travellers over the pack ice during seal pup season, landing only if conditions are safe.

That's how I find myself watching a pup nursing, as its mother soaks up the warm sun. As I walk back towards the helicopters, I see a girl sitting quietly next to a chubby whitecoat staring back at her. Other travellers I meet include a couple on a Valentine's Day date, a cancer patient,

and a Japanese photographer and guide celebrating his 30th year with the seals. There's a young lady who brought her toy seal from childhood, and a 20-something man who slept in his car and ate canned goods after spending his last dollar for the season's final helicopter ride. Passion and curiosity brought them all here to learn and grow.

Before my snorkelling encounter with the protective mother and her pup, I was a sceptic about human-wildlife interactions. But I now accept that sometimes things happen when we least expect it. Biologists can point out why a testosterone-fuelled male seal was compelled to challenge me while I was swimming with his potential mate. But they cannot easily explain why a mother seal would push me to safety with her pup.

I don't need explanations. I just embrace it. **R**

FROM NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
(DECEMBER 2019/JANUARY 2020),
©2019 BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Reefs Key to Island Growth

Coastal erosion from rising sea level is considered a major threat to many Pacific communities. However, new research suggest that islands surrounded by healthy coral reefs are growing in land size. Scientists at the University of Auckland found atolls in the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and the Maldives archipelago have grown by eight per cent in the past six decades due to a build up of coral reef sediment. ABC.NET.AU



TRUSTED BRANDS

2021

Results are Coming

For further information please contact Yulia Mckenzie
on yulia@hawkhurst.co.nz

NEW ZEALAND
Reader's
Digest

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Humour on the Job



"Where do you see yourself in five updates?"

Quite the Entrance

Once I got sent to a client's office in a featureless building.

Somehow, I managed to get the directions up to the client's reception horribly wrong. Before I'd realised it, I'd opened a fire door out onto the roof. It shut behind me with a resolute *thunk!*, leaving me no option but to walk round the roof trying to find another way in.

Turning a corner, I spotted my work colleagues and the client all looking at me in bewilderment through the windows of the meeting room where they were gathered.

They had to open a window for me to climb in, in front of everyone. Awkward.

@Pookiesu

Some Days Are Harder Than Others

It's called 'work' for a reason.

♦ Someone tried to return a defective item without a receipt. After explaining that I could not find where she had paid for the item, she yelled at me, "It's not my fault you people didn't catch me!"

♦ I tied my hair back into a ponytail for work before teaching. It kept coming undone, so I used a rubber band to

hold it. Later, I was reprimanded for misusing school supplies.

◆ I was listening to the radio at work when a girl near me screamed. Then a girl on the radio screamed. The show was about bad jobs. It was her, calling in while still at work.

◆ Three representatives from corporate came to our local office. Their agenda? Redoing our floor plan. Now I have a great view of a wall.

dumbemployed.com

Funny Bones

If I were an X-ray technician, after I took the first X-ray I'd say, "OK, now let's do a goofy one." **BROTI GUPTA**

FAST TALKERS

Some of the more creative justifications for speeding that police officers have encountered.

- ◆ "I wasn't speeding. I just got a haircut and it makes me look fast."
- ◆ "My accelerator is broken and it always goes this fast, no matter what."
- ◆ "I have a cold, and when I cough, my foot mashes the pedal."

policeone.com



BY DESIGN

I was browsing in the men's department at Neiman Marcus in New York when a knitted black designer blazer caught my eye.

Although the tag said it was on sale, it still cost more than I cared to spend. Tempting fate, I tried it on. Just then, a saleswoman appeared.

"It fits you perfectly," she said.

"Yes," I said, "but I really don't need it."

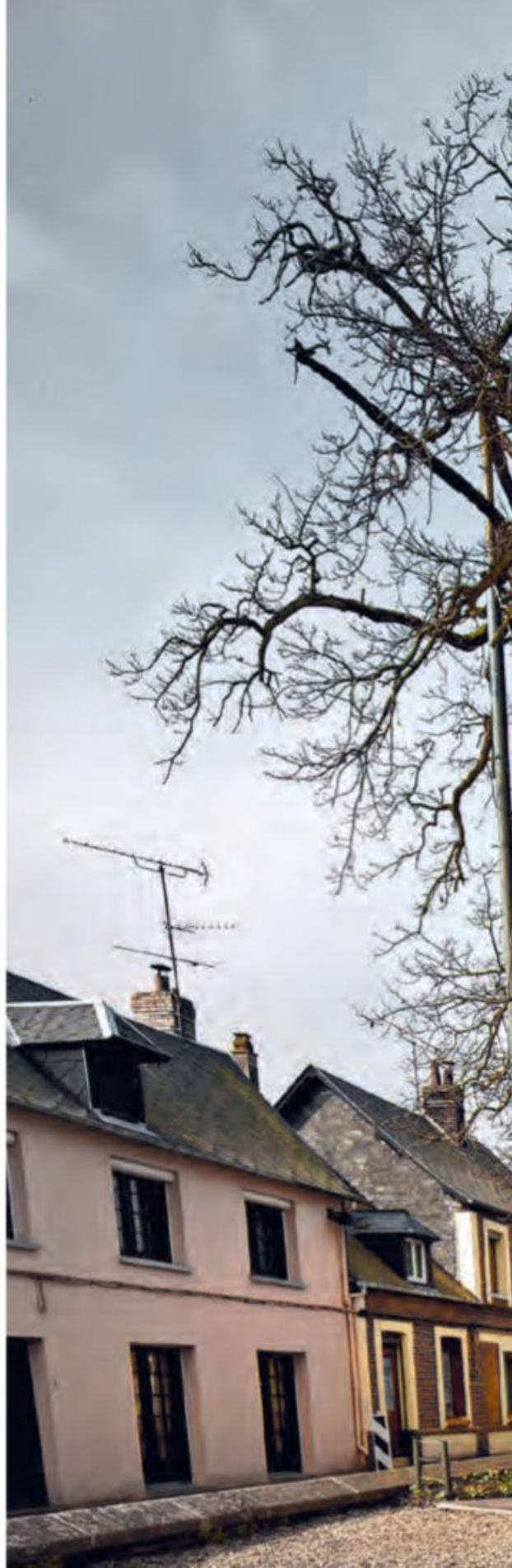
Without missing a beat, she replied, "We don't sell things that people need."

JOE CAPUTO IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

IF TREES COULD TALK

THIS IS
WHAT SIX
OF THEM
WOULD SAY

BY *Diana Thomas*
AND *Zoë Meunier*



Le Chêne Chapelle
in Normandy,
France, is believed
to have been
planted in the
time of Emperor
Charlemagne



Our primitive ancestors lived in forests and jungles and believed that trees had spirits. And they may have been right. Scientists are discovering that trees communicate via chemicals, hormones, pheromones and electrical signals passed between their roots. Trees will even pass water and sugar to one another to keep their neighbours alive when humans have chopped them down and robbed them of their leaves. But what would trees say to us if we could hear them?

LE CHÊNE CHAPELLE

(THE CHAPEL OAK)

ALLOUVILLE-BELLEFOSSE,
NORMANDY, FRANCE

"I believe oaks are the greatest, the most majestic of all trees. But are they all equal? *Non!* The French oak alone possesses a special elegance, glory and *savoir-vivre*. And of all French trees, I am the oldest, the wisest and the most long-suffering.

Some humans believe I was planted in the time of the Emperor Charlemagne, some 1200 years ago. Others, however, date me to 911 CE, when Normandy itself was created from the land given to Rollo, a Viking raider, by King Charles the Simple of France.

