

Personal

SUNDAY MIRROR ★ DECEMBER 14, 1997

FOR WOMEN WHO KNOW WHAT THEY WANT



Glitter

It's the hottest party look



Christmas countdown

Cook up a perfect day with your 8-page guide

Bah, humbug!

Richard Wilson's tips for seasonal Scrooges



Person^onalists

And so this is Christmas...

THE LAST 10 FESTIVE NUMBER ONES

- 1996 2 Become 1
(The Spice Girls)
- 1995 Earth Song
(Michael Jackson) ▼



1994 Stay Another Day
(East 17)

◀ 1993 Mr Blobby
(Mr Blobby)

1992 I Will
Always Love
You (Whitney
Houston)

1991
Bohemian
Rhapsody/
These Are The
Days Of Our Lives
(Queen)

1990
Saviour's
Day (Cliff
Richard)

1989 Do They Know It's
Christmas? (Band Aid)

1988 Mistletoe And Wine
(Cliff Richard)

1987 Always On My Mind
(The Pat Shop Boys) ▼



That's right, you just sit there...

THE 10 MOST COMMON CAUSES OF CHRISTMAS ARGUMENTS

Which film to watch after the Queen's speech.

The washing-up.

Spending too little on Christmas presents.

Spending too much on Christmas presents.

That the sprouts were raw/overcooked.

Socks.

Who lost the nutcrackers.

Someone using the tonic water as a soft drink.

Someone refusing to pull the "bang" from the cracker which didn't work when the cracker was pulled.

Who gets to keep the best Christmas cracker novelty.

I don't believe it!

10 THINGS WHICH BRING OUT THE VICTOR MELDREW IN ALL OF US

Finding something in the sale the week after you paid full price for it

Groceries which keep their lanes locked, requiring you to ask for a key

Finding out that the person next to you on the plane/train/theatre has paid less than you for the same ticket

The fourth corner of the fitted sheet that doesn't fit.

Guests who actually use the guest towels

Messing up the best doggie in the doghouse

Taking a day off work to wait in for a repair man who doesn't show up

Parents who put their children on the phone - and then expect you to cope

Being served regular coffee when you've ordered decaffeinated - and only finding out at four in the morning

Getting home and realising that you've been short-changed



Pull the other one

THE 10 MOST GROAN-INDUCING CHRISTMAS CRACKER JOKES

Why does Santa Claus have a garden?
He has to see how hee

Why does a moth eat less than any other creature?
It just eats holes

What did Adam say on the night before Christmas?
"It's Christmas Eve"

Why did the biscuit cry?
Because his mate and dad had been a cracker so long

What is the worst month for soldiers?
A long March

Why don't polar bears eat penguins?
Because they can't get the silver wrappers off

What is round and bad-tempered?
A vicious drink

Why do barbers make good drivers?
They know all the short cuts

What do you call a big green thing which sits in the corner and cries?
The Incredible Bulk

Why do birds fly south in winter?
It's too far to walk

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LUCKY NUMBERS

the Personal way to choose your lucky Lottery balls

13

It was 13 years ago this week that Band Aid topped the charts with *Do They Know It's Christmas?*

20

20 years ago today showbiz stars formed the Celebrities Guild Of Great Britain to raise money for worthy causes.

35

This number's out of this world. 35 years ago today the first close-up pictures of Venus were beamed back by Mariner II.

37

Ex-England footballer Chris Waddle, now player-manager at Burnley, is 37 today.

43

You could say 'Alo 'Alo to a fortune with this number. Sexy actress Vicki Michelle is 43 today.

45

Fa-lubba-lubba lottery! Bill and Ben was first shown on TV 45 years ago this week.

Turn your little devils into little wizards

This Christmas, help them discover the magic of learning.

Introducing the new kids' range from Franklin, educational toys that let them have fun while they learn.

Wordwizard™ is a dictionary, with simple definitions of over 40,000 words. Spellbound™ has phonetic spelling correction for over 70,000 words, an electronic databank plus a calculator. What's more, both models feature six entertaining word games.

Give a Franklin this year and keep them spellbound.



Franklin

Products shown are Spellbound at £29.99 and Wordwizard at £39.99. Franklin products are available from Argos, Boots, Currys, Dixons, Farrow's, Indes, John Lewis Partnership, Selfridges, Tandy, Toys R Us, W.H. Smith and good electronic retailers everywhere.

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ARIES

MAR 21 - APRIL 20

You're being called upon to take steps to safeguard not just your own future, but those of colleagues and associates. It is no use going to war unless you have the right weapons and armour to hand. Don't let Tuesday's Mars-Neptune alliance lead you astray, as you are almost certainly over-optimistic about your own strengths. In time you will acquire the power to redress the balance. The Sun's change of signs at the weekend shows you how to take the first crucial steps. Eventually you'll be glad you were made to stop and think again.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
0 9 3 0 5 6 4 0 6 1

TAURUS

APRIL 21 - MAY 21

Finances are still first and foremost in your mind. And it's not surprising at this time of year. Rest assured that whenever money burns a hole in your pocket there are plenty of people around to watch the fire. The Sun-Mercury alliance on Wednesday will, however, indicate the error of your ways. This is not the time to tolerate hypocrites or hangers-on. When Mars, the planet of energy, passes through a crucial point of your chart on Thursday you can expect to be noticed for all the right reasons. Don't look back - the road ahead has so much more to offer.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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GEMINI

MAY 22 - JUNE 21

You seem torn between your personal wishes and the demands of a partner or loved one. Of course, your judgement is being influenced by the Full Moon in your own sign and you can expect a few tears or even tantrums in the process. But don't accuse yourself of being heartless or inconsiderate. You have plenty on your mind, not least joint financial issues which need handling with kid gloves. The trick lies in doing one thing at a time and refusing to be put off. By next weekend you'll know that your actions are justified and your attitude spot-on.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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CANCER

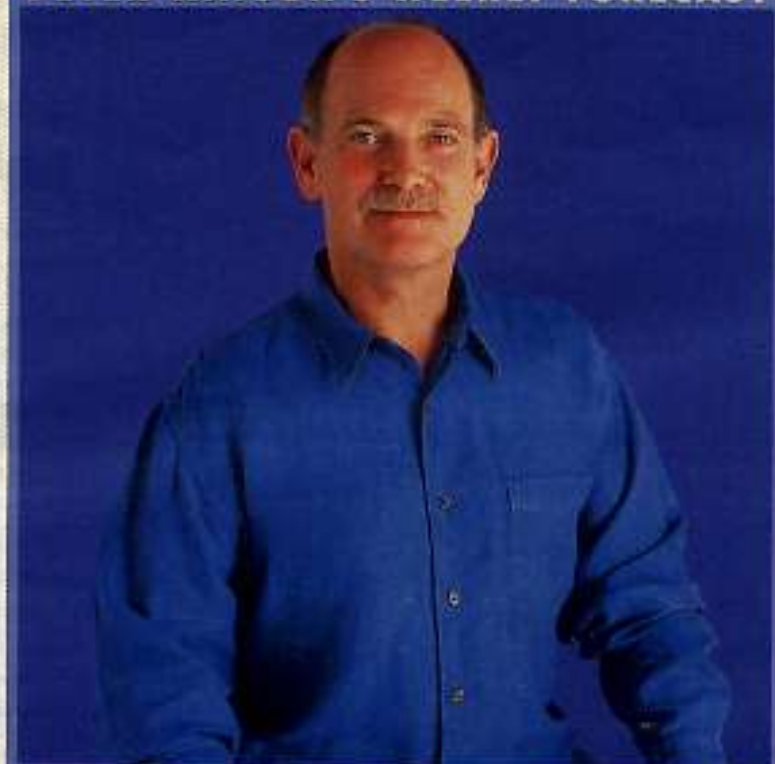
JUNE 22 - JULY 23

Don't let fears and frustrations replace what started out as an optimistic point of view. The Full Moon in the most sensitive area of your chart has put you on edge. However, within days, if not hours, a certain individual will restore any confidence you have lost. Developments regarding your profession or reputation find you on the brink of something stunning on Tuesday when Saturn changes direction. Not only are you heading for creative fulfilment, but you're swelling the coffers too. What you discover this week will remain with you for the rest of your days.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
0 9 3 0 5 6 4 0 6 4

