

Slummy mummy Lucy Sweeney

'Maybe we should stay at home,' says Husband on a Short Fuse. 'It's hell getting there and a different kind of hell when we arrive'

We spend Good Friday struggling down the M4 to spend Easter in the West Country with my parents. We already know that the stress of staying there will be greater than the stress of getting there because we have been forewarned about the leaky roof, orphan lambs and the "slight problem with damp".

"Sometimes I think we'd be better off just staying at home," grumbles Husband on a Short Fuse, as we come to another standstill and Middle Son announces that he needs to pee again. "It's hell getting there and then it's a different kind of hell when we arrive."

"Let's focus on the upside. At least we always get a good night's sleep," I say.

The in-car entertainment strategy collapses after the first three hours, when we finish *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and discover that the first disc of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* has been replaced by James Bond theme tunes.

"Stephen Fry, where are you when we need you?" asks Husband on a Short Fuse. A fight almost immediately breaks out in the back of the car, because Eldest Son accidentally (he claims) drops Youngest Son's Lionel Messi Match Attax card in the gap between the seats.

"Messi's fallen down a crevasse," wails Youngest Son. "He'll never come back."

"This is beginning to feel like Groundhog Day," says Husband on a Short Fuse.

"Last time, Messi fell out of the window," I shout back. "This is different."

"What DVDs have you brought?" asks Husband on a Short Fuse.

"Series three of *Doctor Who*, series two of *The Wire* and series one of *Breaking Bad*," I say, wondering whether there is such a thing as an addiction to boxed sets.

A brief discussion about the perils of Youngest Son watching *Doctor Who* is curtailed by another scuffle in the back of the car.

"Nothing can be worse than this," I say.

Doctor Who has a sedative effect and we spend the rest of the journey in relative calm, eventually arriving so late at night that Husband on a Short Fuse can legitimately turn down my mother's anchovy and olive pasta and the bedtime story ritual can be suspended.

All is well until three in the morning, when Youngest Son rushes into our room screaming that he has seen a Weeping Angel in the garden. The two older boys follow confirming the sighting. Husband on a Short Fuse opens the curtains to prove there is nothing there. A ghostly figure wearing a long white dress and carrying a lamb waves at us.

"Don't blink or she'll get us," screams Youngest Son.

"That's no Weeping Angel. It's Granny," I explain wearily.

"Holiday? What holiday?" mutters Husband on a Short Fuse, as all three children climb into bed with us. ■



Things you only know if you're single

Hannah Betts



...that F. Scott Fitzgerald is a(n inadvertent) single icon.

In 1920, one Isabelle Amorous wrote to F. Scott Fitzgerald to say that she heard that his engagement to Zelda Sayre, his "wild, pleasure-loving girl", had been broken off, informing him that he was well out of it. He responded, "I fell in love with her courage, her sincerity and her flaming self-respect and it's these things I'd believe in, even if the whole world indulged in wild suspicions that she wasn't all that she should be. But, of course, the real reason... is that I love her and that's the beginning and end of everything."

The rest, as the world and his (rather less interesting) wife knows, is history. That same nuptial year, Scott published the first of his fictionalisations of their relationship, *This Side of Paradise*, upon which Zelda had promised to marry him. And so their course was set. As he elaborated in a story again printed in 1920, "All life is just a progression toward and then a recession from one phrase - 'I love you.'"

Ah, Scott and Zelda - the beautiful, the drunk and the damned. Until the crash of '29, they bickered and partied with all the passion and dispassion of his Jazz Baby protagonists. Zelda was then confined to mental institutions, and Scott slid into alcoholism. Yet their co-dependency remained. As he wrote in 1935, "I wouldn't mind a bit if in a few years Zelda and I snuggle up together under a stone in some old graveyard," a fate that came to pass.

The single reader swoons over the prose, empathises over the drink and shudders at the horror of the couplings. ■

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

Carol Midgley



...for bedroom secrets.

Are you the sort of person who likes to wear nothing but Marigold gloves while being spanked with a rolled-up copy of *Horse & Hound*? You are? Then congratulations. It turns out that you're not "mad", after all.

Sexual masochism, fetishism and sadism are no longer classified as mental disorders, providing you're "comfortable" with them, says

the American Psychiatric Association. If you enjoy being handcuffed while wearing a rubber onesie, then rejoice - you're perfectly sane.

I never realised such things were classed as mental disorders in the first place, TBH, but I'm grateful for the update. Otherwise, we might have had to conclude that all those *Fifty Shades*-reading ladies who've sent sex toy sales soaring were in need of a shrink, and that would be awfully expensive for the NHS. The fact that a book as dull as *Fifty Shades of Grey* became the fastest-selling novel in history seems a bit demented in itself, but no matter. This is fetishism's moment. It's a dude on a roll. Sales of nipple clamps have increased fifteenfold in the past year and yet, rather than shrieking, "What, so people are into tit

torture?" everyone seems highly delighted.

I don't know about you, but I've heard enough about other people's sex lives now, thanks. We used to be a buttoned-up nation, but now we can't wait to tell each other about every tickle and slap. Fetishism has not only lost its stigma, it's becoming a lifestyle choice with a tasteful range of loose furnishings. A survey reveals that nearly 70 per cent admit to engaging in some sort of fetishism.

Which is ironic, because kinky sex is becoming so bog-standard, it no longer qualifies as deviant. When you can buy *Fifty Shades* sweatpants, sorry, but we're talking less Miss Whiplash, more *George & Mildred*. Want to be really kinky? Then go to bed early with a nice cup of tea. ■