There are impudent scientists who maintain that I am only 800 years old. *Zut alors!* I ask you, if I am a mere seedling of 800, why can I remember meeting Rollo's great-great-great-grandson William of Normandy, the one they call 'the Conqueror', in 1035? William was a big strong lad

with bright red hair. The story goes that he knelt beneath my branches as if in prayer. *Pah!* That great ginger ape strode from a nearby tavern, his belly full of beer, leaned with one hand against my trunk, adjusted his clothing and ... I will not debase my honour by saying more.

Ah, but an even greater torment befell me more than 650 years later, when I was struck by lightning. *Mon Dieu*, the agony! That bolt shot through me like a giant axe, splitting me in two and hollowing my trunk.

I was barely alive. Some villagers wanted to chop me down. But the local priest and abbot said, no, my survival was a miracle. In 1696, they created a shrine to the Virgin Mary within my trunk and then built a chapel at the top, reached by a staircase attached to my poor, battered body.

Frankly, I found the structure undignified and inelegant. It almost cost me my life during the French Revolution of 1789, when a gang of

godless rebels tried to burn me down. Let me tell you, the torment of those flames against my bark is indescribable. Luckily, a quick-witted villager shouted, 'No! This tree should be a Temple to Reason!'

The flames were doused, my life was saved. The shrine and chapel still stand, though I confess I need some help from the manmade poles that support my branches. I should live for a good few years yet, long after the people who have tried to hurt me have turned to dust."

EL OLIVO DEL MOUCHÃO

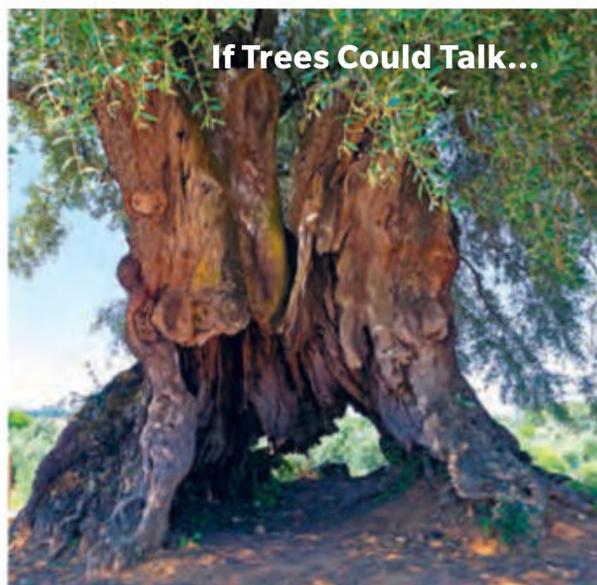
(OLIVE TREE)

MOURISCAS, PORTUGAL

"Ah, those oaks, so proud, so boastful! Yet they ignore their fatal flaw: they are only of use to humans when they are dead. We olives are more modest. No great navy ever used our wood to build its battleships. No roofs are supported with beams hewn from our trunks. But entire civilisations have been built upon our fruit. And for that, we are allowed to live.

That Frenchman speaks with the impetuosity of youth. He talks of the Emperor Charlemagne, but I was planted more than 3350 years ago, a date scientifically proven in 2016 by Professor José Penetra Louzada.

Consider that, you humans, with your lives so brief that they seem to me barely longer than a mayfly's flicker of existence. When I was in my infancy, the prophet Moses lived and



If Trees Could Talk...

Portugal's *Olivo del Mouchão* has estimated age of 3350 years

the Pharaoh Rameses II ruled Egypt. I was more than 900 years old when Plato was expounding his philosophy to his students in Athens, and more than 1350 when Jesus of Nazareth died on his cross.

In my youth, the first humans who gathered fruit from my branches were savages, clad in rough animal skins. I'd seen 700 winters when the first crude fortifications were built, 125 kilometres from me in human measurements, that would become the city of Lisbon. Half a millennium later, the Romans arrived, so stern, so disciplined, so convinced that the empire could never fall. And yet it did, as did the kingdom of the Visigoths who succeeded them.

Next came the Arabs: proud, hawk-nosed, with sharp eyes and scimitars as sharp as the talons of the hunting falcons they treasured so dearly. Their kingdom of Al-Andalus

READER'S DIGEST

survived more than 400 years before the Christians took back the land.

But really, what are these mortal men to me? They come, they go, but I stay. My trunks may be gnarled and twisted, my bark cracked, my branches brittle, but I still produce fruit and still give my bounty to whichever human chooses to harvest it.”

NEWTON'S APPLE TREE

WOOLSTHORPE MANOR,
LINCOLNSHIRE, ENGLAND

“One doesn't like to boast. It's *simply* not the British way. But we can surely agree that the discovery of gravity is one of the absolute cornerstones of our understanding of the universe.

It was, of course, to an Englishman, Sir Isaac Newton, that the world owes this insight. So what single incident first gave the young Newton his inspiration? Why, the falling of an apple from a tree. And which was the tree that produced that falling apple?

Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot deny it. I was that apple tree. And in that moment, I did more to advance the cause of science than any tree who had ever lived, at any time, anywhere.

It may have been almost 360 years ago, which may not sound like much to some trees, but is a jolly long time for an apple. I remember the occasion well. I'd known Isaac since he was a babe in arms, because Woolsthorpe Manor, where I still stand, was his family home. He was clearly



Apples still fall in a downwards direction from Isaac Newton's apple tree

an extremely clever little fellow, so I wasn't at all surprised when he won a place to study at Cambridge University in 1661. He was still there four years later when there was an outbreak of bubonic plague. The students were sent home, which was why he was in my orchard, pondering the universe, when that fateful apple fell. Thus history was made and, to this day, there are travellers who come from all around the world to visit me and say, 'Well done'.”

WOLLEMI PINE

WOLLEMI NATIONAL PARK,
NSW, AUSTRALIA

“Fellas, fellaaaaas. You really want to start squabbling about age? I'm far too mature for all that, but suffice to say I cast substantial shade on your boasts of seniority. I'm so old even I

don't know how old I am. Let's just say that when my grove of pines was discovered in the Wollemi National Park in 1994, I was compared to finding a living dinosaur. Fossil evidence indicates my ancestors existed between 200 and 100 million years ago and that I was once spread right across Australia. My existing crop of brothers and sisters could be up to 100,000 years old. Yeah, you heard right. I wish I could be more exact, but at my age you start to get a bit hazy on the details.

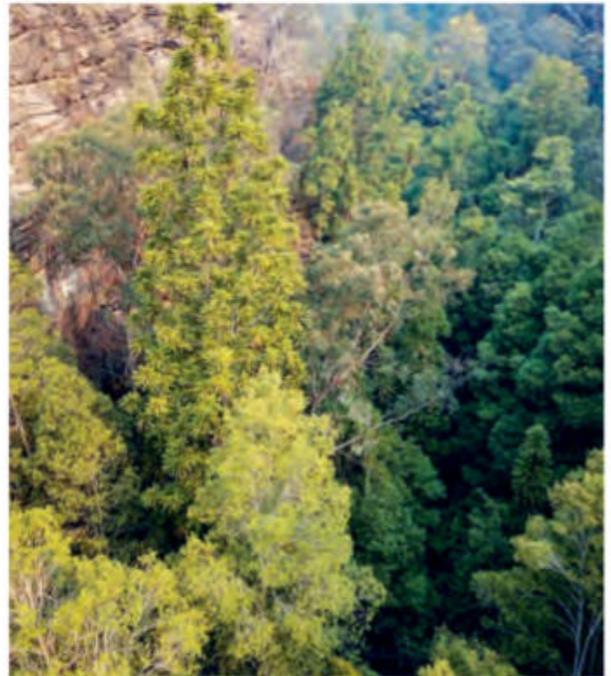
Speaking of hazy, things really heated up around here at the end of 2019. You probably heard, my country took a massive beating from bushfires in the summer of 2019-2020 and my stand of trees was right in the firing line. I could barely breathe from the smoke haze for months. The Gospers Mountain fire alone desecrated more than 512,000 hectares, making it possibly the largest fire ever known to have started from a single source - a lightning strike on October 26.