Your stars

PETER WATSON'S WEEKLY FORECAST



SUNDAY DECEMBER 14 TO SATURDAY DECEMBER 20

LEO

JULY 24 - AUG 23

For some time you've been striving to reach the right balance between your obligations and recreational activities. Now, however, you really do have to shed some of the load, delegate responsibilities and find the right outlet for creative talents. The message seems to be: if you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself. When your ruler the Sun joins Mercury on Wednesday do everything possible to let a little light-heartedness and an extra touch of romance into your life. It will do wonders.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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VIRGO

AUG 24 - SEPT 23

The Full Moon should remind you that recent successes help you on to better things, whereas yesterday's failures have nothing to do with today. Choose the best and discard the rest. You are in a position to impress others with your incisive mind. Loved ones will re-open dialogue after Wednesday when the Sun forms a link with your ruler Mercury. A topic which has been too awkward or sensitive to discuss is now in urgent need of clarification. Grasp the nettle - its sting is not so fearful as you imagine. Bright ideas next weekend add colour to everyone's life.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
0 9 3 0 5 6 4 0 6 6

LIBRA

SEPT 24 - OCT 23

Ideas and inspiration are flying around and you'll be hard-pushed to find a minute to spare. Even so, you must not fall foul of an impatient streak which might get the better of you mid-week. Mars and Neptune are bringing domestic issues to a head. Meanwhile the Sun and Mercury urge you to go out and about, exchanging opinions and ideas. Don't act so quickly that there's no time to read the fine print. You cannot cut corners or take chances. Nor must you respond to other people's demands for an instant response or agreement. Let them wait. And they will.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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SCORPIO

OCT 24 - NOV 22

It seems you are to score a major triumph in an arrangement which can only be made to work with the support of another interested party. Even so, you would be wise not to shout your good news from the rooftops. You may be a little inclined towards impetuous behaviour this week and could upset someone who sees you as a threat. In fact, a Sun-Mercury link on Wednesday provides another opportunity to score extra points. Try not to tread on everybody else's toes. You may be asking them to stand shoulder to shoulder with you at a later date.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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SAGITTARIUS

NOV 23 - DEC 21

A controversy which has come between you and someone close is less serious than it first appeared. Let bygones be bygones, by all means, but don't settle for an uneasy truce. If there are factors which still play on your mind bring them out into the open. You have valuable assets which give you a distinct advantage over others. When the Sun joins forces with Mercury on Wednesday you'll know exactly what should be discussed and what should be left out. Bear in mind that it takes more courage to reveal your insecurities than to hide them. You will triumph in the end.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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CAPRICORN

DEC 22 - JAN 20

At last you are turning the corner as far as your health and well-being are concerned. Just make sure you don't become a victim of misdirected energy on Tuesday when Mars links up with Neptune. There's no point in getting involved in a battle of wits which is none of your concern. It will seem easy to juggle finances to your advantage after Thursday when you are able to focus your attention on an area which has been overlooked for too long. Sudden good fortune must not be allowed to blind you to reality. There is much to be done before you are finally secure.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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AQUARIUS

JAN 21 - FEB 19

It may feel as though you're being led along the pathway to fun and romance when you'd prefer to cast your net wider in your search for stability and security. Try not to let guilty feelings persuade you that you are being lazy or irresponsible. It is sometimes necessary to pause and look back on all that has been achieved before you begin the next round of challenges. A vote of confidence from those who know you best boosts your spirits mid-week. And when Mars moves into your sign on Thursday a surge of power will give you a push in the right direction.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
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PISCES

FEB 20 - MAR 20

With a family crisis well and truly solved you probably thought you were off the hook. But every problem is succeeded by the next and you are now expected to help a group of individuals who are pushing for immediate results. Try to point out that a delay is not a denial. Whatever you do must be given serious consideration. The Sun-Mercury link on Wednesday means it should become clear that no one can hold a candle to you. By next weekend you'll be solving all manner of problems. Until then, refuse to disrupt your own schedule for the sake of somebody else's.

For your in-depth weekly forecast call
0 9 3 0 5 6 4 0 7 2



Why Santa won't be coming down my chimney...



YOU CAN SLING YOUR SLEIGH BELLS AND STUFF YOUR STUFFING. JENNY NISBET EXPLAINS WHY SHE'S GIVING CHRISTMAS A MISS

Christmas comes but once a year – and that's quite enough for me. What is it about December 25 that's supposed to turn us into a nation of *Blue Peter* addicts? Have you ever tried following those instructions for Good Present Ideas which always start enthusiastically with *You Will Need: Natural hand-made paper, sharp pencil, cutting mat, craft knife, tiny gold paper stars, thick white cotton wool, florist's wire, holly, secateurs...* Now stop right there! If I could assemble all that I wouldn't be making budget gifts, I'd be running NASA. And how come women like me who can barely microwave a chicken tandoori takeaway are miraculously supposed to transform into the all-knowing Delia on Christmas Eve? All you're supposed to do is follow one of those 50-page guides to a gourmet Christmas lunch – which is fine, provided you have the kind of mind that can not only run NASA but captain the spacecraft as well. As the countdown gathers pace there are so many decisions to be made. Take Christmas cards: I hope yours are a carefully chosen statement designed to make you appear stylish, affectionate, witty or chic. This year you could be going for minimalist purple and silver (fashionable); fine art (highbrow); charity (caring) or personalised ("Dear Second Cousin

