

## Slummy mummy Lucy Sweeney

*'I'm glad I don't have to deal with all those testosterone surges,' says Smug Mother of Girls, warily observing my motley crew*

**I bump into Smug Mother of Girls on our way back from the local park, after another freezing day in the playground trying to keep three boys exercised through the nuclear winter.**

They are all covered in mud and wearing odd pairs of gloves and boots. Eldest Son has a bloody nose after an injury sustained falling off the monkey bars.

"I'm so relieved I don't have to deal with testosterone surges every 20 minutes," says Smug Mother of Girls, warily observing my motley crew. "It must be such a strain. Although some people are lucky enough to have those quiet, poetic boys who seem to channel their energy more productively."

I am about to explain to her that all boys are sensitive, they just have different ways of expressing it, when Eldest Son and Youngest Son choose this moment to fight over an elastic band they have found on the pavement. I place myself firmly in front of them, obscuring her line of vision, and grit my teeth.

"Where are your girls?" I ask, treading on Eldest Son's hand to stop him from snaffling the elastic band. "How are they bearing up through the grimmest Easter on record?"

"I've left them at home painting watercolours for ten minutes while I pop out to buy some ingredients for cupcakes," she says ethereally. "Then later we're going to sit down and paint some Mandarin characters on a piece of papyrus that we made by hand yesterday. All very peaceful."

In that way that children react when they sense adult disapproval, Middle Son uncharacteristically joins in the scuffle and takes the elastic band, while the other two wrestle. Youngest Son now has a cut lip.

"Gosh, what did you feed them for breakfast?" asks Smug Mother of Girls.

"Coco Pops," I say, even though actually they had toast and honey. "Then white bread with Nutella. Then I'll overload them with something containing fructose. Like cupcakes."

"Too much sugar," says Smug Mother of Girls disapprovingly. "It's a common mistake. You'll only find Xylitol or cinnamon in my kitchen cupboard."

"You make being perfect look so effortless," I say.

"Number one tip: only have girls," she says, only half joking. Then she turns to the boys.

"And what are you going to do when you get home?" she asks.

"Watch television," says Middle Son.

"Of course," she says sanctimoniously.

Bristling with annoyance, I prepare to leave.

"You look like the British Army during the Great Retreat from Marne," she says.

"It wasn't Marne, it was Mons, actually," says Eldest Son. "They retreated to the River Marne. Don't worry; it's a common mistake." ■



## Things you only know if you're single

Hannah  
Betts



**...that there but for the grace of lunacy go we.** The demise of the institution that was Ashton and Demi – or rather, Ashton and “Mrs Kutcher”, as Ms Moore liked to style herself – is proving the great Sophoclean drama *du jour*.

First came rumours of his ostentatious infidelities, inconveniently timed to birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Next issued our heroine's various “episodes”, including a no less flamboyant phase of self-starvation. Assorted offspring and kabbalists tried to intercede. Tight dresses, hirsuteness and baseball caps were deployed. Ashton took up with Mila Kunis; Demi moved through the rite of passage that is Russell Brand. All proving the axiom: you live by the sword, you die by the sword – not least when said sword constitutes Twitter.

The pair are now said to be on the verge of a \$190 million court battle. Er, for what? Both, one assumes, were consenting adults, albeit that Ashton was a tad his missus' junior. Why either owes the other anything beyond a rueful nod and high-five is far from evident. Infidelity is not a crime, neither is an excess of *joie de vivre*. One imagines that the argument concerns his making a fair amount of dosh while he was with her, brand-elevated via being her arm candy. But, really – dignity, people.

Both parties are evidently in need of a good slap. Perhaps Bruce Willis, Mrs K's ex, could burst in on a rope and knock them both about a bit, *Die Hard*-style? Either way, their alleged feud demonstrates an acute case of amputation of nose to spite face. Still, lopping bits off one's body is not an entirely alien concept over in La-La land. ■

## I don't give a monkey's...

Carol  
Midgley



**...for water warts.**

Sorry to do this to you, but we need to talk about water warts. Yes, I'm afraid so. They're every bit as lovely as they sound, appearing as pearly papules all over the body and caused by the delightfully named pox virus *Molluscum contagiosum*. How do I get myself some of these little beauties, you say? Easy. You simply wax or shave your down-below until they

resemble a freshly plucked chicken and, hey presto, you've created a perfect breeding ground for infection.

It turns out that Brazilians and other types of pubic hair removal may be the fast-track to a fashionable fanjita, but could also be behind an “explosion” in this type of infection, often sexually transmitted. French doctors, puzzled by the rise in cases, examined skin clinic records in Nice and found that all but two of thirty patients with water warts had had pubic hair removal. Twenty had been shaved, five clipped (clipped? So our clappers are poodles now?) and three waxed.

In four cases, the warts had spread to the abdomen and, in one, to the thighs. “Hair removal (especially shaving) could favour [the

infection's] propagation and transmission,” concluded doctors. Right. Should we really be in the business of traumatising our foofs? What have they ever done to us?

Still, it's rather cheering for those whose attitude to intimate grooming can be summarised as “Can't be arsed”. The extreme waxers and shavers were probably feeling smug recently, when it emerged that de-hairing had caused a huge drop in cases of pubic lice. But is the price we must pay for this a ladder of warts down to our knees? We've reached a pretty pass when crabs are starting to look like a fractionally more attractive option.

I can't help thinking it's time we regarded pubic hair rather like we regard eyelashes. There for a reason, folks, there for a reason. ■