As the fires tore through my home, a top-secret rescue mission was hatched to save us. Mate, it was hectic, there were aircraft dropping water bombs, large air tankers dropping fire retardant, and helicopters winching specialist firefighters into my remote gorge to establish an irrigation system to bring some much-needed moisture to the ground fuels surrounding me. In an incredible feat, they managed to spare

us while the surrounding forest was reduced to ash.

Are you getting the gist of how important I am? Basically, my siblings and I - and there are less than 200 of us - are the only Wollemi pines that exist in the wild, although we've now been propagated in nurseries. I'm so sacred that my exact location is kept a secret. If everyone knew where I lived, they'd flock to have a gander at me, and contamination from pathogens they would bring in could be the end of me.

Yeah, you humans have a lot to answer for, but you did save my life, so I owe you. Still, it'll be interesting to see which of us will still be around in another 100,000 years."



The Wollemi Pine is believed to have been around when dinosaurs roamed Australia

IL CASTAGNO DEI CENTO CAVALLI

(HUNDRED-HORSE CHESTNUT)
MOUNT ETNA, SICILY

"You thought Luciano Pavarotti was big? Ha! When I was measured in 1780, which seems like only yesterday when you're 4000 years old, my total circumference was 57.9 metres. Not that they had metres then, of course, so let us just say 'sixty paces'. Enough to give me a Guinness World Record for 'Greatest Tree Girth Ever', that's for sure.

I admit my body is essentially a ring of many separate trunks. In fact, I almost look like a grove of different trees. In the middle of the circle there is enough room for buildings, which have been erected at various times in my life. But every single trunk springs from the same roots. They are all me. And I can claim to be the oldest chestnut tree in the world.

So, how did I get my name? Ah, that's a story ... My heroine is Queen Giovanna (Joanna). *Mamma mia, che bella donna!*

Giovanna was the daughter of King John II of Aragon and wife of King Ferdinand I of Naples. When Giovanna married Ferdinand, her father gave her a dowry of 100,000 gold florins. Her new husband gave her land and towns from across his kingdom.

They were married by Rodrigo Borgia, who would become Pope Alexander VI. Giovanna, you will gather,



Sicily's Hundred-Horse Chestnut was a shelter for royalty in its time

was a very special lady. She was also a loyal wife, for in 1485 she began a regal journey around southern Italy and Sicily, encouraging her husband's subjects to remain loyal to their king. To ensure her safety, and impress the people, she was accompanied by a retinue of 100 knights, all mounted on fine horses. One day, their journey took them to the slopes of Mount Etna, where I grow.

Queen Giovanna wished to see the top of the mighty volcano. But on the way to the summit a terrible storm broke out and she and her knights were forced to seek shelter. So great was the expanse of my myriad branches, that the queen and all her men were able to find shelter beneath them. Minstrels sang ballads about that day, poets composed verses, and so I acquired my name.

That was just one day. There have been more than 1,460,000 others."

TĀNE MAHUTA

(KAURI PINE)

WAIPOUA FOREST, NORTHLAND REGION, NEW ZEALAND

“Before we settle this argument once and for all about who is the greatest among us, allow me to explain to you what my name means in Māori: God of the forest. As the largest kauri tree to stand today, and with my age estimated to be between 1250 and 2000 years, I’m not overstating the matter to say that I am nothing less than the physical representation of the Māori world. As legend tells, at the dawn of the world, my siblings and I lived in the darkness between our coupled parents Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the Earth mother). I separated my parents, and in doing so, allowed light and life to begin and flourish. No biggie.

In fact, as visitors walk down the wooded gangway into the rainforest of Waipoua and are confronted by my enormity, they are frequently brought to tears. Oh, did I mention my size? I stand 51.5 metres tall and have a girth of 18.8 metres. Try hugging me and you will not get very far. But scale aside, it is the atmosphere that pervades my whole region that evokes such an emotional response in all who behold me – an energy, a life force, something intangible yet deeply felt.

All Kauri trees are considered a *taonga* (highly treasured) by Kiwis, especially Māori, who see the health

of the tree as reflecting the wellbeing of the *ngahere* (forest) and the people. And as such, now is a troubling time for us all.

Logging in the 1820s depleted our numbers and the few of us giants remaining are threatened by kauri die-back disease, a rot carried on people’s shoes and by mammals. This insidious disease kills virtually every kauri it infects. At times, my walking tracks have been closed as the threat of die-back draws near. And still, foolish men have tried to trespass to bask in my glory, while simultaneously threatening my life. Will they ever learn?” **R**



At 51.5 metres high, New Zealand’s Tāne Mahuta truly is the ‘God of the forest’



BONUS READ

THE JUMP

*I decided to do the scariest
thing I could imagine:
go skydiving. Here's
what I learned about
myself and what
holds us back*

BY *Eva Holland*

FROM THE BOOK **NERVE: A PERSONAL JOURNEY
THROUGH THE SCIENCE OF FEAR**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CORNELIA LI



In the last moments before I climbed into the Cessna, I turned and faced a young, bearded man who was pointing a video camera at my face. I wore a jumpsuit made of panels of fluorescent orange and green fabric, the colours faded by years of sun and wind. A pair of goggles and a leather helmet were strapped on my head. “Why are you here?” the man asked.

I took a deep breath. “My name’s Eva,” I said, speaking to the camera lens, “and I’m here to face my fear of falling from heights.”

I crawled into the tiny plane, awkward in my elaborate harness. Only the pilot had a seat – all the others had been removed – and I sat on the floor behind him, facing backwards, spooning with my divemaster, Barry. Another pair climbed in beside us: divemaster Neil and his charge, Matthew, a first-time skydiver like me.

They sat by the open doorway, and Matthew and I bumped fists as the little Cessna rattled its way down the gravel runway. Matthew looked elated. I knew I was supposed to be excited, too, but I couldn’t get there. For the moment, I existed in a bubble of cold calm. That, I figured, was preferable to the likely alternative: wild, hair-tearing panic.

I’d tried to work on my fear of heights over the years, but the matter never seemed urgent. Then, in February 2016, during a weekend of ice climbing with friends in British

Columbia, Canada, I panicked – an irrational force took over my body and I refused to move any further. My fear put my own life, and the safety of others, in danger. I didn’t want my terror to control me that way ever again.

I’D ARRIVED AT THE SMALL AIRSTRIP in the village of Carcross, Yukon Territory, several hours earlier. Among Carcross’s few claims to fame is the Carcross Desert, billed as the world’s smallest, a tiny collection of soft, rolling dunes surrounded by snow-etched mountains and boreal forest.

Every summer, a skydiving outfit based in British Columbia caravans up here for a couple of weeks and offers locals the chance to jump out of a plane, plummet through free fall, deploy a parachute and eventually land in the forgiving embrace of the tiny patch of sand.

The pro skydivers live by the airstrip, just outside the village, for the duration. The vibe of their

encampment is somewhere between summer weekend camp-out and itinerant circus troupe. They gather in a jumble of tents, cars, RVs and trucks loaded with campers.

Barry is their patriarch. When I met him, he'd been jumping for 39 years, including more than 2000 tandem jumps with clients. He had grey hair and a grey moustache, a big belly and a bigger voice. He's not what you picture when you think *professional thrill-seeker*, but his age and experience made me more comfortable than any young gun could.

I was here because my three most

tried to grab on to the plane as we jumped, latching on in a last-minute panic, he would break my fingers to release my grip if he had to. His tone suggested that it wouldn't be his first time doing so.