On My Mother's Side Once Removed"). On the other hand, you could just buy a Co-op variety box and let everyone assume that you're being: a) terribly post-modern and ironic; b) plain stingy. And what are your gifts saying about you? Nowadays it's not enough to shove a pack of bath salts at Aunt Sybil. Your presentation should be themed – inspirational almost. So, what do you do with a 3ft Gothic candle holder? Oh hello! Designer Kip Dodds recommends first making a cage from cinnamon sticks, then covering with cellophane and tying with raffia. "So natural and earthy." Now why didn't I think of that? But the real test of nerve comes on Christmas Day when after scarcely any sleep, you're awoken by the boom of slippers on the stairs, the crash of wrapping paper in eager hands, then howls of despair when it's discovered you've bought the wrong thing – and that's just your mother-in-law. It's 7.30am and you've still got to drape the banisters with natural garlands, theme the dining room as a fairytale grotto, ring the sleigh bells, make the family's festive breakfast of salmon scramble served with sparkling Bucks Fizz. Then your lunchtime schedule starts at 9.30am when you remove mince pies from the freezer, stuff the turkey, place it in

a pre-heated oven... I know! Let's all go to a nice hotel. No, no that would be cheating. What is it about Christmas that makes everyone want to cosy up? This is the time of year when single girls want husbands, husbands wonder where they last put their wives, mistresses want a baby, daughters want boyfriends, sons want Melinda Messenger and wives want to be the centre of a radiant family circle... someone's bound to be disappointed. One Christmas Day I invited all my single/widowed/divorced girlfriends for lunch and we all sobbed into the pudding together – it was much more therapeutic than singing carols. The trouble with Christmas, as with most things, is men. It's always at happy yuletide that they decide to leave home/return to their wife/run off with the Christmas club money/develop a heart murmur/reveal that they fancy the bloke next door. And on the first festive season after divorce everyone at every party asks you sympathetically what you'll be doing "all on your own". "Trying on my new Ann Summers

fur-trimmed fishnet thong-body – it's a present from my millionaire toy boy," usually shuts them up. Presents are another minefield. One year my friend's husband gave both her and his girlfriend the same romantic Russian wedding ring – they know because there was a nasty scene in the jewellers when they both turned up to exchange it. He has spent every subsequent holiday in emotional Siberia. For me, some gifts are easy. Both of my ex-husbands get the same Turnbull and Asser shirts every year for the simple reason that they're absolute hell to iron. But what am I saying? Christmas is a season of goodwill and peace to all men. That's why we're getting away from it all and going to Sri Lanka, a beautiful Buddhist country. As I baste on the beach like that turkey I should have put in the oven three hours ago, I'll raise a glass in toast – Merry Christmas one and all ■



Both my ex-husbands get Turnbull and Asser shirts every year – because they're hell to iron

HOW TO BE A CHRISTMAS

Scrooge

WITH JUST 11 DAYS TO CHRISTMAS, ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE

STAR RICHARD WILSON IS JUST THE MAN TO RESCUE OF THE FESTIVELY CHALLENGED.

HIS NEW BOOK SHOWS HOW TO MAKE IT A SEASON OF SAD TIDINGS FOR ALL MEN



The very mention of the word Christmas is enough to get Richard Wilson seething with rage. Richard, who stars as grumpy Victor Meldrew in BBC1's *One Foot in the Grave* Christmas Special claims he has never enjoyed the season of good cheer to all men. As far as he's concerned, it's all tacky tinsel, inedible sausage rolls and heartburn. And when it comes to the expense, he's firmly on the side of his

old hero Ebenezer Scrooge before a few rattling chains made him go all soft and gooey. Yet over the years, Richard has learned to survive Christmas, while resorting to his wallet in only the direst of emergencies. Here, in his own words, is his surefire way of making it a very unmerry Christmas for one all:

PRESENTS

Nothing can be more important than choosing the correct gift. But remember, Christmas is a time when we exchange lots of things we'd like to keep for lots of things we don't want. And a time when your bank balance is seasonally adjusted to take into account that you're buying this year's presents with next year's money. You have but one chance to get it wrong so don't make the appalling mistake of actually buying something the recipient likes - or worse, something, they might want. Let me offer you a few scraps of advice. If you are buying gifts, do it as early as possible. The January sales are a good time. But... how much better to phone friends and relations and ask them outright what they want. This will provoke embarrassment and the hasty

condemnation of Christmas as spoilt by commercialism. It's easy to agree not to give anything and you're off the hook.

The problems are much greater when catering for children. Forget the Christmas stocking. That was superseded by pillow cases. Today, even double duvet covers are not unheard of among greedy children (and stupid parents).

I have always found the ideal children's present is a large, beautifully-wrapped cardboard box containing a second box, even more brightly wrapped, inside which is yet another box and so on for at least six boxes. There's no need to put anything in the final box. Children just like pulling parcels to pieces. If that's too much effort, give batteries, toys not included.

For brothers-in-law and nephews, last year's diaries and calendars are perfect and available at knock-down prices in December when they've only four weeks to run, although some do provide the month of January at no extra charge. If they spot the diary is old, threaten to go back to the shop and have the single mother who served you sacked for making such a mistake.

They'll beg you not to go.

Remember, used diaries are identical every few years or so. For example, the calendar for 1998 is the same for 1987 and 1981. Now don't you wish you'd kept it!

Stocking fillers are never a problem. Collect all the free soaps and shampoos from hotels. For special people throw in one or two of those plastic miniatures you hoarded during the holiday flight. I make a point, during the course of the year, of buying anything that says "three for the price



of two". This means if you give the third item away, you will have bought Christmas presents for all your friends and family without it costing you a single penny.

For adolescent boys, hardly-worn but ever changing football strips can be picked up at cheap shops. Keep them for 15 years then offer them as "vintage" football shirts. You'll be adored!

CARDS

My advice is simple. Do NOT try to send a card to everyone who sent you one last year. Why? Because most of them only sent you one because you sent them one.

Follow these golden rules.

1 Buy three different sizes of Tippex pen. I know this sounds rather exorbitant, but you'll get good use out of them as you cover up the squiggly signatures on last year's cards before sending them out again.

2 Alternatively, recycle last year's cards by sending them out exactly as you received them, merely adding below the signature, "and, of course, from

Remember - a diary for 1998 is the same as for 1981. Don't you wish you'd kept it?



9 ways to ruin a child's Christmas

**REMEMBER!
A LITTLE
MISERY GOES
A LONG
WAY**

★ **Point out casually that Santa is an anagram of Satan.**

★ **Take them to a grotty Santa's grotto and explain he's really an over-the-hill actor with a fake beard.**

★ **Buy them a bicycle and tell them they have to share.**

★ **Serve lunch five minutes before the end of Christmas Day EastEnders.**

★ **Tuck them up on Christmas Eve and tell them Grandpa and Grandma are getting a divorce.**

★ **Insist on them having more Brussels sprouts.**

★ **Thrash them at Nintendo.**

★ **Send them on a Discover The Spirit of Christmas Past week - six days in an authentic workhouse.**

★ **Tell them you've donated their present money to a charity for less fortunate children, even though they won't believe there are any.**

Fred, Kathy* - or whatever your name is.
3 Cut the front off last year's cards to make Christmas postcards. There! You've started a brand new tradition.

4 Make your own and pretend they were done by children. What seems cheap and clumsy from a grown man is endearing from a six-year-old.

5 Do not take a small ad in a paper announcing that you'll be giving money to charity instead of sending cards. It costs a fortune to phone or send notes to your acquaintances telling them to look in the paper.



DECORATIONS

Make your own Christmas tree. I guarantee that under the stairs you'll find the worn-out kitchen floor mop. Twist old wire coat hangers around the pole and add left over wads of fireproof, fibreglass loft insulation. Use last year's gift tags to decorate it. Alternatively, hurl decorations at the tree and then leave. When the family arrive on Christmas morning, recount how the neighbour's cat has just dashed in and flung itself at the top of the tree.

