

## Slummy mummy Lucy Sweeney

***'What kind of Easter eggs will you be using?' asks Alpha Mum. 'Organic, free range,' jokes Smouldering Teacher***

**Smouldering Teacher makes the big mistake of giving parents too much opportunity to intervene in his plans for the end-of-term Year 3 Easter egg hunt.**

He outlines his strategy after a meeting on PE kit: eggs to be hidden around the playground; strict monitoring by the Easter Bunny; all eggs to be shared equally among participants at the end.

"What could be simpler and more democratic?" he says, delivering one of his winning smiles. "Any questions?"

Tiger Mother sticks up her hand.

"That was a tactical error," I whisper to Sexy Domesticated Dad. "He's opened up a can of worms."

"The world is a competitive place," she announces. "The child who finds the most Easter eggs should get to keep them or at least decide how they are distributed."

"I bet she's already enlisted an Easter egg-hunt tutor," says Sexy Domesticated Dad.

"I'm not sure that sends out the right message," says Smouldering Teacher. "And it means the Easter Bunny will have to break up a lot of fights. We are a multid denominational school, and we want everyone to have pleasant associations with our celebrations."

"What kind of eggs will you be using?" asks Alpha Mum, who knits her own wholemeal jumpers.

"Organic, free range," jokes Smouldering Teacher, "and locally sourced, of course."

"Can you guarantee that you won't use Cadbury Creme Eggs?" asks Alpha Mum. "I have issues with the fondant filling."

"Actually, I have already promised each child a Creme Egg as a present from me," says Smouldering Teacher, putting his hands on his hips in a way that suggests he is comfortable taking control in most situations. "It is a reward for learning their six times table."

"External rewards make children lose their intrinsic interest in an activity," says Tiger Mother. "If they only perform tasks for rewards and there is no incentive, children stop doing the task. I read a paper on it."

"And it could play havoc with their dopamine receptors," says Alpha Mum. "They might start to associate you with pleasurable treats."

"I hardly think that one Creme Egg will do any harm," says Smouldering Teacher.

"I will say just two words," says Yummy Mummy No 1. "One hundred and eighty calories."

"That's actually five words," points out Sexy Domesticated Dad.

"If you like, I can stick to Mini Eggs," says Smouldering Teacher.

"Fifteen calories each egg," says Yummy Mummy No 1.

"Perhaps you could give them organic dark chocolate instead," suggests Alpha Mum. ■



## Things you only know if you're single

Hannah Betts



**...that clothes maketh the (single) man.**

Forgive this column a rare totter into gender stereotyping, but one can tell a good deal about the sexual status of both men and women from their outfitting. By which TYOKIYS does not refer to the lowest-common-denominator, hands-off-my-sweet-ass monstrosities that are wedding bands.

These, obviously, should be eschewed by all but the most slaveringly Christian, who will have no need of jewellery to signify this fact, but plump for it all the same. No, what this column is talking about is the way in which coupling tends to make chaps' wardrobes that bit better, women's significantly worse.

For, just as sumptuary laws were wont to dictate which classes could sport certain colours and materials, so the female conjoined appear to feel obliged to mass towards elasticated jersey the moment they surrender their liberty.

For a start, straight men aren't the brightest biscuits in the fashion box, and it is dispiriting to parade one's sartorial triumphs before a vacant audience. Second, funds that should be spent on the serious business of attire start being directed towards fripperies such as mortgages. Result: sweaters will start to wilt, bras grey.

Chaps, on the other hand, tend to have their game raised by pair-bonding. Not only may they begin to wash; the abnegation of responsibility for which blue shirt should accompany which blue trousers will be greeted with euphoria. To be sure, there will be a gradual slide towards the chino, but at least said platitude will make some reference to body shape/basic humanity. ■

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

Carol Midgley



**...for directory enquiry services.**

Are you amazed to learn that the Metropolitan Police spent £35,000 in two years by phoning the speaking clock? No, me neither. Not since someone who once worked in a call centre told me that listening to the posh lady's third stroke is a time-honoured way to skive. You look busy when the boss walks past and you avoid answering any other

calls. Genius. But here's something that may manage to smack your gob: the Met also spent £200,000 phoning directory enquiry services.

Why would anybody ever call directory enquiries? Surely no one's used them since about 2007. They are useless. You may as well ask a passing stranger to be unhelpful, irritating and rude, then give them lots of money. "Leeds?" an incredulous voice will demand. "And how are you spelling 'Leeds'?" Then they'll tell you that, no, there are absolutely no cinemas listed there, but will a wig shop do instead? Once, as a cunning trick, I asked one of them for my own home number. They could find no trace. No wonder criminals get away with it if one of the

main police sleuthing methods is dialling 118.

If there's a blue moon with a pig flying past and they do by some miracle manage to locate a number, it's still annoying, because then they switch to the hard sell. "Can I connect you?" they'll trill. "Only £3,000 a minute."

Sorry, yes, that was an absurd exaggeration. Make it £2,000. Oh, I'm kidding, 118 lawyers. But cases like the man who was charged £350 for a 118 call and connection from a land line in 2009? That's no joke.

In defence of the Met, it would be very easy to rack up a £200k directory enquiries bill. You could probably manage it in a weekend. Perhaps it answers one of life's eternal mysteries: how the hell many of these companies haven't gone to the wall. ■