I signed the bluntest waiver form I'd ever seen. "Sport parachuting is not perfectly safe," it read. "We cannot and do not offer any guarantees. We do not guarantee that either or both of your parachutes will open properly. We do not guarantee that individuals at SkydiveBC North or Guardian Aerospace Holdings Inc. will function without error. We do not guarantee

"WE DO NOT GUARANTEE THAT EITHER OR BOTH OF YOUR PARACHUTES WILL OPEN PROPERLY," THE WAIVER READ



potent physical fears were of heights, speed and falling. And there was nothing, I figured, that combined all three as effectively as skydiving. My notion was to take a blitzkrieg approach to facing my fears. I would force myself to do the scariest thing I could think of, in a full sensory assault on my fear response, and if I came out the other side, I would be changed. Empowered. That was the idea. So far, I just felt sick and scared.

Barry introduced us first-time jumpers to the gear we'd be using, how the various safety mechanisms worked, and informed me that if I

that any of our backup devices will function properly, and we certainly do not guarantee that you won't get hurt. You may get hurt or killed, even if you do everything correctly."

The form did nothing to calm me down. I signed my name and handed it over. With the paperwork completed, there was nothing much left to do but wait my turn – and stew.

When the Cessna was ready for us, Barry showed me how we would enter and exit. The plane was tiny, and when we launched ourselves through its low doorway, we would be harnessed together. There was a

careful protocol to follow. I'd pictured us stepping out of a full-height doorway, or even a yawning garage-style opening, like in the movies. But the small plane, plus our joined bodies, demanded an awkward crouch-and-roll. For some reason, the sheer impossibility of the manoeuvre – really, I was going to tandem-somersault out of a tiny opening in midflight – calmed me down. This couldn't be real. It seemed like a joke.

THEN, SUDDENLY, IT WAS TIME. I pulled on my fluorescent jumpsuit, helmet and goggles and got cinched into my harness. I faced the camera, declared my intentions and climbed into the plane.

We were airborne, rising up above

Somewhere on the way up, shivering with cold and fear, I noticed something: I wasn't sweating. I had expected to be clammy with fear-sweat, but instead I was bone dry. Perspiration was on my mind because I'd recently heard about a scientific study that used the sweat of first-time skydivers to answer a single question: can humans smell fear?

We've long known that animals can 'smell' fear on each other, although in casual, non-scientific conversation, we tend to talk about it in terms of predators smelling fear on their prey. That's a misunderstanding of the phenomenon. What happens is that prey animals unknowingly emit what are known as alarm pheromones: airborne chemical



FOR SOME REASON, THE SHEER IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE TANDEM-SOMERSAULT OUT THE PLANE'S TINY OPENING CALMED ME DOWN

the desert, with Carcross and Bennett Lake stretching away into the mountains. The landscape below me was familiar, comforting. I had hiked it, biked it, paddled it, driven it, flown over it in commercial jets countless times. I've never minded flying; it was the falling I was worried about. I tried to breathe deeply and focus on the scenery. There was the train bridge. There was the beach. There was the highway leading home.

cues intended to silently warn other members of their species, alerting them to nearby predators and potential dangers.

SEVERAL STUDIES have pointed to the possibility that humans, too, can signal their fears to one another by chemical means, through our sweat. Two of those studies showed that test subjects were able to distinguish between the sweat of a person who was



watching a scary movie and a person who was watching something non-frightening. Another found that subjects who had smelt the sweat of scary-movie-watchers demonstrated heightened cognition in the presence of a potential threat. Still more studies found an increased startle response in people who'd been exposed to someone else's fear-sweat, as well as a higher likelihood of perceiving facial expressions as fearful or negative. The takeaway was clear: people who had smelt another human's fear-sweat were primed for a fear response of their own.

But those studies were all based on observed behaviours. A team of US researchers led by Lilianne Mujica-Parodi wanted to look deeper. They decided to use an fMRI scanner (which tracks blood flow to measure brain activity in real time)

to determine whether exposure to human fear-sweat provoked a measurable reaction in another human's amygdala, the key brain structure that triggers our fear response.

They started by collecting sweat from 144 people who were participating in a first-time tandem skydive. Then they used those same 144 individuals as their own controls, collecting their sweat after they'd run on a treadmill for the same length of time that the skydive had lasted and at the same time of day.

"Because the tandem master controlled the descent," the researchers wrote later, "the skydiving condition produced a predominantly emotional but not physical stressor for our sweat donors, while the exercise condition produced a predominantly physical but not emotional stressor." They confirmed the first-timers' emotional

stress by testing their levels of cortisol, a hormone released by our adrenal glands in connection with our fight-or-flight response. Sure enough, they had spiked.

Then came phase two: presenting the sweat samples to test subjects and using fMRI scans to view how their brains reacted in real time. They showed that when a subject

exercise-sweat while being shown a range of images of human faces, with a carefully manipulated spectrum of expressions ranging from neutral to angry.

The results were striking. When they were inhaling the exercise-sweat, the subjects' brains only reacted strongly to the angry faces, treating them, but not the neutral

AS WE CLIMBED TO 3050 METRES, THE WEIRD OUT-OF-BODY CALM I'D FELT ON TAKEOFF SEEPED AWAY



inhaled sweat taken from a stressed or fearful person, their amygdala was activated. In a secondary procedure, they had also shown that what was happening wasn't about smell, exactly. Our noses can't distinguish between fear-sweat and everyday exercise-sweat, but our brains react differently to the two. That's what's known as a chemosensory reaction: the pheromones in the fear-sweat trigger our emotional, not our olfactory, sensors.

Then they took it one step further. The researchers hooked another group of test subjects up to an electroencephalogram (EEG) machine. Basically, an EEG lets researchers see which parts of the brain are reacting to a given stimulus. Once they were wired and ready, the subjects were exposed to both fear-sweat and

faces, as potential threats. But when they inhaled the fear-sweat, subjects reacted strongly to the whole range of faces, from those with neutral expressions to ambiguously angry to clearly angry.

The suggestion, the researchers wrote, was that the fear-sweat triggered the brain to create a sort of heightened vigilance in the subjects, a greater attention to the environment around them.

We can, indeed, 'smell' fear on each other. And that chemical alert system prepares our brains to react to incoming threats.

When we spoke, I asked Mujica-Parodi why she had chosen skydiving as a way to gather the fear-sweat she needed. "Skydiving was a way to induce actual danger in a way that was also ethically sound

and scientifically sound," she told me. "The nice thing about skydiving is that it's an experience unlike anything you've ever encountered before. Evolutionarily, there's no animal that enjoys the feeling of being dropped, and it's also highly controlled."

I asked Mujica-Parodi if she'd ever gone skydiving herself. "I did force myself to jump, and I felt very nauseous," she said. "I would not say that I enjoyed it."

THE ASCENT TO 3050 METRES seemed to take hours, and as we climbed, the weird out-of-body calm I'd felt on takeoff seeped away.

It was like coming out of shock, losing that numbed protection and feeling the full pain of an injury for the first time - only instead of pain, I felt a terror that rose through my body until it reached my lungs, my throat and my brain and threatened to choke me.

Barry, behind me, sensed my growing tension - no surprise, since we were pressed together like two people on a luge sled. He periodically squeezed my shoulder and pointed out landmarks below. As we neared jump height, the Cessna circled around a large cloud, skirting its edge.

"You might be a lucky girl and get a cloud jump," Barry said.

I did not want a cloud jump.

The pilot announced that we were nearly in position for Neil and

Matthew's jump. They shimmied towards the gaping hole where the plane's door should have been and nudged themselves awkwardly into a spooning crouch on the lip of the doorway.

Seeing them inch towards open space was nauseating, and I looked away. I couldn't watch them vanish into the sky; I stared at the plane's riveted metal wall instead. The pilot dipped the plane slightly to the right, tipping Neil and Matthew out the door, and then, liberated of their combined 135 kilograms, the Cessna sprang back suddenly to the left. My stomach clenched and jerked and I swallowed hard.