With a tear in your eye explain how after all your hard work, not going to bed until 3am, you haven't had time to re-decorate it. You will hardly have finished the sentence before the whole congregation will have thrown off their coats and got down to work.



DRINK

Do not go mad! There is nothing wrong, in these days of breathalysers, alcoholism and health fads, in presenting your guests with a simple fruit cup. I usually go for a blend of long-life orange juice, a dish of Ribena and a can of pineapple chunks. For those who insist on spoiling a beautiful cocktail with spirits, then I recommend the addition of small quantities of Listerine or very cheap gin. Alternatively, use up the dregs you threw together last Twelfth Night, or a wee drop of Benylin. If you are not willing to stump up cash for party beverages, make yourself useful around the local bottle bank for an hour. When you're there, offer ▶



to help clean car ashtrays. Take the empty bottles home and scatter around the living room, putting most of the dog ends in the rubber plant for that authentic party look.

When your guests arrive later, explain that Gazza, Oliver Reed and Princess Margaret popped round unexpectedly to wish you the compliments of the season... and now look at the place!

GAMES

First hide the telly. Then tell everyone how families had to make their own entertainment when you were a boy. This always goes down well. Snap Dragon was immensely popular in the 1800s – which is surprising, since they had neither running water nor a reliable fire service.

You need to fill a large bowl with flaming brandy – expensive, I know, but you can always save it. Throw in a handful of raisins or sultanas. Party guests then take it in turns to snatch a flaming raisin and pop it in their mouth. The flames go out as soon as the mouth shuts, so speed and dexterity are essential.

I don't recommend this game to anyone with artificial eyelashes or a tendency to wear copious amounts of hair lacquer. So if Dusty Springfield or Baroness Thatcher turn up at your house, you'll just have to ask them to sit this one out with a nice glass of stout.

In similar old-fashioned vein, try Hide And Seek. Count to 10 as everyone finds somewhere to hide, then settle in your favourite chair, bring out the telly, and enjoy 20 peaceful minutes of peaceful viewing while everyone wonders if they are the last ones to be found. If you're looking for a hiding place, always go straight to the lavatory with a good magazine. Only open the door when a queue forms threatening to break it down. Once in a while, you can organise a really good theme party along the lines of Vicars and Tarts. My tried and tested combinations are: Jeffrey Archer and Cynthia Payne; undertakers and mortuary attendants; scoutmasters, choir boys and vicars; or Gyles Brandreth and Jilly Cooper. When it's time to get rid of your guests, if you can't

My Fatal Mulled Wine

Keep this in a bucket in the garage and book your seat in casualty now. Explain to guests why they'd really prefer tap water...

INGREDIENTS

- One litre of red wine. Something with a screw top.
- Two litres of water.
- One orange stuck with cloves – I'm assuming this means cloves of garlic.
- Miscellaneous fruit – oranges, lemons, tomatoes, whatever.
- Four tablespoons of sugar – or the equivalent of Hermesetas.
- Small liquorice stick, slightly larger cinnamon stick and the stick you use to throw for the dog.
- Two teaspoons of fresh or ground ginger or slice of McVitie's ginger cake.
- A generous splash of your favourite liqueur. Creme de Menthe is ideal.



INSTRUCTIONS

Throw all ingredients into a cauldron. Boil like mad for about an hour, stirring occasionally if you are in the vicinity.

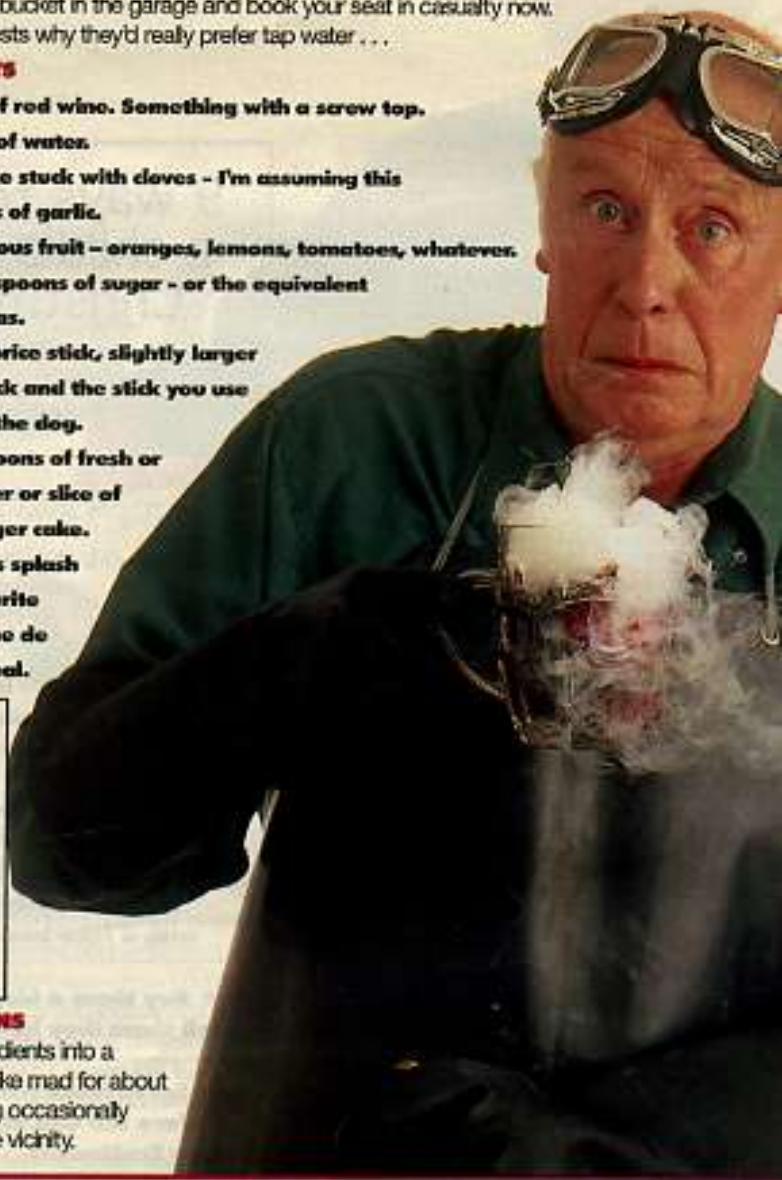
bore them away on your own, try embarrassing them with images of Christmas past on the old slide projector. Comment loudly how much younger everyone looked. And simmer.

If they want some exercise, combine walking with carol singing to raise a few bob. You only need to practise the first four lines of your chosen carol.

The rest doesn't matter, as the door will either be opened by the time you finish or you'll hear something like "bugger off" through the letter box. If you feel you're not welcome, repeat the first four lines again and again until the householder begins to scream hysterically. Don't be shy about ringing the door bell as often as is needed.

Allow plenty of time for a pint in the local afterwards. The landlord is sure to appreciate the loose change. ■

Adapted by Murray Davies from: *Scrooge's Guide To Christmas* by Richard Wilson and David Roper. Published by Hodder and Stoughton at £8.99.



Christmas must be finally over because...