Now it was our turn. Barry directed me to roll over and scuttle into position as the pilot got us lined up for our jump. My breath came fast; I struggled for control. I desperately wanted to shout, "No, no, I changed my mind. I don't want to do this!"

I clenched my jaw. I knew that if I said the word, they would take me back down to the ground, keep my money and let me walk away. The whole day would be for nothing.

Eventually I got myself in place, hunched over with my kneecaps level in front of the doorframe, with Barry behind me. I tried to unfocus my eyes so I couldn't see the opening and the endless air next to me, the ground far below.

Over the roar of the wind and the plane, Barry shouted last-minute



adjustments to the pilot, getting us lined up just right. “Give me five left! Five right!” The seconds stretched out while I fought the urge to quit. I had the sensation of trying to hold up some massive weight, my strength ebbing away, moment by moment.

Finally, Barry put his right foot out on the narrow metal step fixed to the plane’s fuselage, below the open door frame, and yelled for me to do the same. It took me three tries – the wind first blew my foot behind, then in front, before I finally lodged it against his.

Next I had to crouch down so my left knee pointed out over the lip of the doorway and lock both my hands onto my harness, gripping a pair of handles at shoulder height. I was glad to have something to hold on to.

Ever since Barry had promised to snap my finger bones if need be,

I’d had a recurring vision of myself reaching out in panic as we exited the plane and fastening on to the door frame or a strut with a vice grip fuelled by fear, pulling the Cessna off balance and risking everyone’s lives.

We were halfway out of the plane, perched on the very edge. I was past the bail-out point now. I closed my eyes and tried not to hyperventilate, tried not to think about what was coming.

All I could do was stay limp and trust Barry to get us in the air. I felt him rocking back and forth to get our momentum up, heard him yell something, but I was deep in my own head. Then we rolled out of the plane and into space.

Barry had urged me to keep an eye on the Cessna as I somersaulted out of it. Watching the plane appear to fall away from you when you were

the one plummeting was, he assured me, one of the coolest parts of a jump. But I had no desire to watch the Earth and the sky spin around me. I kept my eyes shut hard until I could feel that Barry had stabilised us in free fall.

I felt him tap me on the shoulder, then again, and yell something in my ear, and I peeled my hands off the harness handles and thrust my arms out wide, like I was supposed to. I tried to think about arcing my body into a slight bow: feet together, head up, my belly pointing the way down. I stared at the ground rushing up at us, and suddenly I opened my

37 seconds of free fall. Once I got started, I couldn't seem to stop. My voice got hoarse, my throat raw. I kept yelling. Dimly, over the sound of my own swearing, I heard Barry say something about our chute, then a force seemed to pluck at us from above – not a hard jerk, but now my feet were dangling below me and I could feel my weight pushing down on the crotch straps of my harness.

I stopped yelling. Barry reached forward and offered me the straps that controlled the parachute, to let me steer. It took me a couple of tries to put my shaking hands through the loops, and I was too weak to pull effectively.



I WAS PAST THE BAIL-OUT POINT NOW. I CLOSED MY EYES AND TRIED NOT TO HYPERVENTILATE

mouth and spoke for the first time since we'd started the flight up.

"Holy s***!" I yelled, and the wind seemed to tear the words out of my mouth to make room for more. A small part of my brain noted, amazed, that I could even hear myself, could even produce audible speech, with the force of the air roaring by me. Later, I would learn that we had reached a peak speed of 163 kilometres per hour.

I screamed those same two words over and over through our entire

I could feel him pulling the cords for me from above.

Other jumpers had described the long, leisurely parachute descent after free fall as relaxing. But I couldn't relax – I was too aware of my weight in the harness, my feet dangling, the familiar landmarks far below me. There was the train bridge. There was the beach. There was the highway.

Barry spun us around and I felt sick, hated him for a moment, and quavered that I didn't like that. The fall went on and on. Finally we neared the desert and Barry took over

READER'S DIGEST

steering entirely, reminding me of my role in landing.

He twisted us from side to side, tacking like a sailboat to shed speed as we came in over the dunes. Then he gave me the signal to pull my knees up (I did my shaky best) and pull down hard on the chute straps. I braced for impact, but my feet never touched – suddenly I was on my belly in the sand, Barry on top of me. He unclipped the right waist clip so he could roll off of me as the ground crew approached, cheering and freed me completely.

THE CREW AND OTHER JUMPERS clustered around; someone helped me to my feet. I tried to smile, but my cheeks and lips felt as wobbly as my arms and legs. I stared at the sand and

dug around inside myself, trying to find some pride in my accomplishment, some kind of silver lining with which to cover up the apparently bottomless chasm of fear I carried inside me.

Later, after I'd stripped off my harness, helmet and jumpsuit, after I'd calmed down enough to safely attempt the drive home, I did find some pride. I had done it, after all. I hadn't backed down, pulled the plug at the last minute and forfeited my money and my dignity. I hadn't clutched on to the airplane as we rolled out of it, killing us all. I hadn't screamed the entire way down. **R**

EXCERPTED FROM *NERVE* BY EVA HOLLAND.
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Puzzle Answers

From pages
140-142

TRAINS

Route A, which will take 70 minutes.

FAVOURITE THINGS

Amar likes to zip-line, Oriana likes to kayak, Rosa likes rock climbing and Joy enjoys cooking lessons.

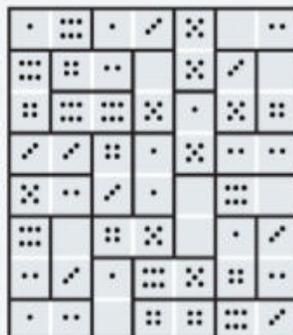
MATHELOGICAL

2	4	9
7	8	6
5	3	1

SUDOKU

5	9	3	8	1	2	4	7	6
6	8	4	7	3	9	2	5	1
7	2	1	4	5	6	3	9	8
4	3	6	2	7	1	9	8	5
9	1	7	3	8	5	6	4	2
2	5	8	6	9	4	1	3	7
3	6	5	1	4	8	7	2	9
1	7	9	5	2	3	8	6	4
8	4	2	9	6	7	5	1	3

DOMINOES



1 TO 25

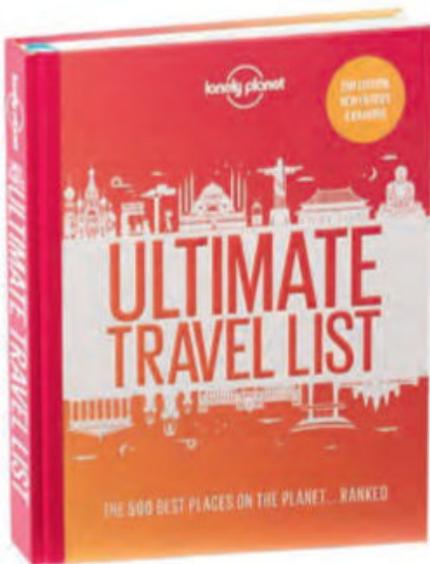
21	14	19	23	4	8	22
24	20	19	1	24	25	20
3	18	21	23	2	3	18
17	17	16	22	4	9	9
13	15	13	5	10	8	5
6	14	12	11	6	7	12
25	15	16	11	2	7	10

RD RECOMMENDS

Wat Pho, housing the temple of the reclining Buddha, is a Bangkok landmark



Non Fiction



Ultimate Travel List: The 500 Best Places on the Planet

LONELY PLANET

This second edition of the *Ultimate Travel List* provides new entries and updated rankings. With 500 landmarks and more than 300 pages, as you'd expect, this hard-cover coffee-table tome is a weighty beast. Starting with the carved rose-red cliffs of the Lost City of Petra in Jordan, it moves to the natural world for entry number two with the Galapagos, and finishes with the Tajikistan wilderness. In between, every continent in the world is represented as Lonely Planet writers rank the world's most thrilling, memorable and downright interesting places.