- ★ Even Bernard Matthews couldn't get any more meat off the bird.
- ★ I finally stopped humming the theme to *The Great Escape*.
- ★ The barmaid has taken off her earrings which light up.
- ★ I joined the mile-long queue for rot at Marks and Spencer.
- ★ Easter eggs have gone on sale at Woolworth's.
- ★ I can no longer buy advocaat for love or money.

To get rid of guests, try showing images of Christmas past on the slide projector



Eat, drink . . . but be wary

MONICA GRENFELL OFFERS AN EATING-OUT**MENU THAT WON'T PILE ON THE POUNDS**

Call me an old party-pooper, but starting the New Year bursting out of your jeans isn't my idea of a fantastic Christmas. It's all very well saying

"go on, enjoy yourself!" but many of you have had weight problems all year and have written to me asking how you can avoid putting it all back on again. The good news is that you don't have to stick with salads when you're eating out this Christmas, and with a bit of planning you can eat well and keep your weight steady. I've chosen a few restaurant favourites with your highest and lowest-calorie menu choices:

CHINESE

Best choice King prawns with tomato (198 calories).

Worst choice King prawns in batter (240 calories each)

CURRY HOUSE

Best choice Tandoori chicken (200 calories).

Worst choice Lamb biryani (900 calories).

ITALIAN

Best choice Veal marsala (300 calories).

Worst choice Spaghetti carbonara (1,020 calories).

MEXICAN

Best choice Barbecue ribs (370 calories a serving).

Worst choice Fajitas beef (1,300 calories).

PIZZA PARLOUR

Best choice Pizza Hut personal pan pepperoni (338 calories).

Worst choice Pizza Express American (930 calories).

DIPS

Best choice Salsa (64 calories per 100g).

Worst choice Taramasalata (446 calories per 100g).

SNACKS

Best choice Raw vegetables (but watch the dips!)

Worst choice Peanuts (300 calories per 50g).



Things you may not know about alcohol

★ It takes an hour to break down each unit of alcohol, so six pints of beer can stay in your bloodstream all night.

★ Oriental people have the least tolerance to alcohol.

★ Alcohol is absorbed more quickly if drunk with a fizzy mixer – so you get drunk on "spritzers" or gin and tonics more quickly than plain old booze.

CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE . . .

Come on now, when else do you eat chestnuts if not Christmas? They might taste worse than chewing on an old log, but so what? They're low-calorie, good for those hormones, they don't fill you full of gas like normal nuts – and they're festive. What more do you want? Chestnuts are:

- ★ High in carbohydrates.
- ★ Only 48 calories an ounce – other nuts are 170 calories.
- ★ High in vitamin B6 – great for PMS.
- ★ High in vitamin E.
- ★ Contain 20 times less fat than other nuts.



Shrink an inch in just two weeks!

Even slim girls can have a droop bottom, but the latest bootleg trousers and skimpy skirts demand a no-wobble, firm rear view. Well, don't despair! In just two weeks you can work wonders: simple bottom lifts, done three times a day for just three minutes. Add it to some stationary cycling and take the stairs three at a time and you'll lose an inch round the hips by Christmas Day!



Lie on all fours, making sure your back is straight and your tummy is held well in.



Lift your right leg SLOWLY until your thigh is level with your back, NO HIGHER. Do 15 on each side three more times, and



Stretch out by placing a foot across your opposite thigh above. Lift your other foot you feel a stretch. Change



Fresh offers



There are big savings on beer at Sainsbury's. Get 15 x 440ml cans of John Smith's bitter or Stella Artois for the price of 12 (£10.99) or buy 18 x 440ml cans of Stella for just £12.99 (down from £19.99)!



For a bubbly party, try Sainsbury's Cava, reduced from £4.99 to £3.99 a bottle or four for £15 – or Sainsbury's Blanc de Noir at £9.99 (normal price £11.99).



For good reds at great prices, try Sainsbury's Navarra at the special price of £2.49 (normally £3.49) or Suhindol Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, £2.79 (normal price £3.79).



The non-alcoholic favourite is often cola, so we're offering two bottles of Sainsbury's Classic Cola for the price of one – you get 4 litres for just 95p!

Scent from heaven

OUR FRESH AND FRUITY SELECTION OF PERFUMES FOR MEN AND WOMEN WILL HELP YOU HAVE A SCENT-SATIONAL CHRISTMAS! FEELGOOD FRAGRANCES HAVE BEEN BIG NEWS IN 1997, WITH CITRUS OVERTONES TO CHEER YOU UP AND SENSUAL SCENTS TO SET THE MOOD FOR LURVE! BY OLIVIA BUXTON

FOR HER



★ **HUGO WOMAN** by Hugo Boss

Bottle A small, unique water flask bottle.

Fragrance Fresh and clean fragrance with a hint of vanilla. A modern fragrance for Nineties woman.

Price Eau-de-toilette 40ml spray, £25 (RRP).



★ **HAPPY** by Clinique

Bottle A simple, elegant glass bottle, compact enough to carry in a handbag.

Fragrance A hint of citrus with a multi-layered floral scent. Perfect for everyday wear. Tres chic.

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £29.50 (recommended retail price).



★ **ORGANZA** by Givenchy

Bottle Ornate and sophisticated in the shape of a woman.

Fragrance Musky, spicy and aromatic. Like most Givenchy perfumes, this is very strong and heady. Ideal for the sophisticated woman.

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £38 (RRP).



★ **TOMMY GIRL** by Tommy Hilfiger

Bottle Triangular, with a funky denim button top.

Fragrance Strong, fresh and fruity. Excellent fragrance for the sporty among us. Get moving!

Price Eau-de-Cologne 50ml spray, £25 (RRP).



★ **ALLURE** by Chanel

Bottle Simple and elegant, very understated for Chanel.

Fragrance Subtle, classy and floral. Excellent follow-up to Chanel No.5 For the traditional woman who prefers a modern twist.

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £36.50 (RRP).



★ **COOL WATER WOMAN** by Davidoff

Bottle A delicate, transparent blue bottle in the form of a water droplet.

Fragrance Light and refreshing with marine overtones. Ideal for the pro-active woman!

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £29.50 (RRP).



★ **PLEASURES** by Estée Lauder

Bottle Pretty and feminine.

Fragrance An extremely flowery scent to remind you of those long summer days. Destined to become a Lauder classic. Flower power rules!

Price Eau-de-parfum 50ml spray, £33.50 (RRP).

FOR HIM



★ **XS (EXCESS) POUR HOMME** by Paco Rabanne

Bottle Novel design with a gleaming cigarette-lighter cap.

Fragrance An invigorating yet sensual everyday fragrance. Will appeal to all tastes.

Price Eau-de-toilette 100ml spray, £25.75 (RRP).



★ **XERYUS ROUGE POUR HOMME** by Givenchy

Bottle Deep, rich burgundy bottle, small enough for briefcase or sports bag.

Fragrance Woody, spicy, masculine. A man who wears this exudes confidence.

Price Eau-de-toilette 100ml spray, £26 (RRP).



★ **CERRUTTI 1881 POUR HOMME** by Parfums Int. Ltd

Bottle An Italian-inspired marble effect.

Fragrance Lemony and spicy to add zest to your day. Ideal for the man on the go.

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £31 (RRP).



★ **L'EAU D'ISSEY POUR HOMME** by Issay Miyake

Bottle Streamlined, flat and easy to handle.