COMPILED BY DIANE GODLEY



Chatter:
The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It
Ethan Kross

VERMILION

For many of us, the silent conversations we have with ourselves can lead to negativity that can harm work performance, damage relationships and contribute to mental and physical illness. Although the author is a leading academic in the science of self-control, his language is accessible, with interesting case studies (including himself). The tools he shares include reframing experiences and learning how to positively motivate our inner voices. *M.Egan*

Mums Who Clean

Rachael Hallett & Karlie Suttie

PENGUIN

To be honest, I'd rather read about cleaning a house than actually doing it. There is, however, encouragement to be found from the creators of this popular Facebook group, who share cleaning tips. This book catalogues everything from odour-banishing recipes to room-by-room cleaning and dealing with unexpected guests when your house is a mess. The advice here is: swiftly light a scented candle, close bedroom doors, check the bathroom, and hide dirty dishes in the oven.

M.Egan



Secret and Special
Will Davies

PENGUIN

The author of *Somme Mud* and *Beneath Hill 60* brings to light the untold story of the Z Special Unit and Operations, and the extraordinary feats this secret military reconnaissance unit undertook in Southeast Asia during World War II. The unit included Australian, British, Dutch, New Zealand, Timorese and Indonesian operatives, and carried out 81 covert missions, including guerilla warfare and amphibious attacks by canoe on Japanese ships in Singapore Harbour. *M.Egan*



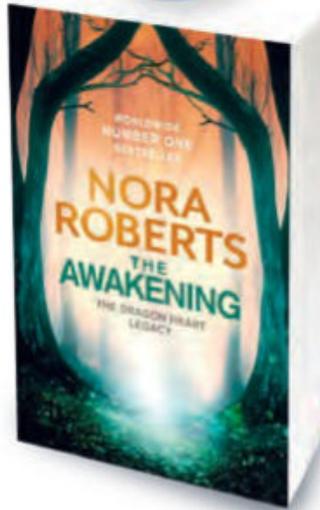
Fiction

Healthy Keto Air Fryer Cookbook

Aaron Day

PENGUIN
RANDOMHOUSE

A keto diet is basically a diet low in carbs and high in the right kinds of fat that enable you to use your body fat instead of carbs or protein for energy. And an air fryer is exactly what its name implies, an appliance that uses hot air to cook your food. This cookbook combines the two to provide healthy recipes for two people, such as quiche, stuffed mushrooms, beef skewers and breakfast muffins. It also gives a detailed introduction to the keto diet and how to get the best results from your air fryer.



The Awakening

Nora Roberts

HACHETTE

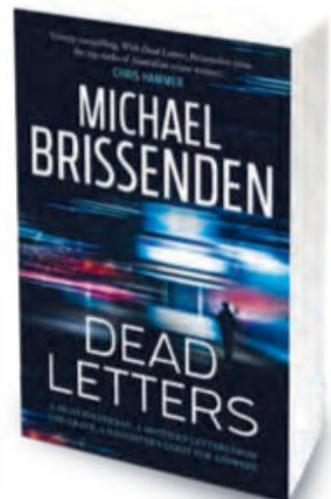
Nora Roberts's new fantasy trilogy – *The Dragon Heart Legacy* – is set in a misty and mysterious part of Ireland that doesn't appear on any maps. First up is *The Awakening*, which whisks schoolteacher Breen Kelly away from her mundane and debt-ridden life to a mystical world of dragons and faeries, good and evil, and ancient blood and sacrifice. With the secrets of her parents clouding her destiny, is she prepared to take a leap into the magic of the unknown? *M.Egan*

Dead Letters

Michael Brissenden

HACHETTE

From award-winning foreign correspondent and political reporter Michael Brissenden, *Dead Letters* is a thriller centred around politics. Counter-terrorism expert Sid Allen is investigating the death of a politician. A journalist, Zephyr Wilde, is researching a cold case, a brothel owner who rubbed shoulders with influential people. As they both ask too many questions, Sid and Zephyr stir up a hornet's nest of corruption, but powerful forces are out to silence them.





While Paris Slept

Ruth Druart

HACHETTE

Heartrending and strangely inspiring at the same time, *While Paris Slept* is about the immense power of love at a time when the world was turned upside down by human cruelty. In occupied France during World War II, a desperate young mother at a train station hands over her most precious possession to a stranger – and the lives of four adults and one child take a different course. Told from alternating perspectives, Ruth Druart's debut novel is an engrossing read that deals with themes of heritage, religion and culture. *M.Egan*

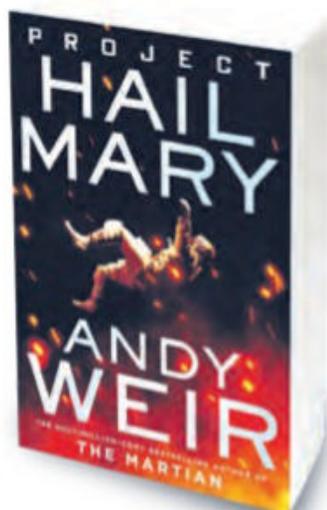
Project Hail Mary

Andy Weir

PENGUIN
RANDOMHOUSE

Not content with stranding Mark Watney on Mars, the author of *The Martian* and *Artemis* returns with what is my favourite novel by him yet. Astronaut Dr Ryland Grace wakes up alone in deep space with no memory of how he got there or what his purpose is. Like the spaceship, the action is fast, finely honed and pressurised. Weir's nerdy yet well-explained science, unexpected elements, wry humour and likeable characters will transport you on an unforgettable journey through the stars.

M.Egan



The Wreck

Meg Keneally

ALLEN & UNWIN

From the best-selling author of *Fled* comes *The Wreck*, Keneally's second moving tale of a strong female character during Australia's convict era. It's 1820 and Sarah McCaffrey tries evading arrest for her part in a failed rebellion. Thinking she has escaped, she discovers she's hidden on a ship bound for the colony of New South Wales. But when the impulsive captain's actions drive the ship into a cliff, Sarah is the sole survivor. Adopting a false identity, she forges a new life in the new country, until her past follows her across the seas.

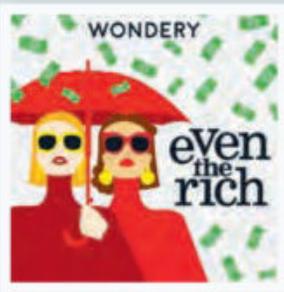


Podcasts



Beatrix Potter

Best known for her children's books such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, writer and illustrator Beatrix Potter lead a lonely life until her literary success gave her the courage to break free of her domineering parents – and seek for herself the joy that generations have found in her work.



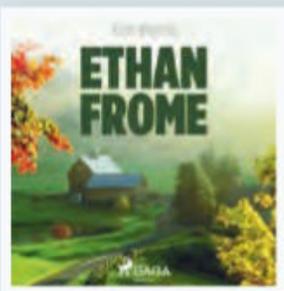
Even the Rich

While on the surface the wealthy and famous may lead charmed lives, high mansion gates often shield tears, tantrums and trouble. Gossipy comedians Brooke Siffrinn and Aricia Skidmore-Williams share tittle-tattle about some of the greatest family dynasties in history, from the Murdochs to the Royals.



Rabbit Hole

This *New York Times*-made series explores how watching one YouTube video can lead to several hours of binge-watching – thanks to the site's recommendations algorithm. It interviews YouTube 'king' PewDiePie (108 million subscribers), covers QAnon, and examines falling down the rabbit hole.



Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edith Wharton's 1911 classic novel *Ethan Frome* is about a farmer with dreams and desires that end in an ironic turn of events. It's a thoughtful and somewhat bleak narrative about whether we should follow our duty or heart.



Audio Book

HOW TO GET PODCASTS To listen on the web: In a search engine, look up 'Even the Rich', for example, and click on the play button. **To download:** Download an app such as Podcatchers or iTunes on your phone or tablet and simply search by title.

TO LISTEN TO RD TALKS GO TO

www.readersdigest.co.nz/podcasts and click on the play button.



**THE
GENIUS
SECTION**

*Sharpen Your
Mind*

GO AHEAD, DO NOTHING

*We push ourselves to work harder, but taking a break
can often fuel a burst in productivity and creativity*

BY Jeffrey David

FROM **PSYCHOLOGY TODAY**

In 1910, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a story about a boy who was tasked with opening a valve every so often on a water pump powered by a steam engine to release the built-up pressure. His whole job consisted of staring at these whirring pieces of metal all day. Needless to say, the kid got incredibly bored. One day, the supervisor walked in and the boy was nowhere to be found. Yet the pump ran just as it should. The ‘lazy’ boy had contrived a mechanised release for the pump and won his freedom from monotony. The first iteration of the automatic steam engine was born.

Now, this story may be apocryphal, but the boy’s behaviour reflects a deeper truth. When we are feeling lazy and disinclined to do something, we often search for an easier way to do the undesirable task at hand. We try to streamline the process and save time and effort. In other words, laziness can drive innovation.

In recent years, some psychologists and business leaders have wised up to this insight, shifting our perspective of what laziness really means. Strategic idleness may actually be a powerful tool. Both Bill Gates and Walter Chrysler have been credited (probably erroneously) with an apt quote: “I always choose a lazy person to do a hard job

because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it.”

Research shows that our brains are wired for laziness. For our ancestors, energy was a precious resource. People had to conserve energy to compete for food, flee from predators and fight. Learning to calculate the caloric costs and benefits of our actions was critical to survival, and expending energy on anything other than short-term gains was risky. So we learnt to play it safe.

Now that day-to-day survival is less of an issue, it seems natural that we would opt for indolence, or inactivity, but the opposite has occurred. Sleep patterns have changed in the past 100 years. Then the average person got nine hours sleep. Today the average sleep time is 6.8 hours a night.

Our culture teaches by example that our worth depends on how industrious we are, so we work even harder to produce even more. Until ten years ago, many psychological studies emphasised high executive functioning – skills such as focus, memory and problem-solving – and achieving goals as essential traits for success and happiness. Meanwhile, daydreaming and mind-wandering were associated with unhappiness. This judgment has an almost ancient

STRATEGIC IDLENESS MAY ACTUALLY BE A POWERFUL TOOL



history. Long ago, many Christian theologians derided sloth as a sin – one of the seven deadly ones, in fact. Idleness was declared a moral failing, and its cure lay in hard work.

But there's one big paradox: the harder we work, the less productive we are. "When demand in our lives intensifies, we tend to hunker down and push harder," says Tony Schwartz, head of the Energy Project, a productivity consulting firm. "The trouble is that, without any downtime to refresh and recharge, we are less efficient, make more mistakes, and get less engaged with what we're doing."

This forced sustained focus leads to selective attention, which can hinder our ability to generate fresh solutions and ideas. Even worse: too caught up in the end result, we overlook the quality of our experience while working and living and thus deprive our lives of meaning.

Amid this epidemic of overwork, how can we make our labour more meaningful and our lives more fulfilling? Perhaps we could do with a healthy dose of deliberate daydreaming. Current research in psychology and neuroscience points to a new understanding of the value of the wandering mind. Studies show that taking breaks and allowing

your thoughts to drift can help your brain retain information, refocus, gain fresh perspective, and make new connections between ideas. Just think of the 'eureka moments' that occur when we're engaged in the most mundane tasks, such as showering or doing the dishes.

One Canadian study shows that mind wandering increases activity in the brain's default mode network, or DMN, a system of connected brain areas that deals with problem solving and shows increased activity when a person is not focused

on the outside world.

Here's the core problem: when the time finally comes to put our feet up, we often don't know how. We have little training in how to be idle. Take away a kid's toys or a teen's smartphone and then tell them to entertain themselves. They'll likely be at a loss. But would you fare much better? So maybe this week, notice when you have some downtime in your day, some white space in your calendar. Instead of filling the space with more work or more digital distractions, step back, recline and be, in the words of poet Mary Oliver, "idle and blessed".

PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM (NOVEMBER 28, 2019),
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WE COULD DO WITH A HEALTHY DOSE OF DELIBERATE DAYDREAMING



TRIVIA

Test Your General Knowledge

- 1.** Which software giant promises to be carbon negative by 2030 and to remove its historical emissions by 2050? *1 point*
- 2.** What special postmarks will your love letters get if you send them through the post office in Love, Saskatchewan? *1 point*
- 3.** What is the largest part of the eye, giving it its shape? *1 point*
- 4.** What was the fate of the first fire hydrant patent? *1 point*
- 5.** Where is the largest known cave chamber in the world to be found? *2 points*
- 6.** Which planet has a day that lasts almost eight months in Earth time? *1 point*
- 7.** There are more ways to arrange a deck of playing cards than there are atoms on Earth. True or false? *1 point*
- 8.** What contains more sugar, mangoes or bananas? *1 point*
- 9.** What geographic location lies at the centre of the world map on the official flag of the United Nations? *1 point*
- 10.** Which New Caledonian island received an obituary in 2013, when an Australian research ship found that it had, in fact, never existed? *2 points*
- 11.** What notable feature enabled the Roman god Janus to look both backwards and forwards at the same time? *2 points*
- 12.** Is Singapore in the Northern or Southern Hemisphere? *1 point*
- 13.** Popular among scientists, 'agar art' uses what as a pigment? *2 points*
- 14.** What YouTube sensation, where teams compete in such events as 'funnel endurance', 'block pushing' and 'high jump', helped sports fans endure the delayed 2020 Olympics? *1 point*
- 15.** Assuming you don't drink it immediately, how many bubbles are likely to form in a glass of champagne? *2 points*



16-20 Gold medal **11-15** Silver medal **6-10** Bronze medal **0-5** Wooden spoon

ANSWERS: 1. Microsoft. 2. Teddy bear or heart. 3. Vitreous body. 4. It burnt in a fire. 5. Sarawak Cave Chamber, Gunung Mulu National Park, Borneo. 6. Venus. 7. True. 8. Mangoes. 9. North Pole. 10. Sandy Island. 11. Two faces. 12. Northern Hemisphere; 137 km north of the equator. 13. Bacteria. 14. The Marble League. 15. About one million.

PUZZLES

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 130.

BY Marcel Danesi

21	14	19	23	4	8	22
24			1			20
3						18
17						9
13						5
6						12
25	15	16	11	2	7	10

1 to 25 Moderately Difficult

Move the numbers from the outer ring onto the board. Each number must be placed in one of the five cells that lie in the direction indicated by its chevron. The numbers must snake together vertically, horizontally or diagonally so they link in sequence from 1 to 25. For example, 2 must be adjacent to both 1 and 3. There's only one solution. Can you find it?

Mathellogical Difficult

Each letter in the grid stands for one of the whole numbers from 1 through 9. No two of them represent the same number. With the help of the clues, can you figure out which letter stands for what?

- $B \times F =$ the two-digit number AB
- $B + J = G$
- $D \times D =$ the two-digit number BC
- One of the rows contains only odd numbers.

A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	J

(1 TO 25) JEFF WIDDERICH; (MATHELOGICAL) FRASER SIMPSON; (FAVOURITE THINGS) EMILY GOODMAN

			8	1		4		
		4				2	5	
						3	9	
	3		2					
	1		3		5		4	
				9	4		3	
	6	5						
	7	9				8		
		2		6	7			

Sudoku To Solve This Puzzle

Put a number from 1 to 9 in each empty square so that: every horizontal row and vertical column contains all nine numbers (1-9) without repeating any of them; each of the outlined 3 x 3 boxes has all nine numbers, none repeated.