Fragrance Hint of citrus with woody undertones. Your girlfriend will want to borrow it!

Price Eau-de-toilette 75ml spray, £28 (RRP).



★ **'LE MALE'** by Jean-Paul Gaultier

Bottle JPG-designed, featuring his trademark T-shirt and earring.

Fragrance Sweet, maybe overpowering vanilla scent, which develops musky overtones.

Price Eau-de-toilette 75ml spray, £29.50 (RRP).



★ **OBSESSION FOR MEN** by Calvin Klein

Bottle Amber and flask-shaped.

Fragrance Strong, potent and musky. Use sparingly, as too much could be overpowering. For the mystical man!

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml spray, £37 (RRP).



★ **OPIUM FOR MEN** by Yves Saint Laurent

Bottle Oriental-influenced, slimline.

Fragrance The muskiest of all, heavily influenced by a patchouli and sandalwood base. For pleasure-seeking hedonists!

Price Eau-de-toilette 50ml Spray, £27 (RRP).

Supernatural magic number

PSYCHIC BONNIE McGRATH HELPS YOU MAP OUT YOUR FUTURE WITH NUMEROLOGY

YOUR NUMEROLOGY GUIDE

Numbers have been used as a means of prediction since the dawn of human awareness. Numerology was known to the Babylonians and the Greeks because they understood that numbers have always carried power, and when numbers are linked to your birthdate they will show you all about yourself. First work out your own number using the system below, then read on to find out what numerology says about your character – and those of your friends and family! Have fun...

HOW TO FIND YOUR PERSONAL NUMBER

To work out your number, add together all the single digits in your date of birth, which gives you a two-figure number, then add together those two digits. If the answer is a single figure, that's your number. If it's a double figure, add the two single figures together again. For example, Bonnie's birth date is March 19, 1947, so in figures that comes out as

19/3/1947

1+9+3+1+9+4+7 = 34

3+4 = 7 ...so Bonnie's number is 7.

1 Your number stands for leadership, you have a great deal of initiative and are not afraid to use it. An independent thinker, you always coming up with new ideas and always have to be active in one way or another. Usually you are a self-starter or self-employed with a strong feeling of your own self-importance. You like to be noticed and will do well in business.
Best area for careers Advertising, writing, acting – anything where creativity is coupled with intuition.

2 Your number is the number of adaptability. You hate conflict but have strong moods and feelings. You enjoy working with others and are usually happy to work for someone else.



SUMMED UP Tom Cruise was to lead – his number is ONE. His wife Nicole Kidman is a focused FOUR, while EastEnders Patsy Palmer is a flexible FIVE. The Queen's psychic SEVEN balances Prince Philip's moody TWO. As a SIX, Cherie Blair is also a great leader... watch out Tony!

You're not intellectual, but you can be an excellent scholar. You will always finish a project even when you have lost interest. Normally very loveable, you never like to be taken for granted. Once crossed you do not forgive easily. You love your home and you need a home base to relax and feel secure. You have a tendency to hold back and not stand up for yourself. This is something you should try to change. You can be creative and enjoy making things with your hands.
Best area for careers Social work, nursing, medical, farming or fishing.

3 You are a very creative person who loves art. You can give a lot of yourself in time and energy and enjoy sharing your knowledge with others. You will have lots of acquaintances and are

always involved with lots of things at any one time. You enjoy making people happy, especially those close to you. You have a deep need to be wanted and loved and you like to be surrounded by beautiful people. Generally a happy person, your love of everything is infectious, making you a very attractive person.

Best area for careers Trouble shooter, driver, pilot, diver or artist.

4 You are very practical and industrious. You enjoy doing things for other people. Everything has to be deep and meaningful for you, however at the same time you are realistic and can be very objective. You like to be self-disciplined, but sometimes you find this difficult. Normally generous, you can also have a frugal side. Other

people must never take advantage of you. Those who do, do so at their peril. No.4 likes order. You are – just relax and go with the flow.
Best area for careers Crafts, factory worker, financial adviser, nurse, care worker or counsellor.

5 A good communicator, you need to express yourself through singing, speaking or writing. You are enthusiastic and always willing to give someone a chance. You can be very generous, you need your own space and are always wondering if the grass is greener. You need to be careful because you have a tendency to keep pushing yourself to the limit. You need constant change and you are going. But watch out or you could become a Jack of all trades and master of none.

Best area for careers Receptionist, assistant, librarian, magazine salesman, actor or musician.

6 Six is the number of harmony. It shows that you are creative and responsible. But you have a tendency to take yourself too seriously, it is hard to say "no", so watch out, do not take on too much. You are extremely capable and efficient, make an excellent team leader. You are a home lover, a very caring person and a good listener. You are very forgiving. You are a bit of a loner so you do need a partner and to be around people to bring you out of yourself. You inspire others by having an air of mystery.
Best area for careers Teacher, lawyer, doctor, nurse, social worker, childminder farmer.

7 Seven is the number of mysticism. You will have insight and sensitivity, you also have extra-sensory perception. People of this number can use

that rule your life

AND WITH HER HUSBAND JOHN, A SPIRITUAL HEALER, ANSWERS MORE OF YOUR QUESTIONS

DEAR JOHN AND BONNIE

DEAR JOHN AND BONNIE

I am 21 now, but at 16 I had an abortion. I didn't know what I was doing and was probably forced into the decision by others. I constantly think about the baby, and if I had the time again would I have kept my baby. Can you tell me if my baby is at peace, and doesn't hate me?

K.C., Shropshire

In replying to your letter John and I hope we can also help the many other readers who have written with similar experiences and are finding it difficult to come to terms with their grief. It doesn't seem to matter whether it happened recently or 30 years ago, any mother who has undergone a termination will still feel guilty. Your child understands and does not blame you. When a child goes over who has been aborted or miscarried, he or she is welcomed by members of their family on the other side and is loved and cherished. You yourself need to go through the process of acceptance. You can begin by naming your child, talking, and expressing your love. The next step is to learn to forgive yourself.

DEAR JOHN AND BONNIE

I am 14 years old and a few months ago I discovered I had the ability to channel healing energy. I started developing it by healing headaches and bruises. Now I've mostly stopped because lots of people have been asking me to do on-the-spot healing to try to make me look stupid. Now I fear the ability might fade. What can I do to keep developing it? Are there any books to help me? Telling people of this gift has led to a lot of ridicule and nearly all of my classmates insult me or call me a hoax. But I'm determined to

become a professional healer. Some of the other psychic skills I have are activating when I don't need them, for instance, telepathy. How can I keep this under control? C.W., Mid Glamorgan.

It is a pleasure to receive a letter from a 14-year-old who seems to have a natural healing ability, and I am pleased that you are learning to treat it in a responsible way. But it concerns me that you seem to have alienated yourself from your classmates, and you make no mention of any friends. The worst thing you could do is to become a loner, and this is what will happen if you continue to tell your classmates about a gift they find hard to understand. Let me assure you that your gift will not fade. It will grow and you will, when the time comes, help a lot of people. To keep developing it, it is important to meditate and get in touch with the guides who are working with you. A good book to read is *The Art Of Spiritual Healing* by

Joel S. Goldsmith. Meditating will develop your psychic abilities by helping you to focus your gift in a positive way. Good luck!

DEAR JOHN AND BONNIE

I have read that we all have a guardian angel who we can communicate with. Is it possible that my husband, who died some years ago, has come back as my guardian angel? How can I ask him to watch over our children?

P.R., Hampshire.

A guardian angel is someone who is with us from the moment we are born until the moment that we die. They watch over us and try to guide and protect us. Do not confuse your angel with your husband. They are both there for you, but in different ways. To help you to feel your husband's presence, talk to him and tell him your fears as if he was sitting there with you. Then you will feel the love and peace he is sending you. ■

become mediums, capable of being earthy yet mystical, and they love sharing their knowledge. Sensitive to people and places, you love everyone to be protected from life, but realise that they have lessons to learn. You are friendly, open and helpful. You must watch your health as you do not have stamina. You have an inquisitive mind and dislike routine. You are never one for rounds of parties and can be lonely and lost for ways to use your time.

Best area for careers Artist, dancer, clerk, academic, scientist, tarot reader or medium.

8 A born organiser and leader, you have the ability to look at things and cut to the heart of the matter. You are very materialistic and your number is associated with power and success. However, it is what you do with your success that matters. When you use it to help others, help will always be given in return. When you use it for your own gain you will be successful for a time only. You take your love life seriously and don't give in easily. You usually have all of the right intentions and never lose sight of your goal.

Best area for careers Politician, business investor, adviser, proprietor, photographer.

9 This is the number of great visionaries. Like visionaries throughout the ages, No.9s often travel. You are intuitive and your visions of the future are incredibly accurate. Your number is the number of service to mankind and if you are wise enough not to look for reward, results and recognition, they will come to you anyway. However, you have high ideals and a deep desire to help other people. You are kind and gentle, and most likely to stay in the background at events.

Best area for careers Writer, gardener, executive, cleric, magician.

John and Bonnie's Phone Lines

JOHN'S HEALING LINES

Stress	0930 564 076
Back Pain	0930 564 077
Depression	0930 564 078
Meditation	0930 564 079
Migraine	0930 564 080
Addiction	0930 564 081

BONNIE'S PSYCHIC HELP LINES

Relationships	0930 564 082
Bereavement	0930 564 083
Desertion	0930 564 084
Eating Disorders	0930 564 085
Problems At Work	0930 564 086
Self Confidence	0930 564 087

RUNE LINES

Simply look at these rune symbols for a few moments and decide which one appeals the most. Then ring the number for your rune message.

 0930 566 741 Relationships and Partnerships	 0930 566 744 Strength
 0930 566 742 The Gateway	 0930 566 745 Health and Blessings
 0930 566 743 Growth and New Beginnings	 0930 566 746 Protection

ALL CALLS COST 50P PER MINUTE

If you have a question write to: John and Bonnie, PO Box 6899, London E14 5BS. For healing appointments phone: 01277 812462. They will answer as many as possible in Personal Magazine, but regret that it is not possible to offer individual replies.



Razzle-dazzle

NOW IS THE TIME FOR ALL GOOD PARTYGOERS TO PUT ON THE GLITZ. PERSONAL EXPERT

MARTYN FLETCHER CELEBRATES THE LATEST SHIMMERING PARTY MAKE-UP AND TELLS YOU HOW

CHOOSE IT, USE IT AND MAKE YOUR SPARKLING PARTY LOOK LAST ALL NIGHT LONG

Shimmering shades are the latest news in most ranges, so after years of matt, pale and interesting looks with an emphasis on lips, we can enjoy lashings of sparkle with light-reflecting make-up to catch the Christmas glow.

PREPARE TO SHIMMER

Using a gentle exfoliator removes dead cells and gives your skin a healthy glow, as well as allowing your foundation to glide on without going patchy. Try Body Shop's Conditioning Cream Scrub, £5.25, or make your own with porridge oats and water. If late nights are likely, a slightly lighter concealer dotted and blended under the eyes will make them look fresher. Some have light-diffusing properties to soften fine lines and shadows. Try Colourings Lightening Touch, £4.25. To make foundation last the night use a loose translucent powder but don't brush it on or you will dislodge your foundation. Press it on with a powder puff then brush away any excess.

★ **FOUNDATION TIP** Shimmer shades look best against skin with a slight sheen – go easy on the powder.

GET THAT TWINKLE

For parties you can be adventurous and wild with eye make-up. But use a subtle touch to press the colour on to the lid, and a sponge-tipped applicator is better than a brush. Place colour from the lash line up to the socket line. Any higher and it can look overpowering. Use shades that complement your eyes: for blue, try purples, lavender, pinks and silver-

greys; for green, go for golds and coppers, as well as rusts, apricots and terracotta; for brown, use greens, rusts, plums and orange. Look out for Miners Professional Loose Eye shadow Powders, £2.99, or Barry M's Dazzle Dust, £3.95. (0181 349 2992 for Barry M stockists)

★ **EYE TIP** If the sponge-tipped applicator is damp the colour will become more intense.

EYE LIGHTING

Liner and lashes transform daytime eye make-up into a glamorous party look. The eyebrows frame the face, so after filling in and shaping, run a little highlighter just under the brow to catch the light and lift the eye. Propelling liners are quick and easy to apply. I use Bourjois Liner Precision Propelling Eye Liner, £3.95. If you want to use liner in the inner rim of your lashes use a kohl pencil to create this dramatic look.

★ **LINER TIP** If your hand is unsteady, paint little dots along the lashes and join them up. Use either a few coats of dark mascara, or for a real party look use falseies – trim them to the length of your own. If you're a bit of a Disco Diva then Eylure have rainbow-colour lashes in their Club Collection at £3.75. For something slightly more natural, buy single false lashes and apply them only to the outer corner of your eyes.



SMILES THAT SHINE

To make your lipstick last the outline your lips with a lip pencil. Once filled in your whole lip area with the lip pencil. Powder with a little translucent powder to lock that colour on your lips, then apply your lipstick. Finish by an application of lip gloss. Lip gloss doesn't last all night, so keep some in your handbag for touch-ups. Check out Sweet Georgia B's Sparklers Lip Gloss, £3.95 (mail order from Beautyquest, phone 0541 505000).

★ **LIP TIPS** To create your own glitter gloss mix glitter eye shadow with Vaseline and apply it with a brush. To stop lipstick smearing like wine glass, lick the rim. Lipstick won't stick to a wet surface.

LIGHT HANDS

Glitter nail varnish gets your manicure noticed! Try the R.U. range from Superdrug, £1.99, or Hot Nails Spectacular, £3.95. To spice up an existing colour use a glitter top coat so your colour shines through, such as Georgia Brown's Sparklers Nail Polish, £3.95. Design Nails with removable stick-ons won't drop off your soup. E.L.F. Touch, £3.25, is available in gold and silver for £2.99. Now you're ready to hit the party and dazzle! ■

GLITTER BLUSH

First use a large soft brush and dust a little blusher onto the apples of your cheeks, blending away towards your hairline.

Then use a shimmery highlighter along the top of your cheekbone.

Try Miners Glitter Slick, £2.99

★ **BLUSHER TIP** For a do-it-yourself shimmer blusher, mix highlighter and cream blusher together and apply the combined cream before any face powder. It will make the blending so much easier.