Favourite Things Easy

Amar, Oriana, Rosa and Joy each have a different favourite activity from among the following: rock climbing, kayaking, cooking lessons and zip-lining. Can you figure out who likes what, based on the following clues?

- ◆ Amar's favourite activity isn't rock climbing.
- ◆ Oriana is afraid of heights.
- ◆ Rosa can't do her favourite activity without a harness.
- ◆ Joy likes to keep her feet on solid ground at all times.

BRAIN POWER
brought to you by



ジュースアップ
Juice up

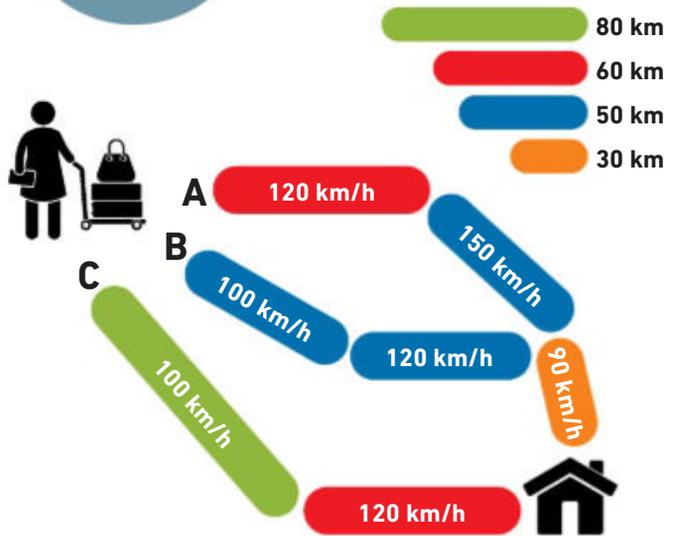


Puzzle Answers
PAGE 130

Trains

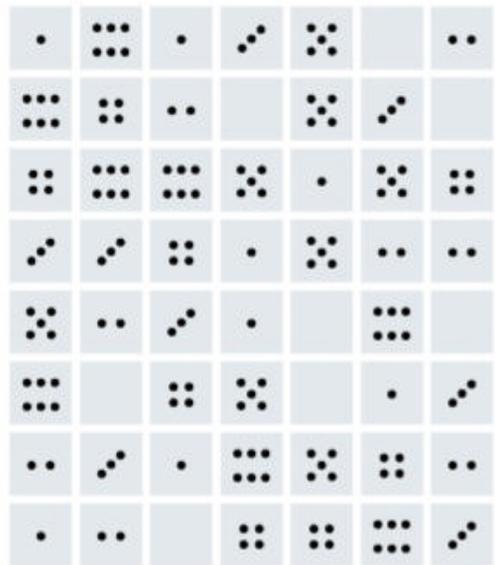
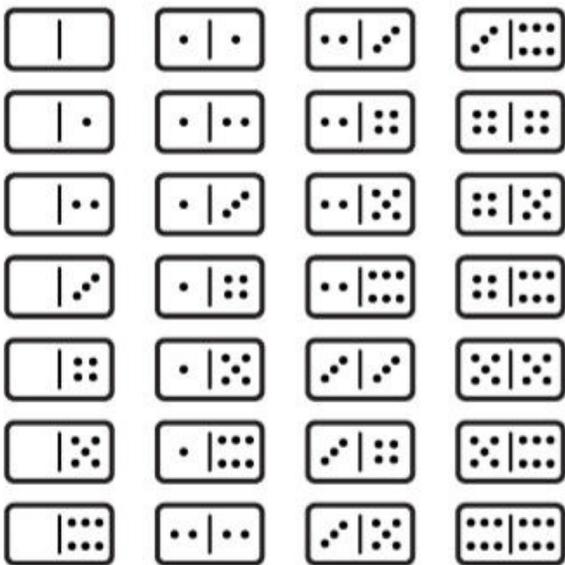
Moderately difficult

This map shows Luisa, her destination and three train routes she can take to get there. Each segment of track has a different speed limit, indicated by the speeds shown. The distances of each segment are indicated by their colours and the legend to the right. Presuming that each train always goes at the top permitted speed and doesn't stop anywhere along the way, which route (A, B or C) is the fastest?



Dominoes Easy

A standard double-six set of 28 dominoes has been arranged in a rectangle. Can you draw in the lines to show the placement of the dominoes? We've listed the 28 dominoes so you can cross them off as you find them.



WORD POWER

Second to None

This month, we visit the likes of nuns, protons and sprouts – words made exclusively from the second half of the alphabet, letters n to z

BY *Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*

1. stuporous – A: hunched over.
B: leaking. C: impaired.

2. wry – A: ironically humorous.
B: disrespectful. C: made with flour.

3. purport – A: transfer.
B: commit a crime. C: claim.

4. tryst – A: final audition.
B: natural disaster. C: lovers' meeting.

5. wonton – A: wild abandon.
B: Chinese dumpling.
C: great quantity.

6. spoor – A: animal tracks.
B: rude rejection letter or message.
C: plant cell.

7. yurt – A: custard dish.
B: buffoon. C: circular tent.

8. usurp – A: purée or mash vegetables. B: flip over. C: seize.

9. sop – A: thick syrup or treacle.
B: bribe. C: wetland or swampy area.

10. zooty – A: an animal attendant employed in a zoo. B: fit or flexible.
C: flashy; ostentatious.

11. punt – A: university athlete.
B: flat-bottomed boat. C: smallest of a litter.

12. tortuous – A: forming clumps or thick grouping. B: winding.
C: painful.

13. onyx – A: antelope found in Africa and the Middle East.
B: gemstone. C: primrose.

14. yowl – A: rookie. B: felt hat.
C: a loud wailing cry.

15. ouzo – A: firearm manufactured before 20th century. B: Greek liqueur. C: slow drip.

Answers

1. stuporous – (C) impaired.

I can't take medicine for my hay fever – just one pill leaves me sleepy and stuporous.

2. wry – (A) ironically humorous.

Mr Russo's students loved his wry sense of humour and unusual lesson plans.

3. purport – (C) claim. Jack purports to be a bad singer, but he always brings down the house at karaoke on Sunday nights.

4. tryst – (C) lovers' meeting.

Clara and Lenny planned a midnight tryst in the garden.

5. wonton – (B) Chinese dumpling.

I see you've left all the broth and eaten just the wontons.

6. spoor – (A) animal tracks.

The park ranger followed the tiger's spoor back to the den.

7. yurt – (C) circular tent.

Hannah teaches meditation workshops in her backyard yurt.

8. usurp – (C) seize. "I left for one minute to fetch a drink – and that guy usurped my seat!" exclaimed Alessandro.

9. sop – (B) bribe.

If you give the doorman a few bucks as a sop, he'll let you in.

10. zooty – (C) flashy; ostentatious.

Freddy looked very zooty in his 1940s-style suit with wide legs and a pinstripe pattern.

11. punt – (B) flat-bottomed boat.

The travellers steered their punt down the River Thames.

12. tortuous – (B) winding.

The trail is tortuous and steep, but the reward is a spectacular view from the summit.

13. onyx – (B) gemstone. Harold gave Esme a black onyx ring for her 21st birthday.

14. yowl – (A) a loud wailing cry.

If you accidentally step on your cat's tail, you'll probably hear her yowl.

15. ouzo – (B) Greek liqueur.

"I'd like to propose a toast!" said Nick, lifting his glass of ouzo.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

5-9: Fair

10-12: Good

13-15: Word Power Wizard

Let your child's
IMAGINATION

run **WILD...**



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