For parties at this time of the year, you can be adventurous and wild with your make-up





PERSONAL FASHI

NEVER A

BAUBLES

BANGLES .

FOR ULTRA-FEM

BEADED FABRICS

YOU CAN DA

YOUR

THROUGH

PARTY SEAS

BY BECKY SUNSH

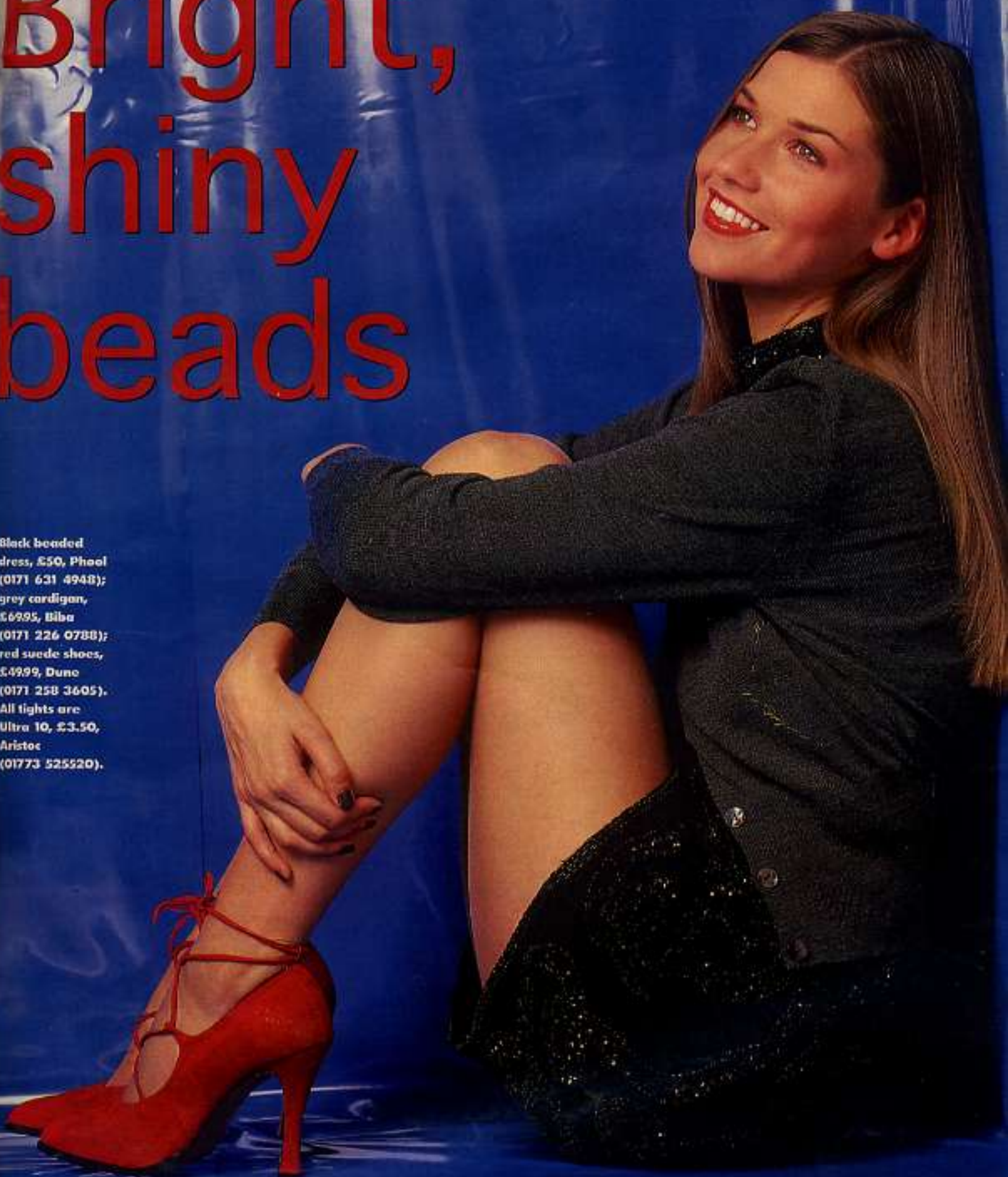
PICTURES

ANDY McCART

Aqua beaded
cardigan, £40,
Top Shop
(0171 636 7700);
green-blue
beaded top,
C&A
(0171 629 1244);
black beaded
dress, £54.99,
Jeffrey Rogers
(01923 474400).

Bright, shiny beads

Black beaded
dress, £50, Phool
(0171 631 4948);
grey cardigan,
£69.95, Biba
(0171 226 0788);
red suede shoes,
£49.99, Dune
(0171 258 3605).
All tights are
Ultra 10, £3.50,
Aristoc
(01773 525520).





Silver beaded
lace dress, £100,
French
Connection
(0171 399 7200);
silver beaded
crochet top, style
no. MH3332,
£34.99, Empire
(0800 220 230);
silver beaded
bags, from
£19.99,
Accessorize
(0171 313 3000);
ice-blue perspex
mules, £50,
The Magic Shoe
Company
(0171 791 3352).



Brown beaded
dress, £110,
French Connection
(0171 399 7200);
navy suede
sandals,
£47.50, Bertie
(0171 380 3800);
gold beaded bag,
£29, Elvi
(0121 212 2392).



Pink beaded top,
£29.99,
River Island
(0181 998 8822);
red skirt, style
no. WK9016NW,
£20, Freemans
(0800 900 200);
red diamante
shoes, £75, by
The Magic Shoe
Company
(0171 791 3352).

Best buy

Accessories with attitude complete your knockout party look. Here's OLIVIA BUXTON's selection of ritzy evening bags.

★ Gold mesh
purse bag
with clasp
and strap,
£25, from
selected
Marks and
Spencer
stores (0171
935 4422).



★ Red velvet
satin purse
with clasp
and strap, £40,
Dollargrand
mail order
(0171 794
3008)



★ Gold
beaded
bag, £20,
Freemans
mail order
(0800 900
200)



★ Black velvet
evening bag
with satin
handle,
£14.99, from
Accessorize
branches
(0171 313
3000)



★ Purple
velvet beaded
purse bag,
£18 (also
available in
brown),
Freemans mail
order (0800
900200)





IT'S GOODBYE FROM HIM . . .

I'm the joker in this card game . . .



**COLIN WILLS
SUGGESTS A
DEVIOS NEW TWIST
TO THE ANNUAL**

CHRISTMAS CARD RITUAL

Sent your cards off yet, or are you going to wait until the pillarboxes have got more stuffed in them than a Christmas turkey's back end? I don't know why we bother, actually. It's all so predictable. I've been sending cards to the same people since the days when they got there by stagecoach with a change of horses at York.

The only time anyone gets crossed off my list is if I walk through the churchyard, spot a familiar name on a gravestone and think to myself: "Hang about, didn't I send him *Wild Geese In Formation Over The Solway Firth* last year? No wonder I didn't get one back."

Quite apart from the risk of getting your tongue glued to the roof of your mouth from licking stamps for two hours and having to speak like Jonathan Ross for the rest of your life, there's all the hassle of where to put the ones you receive.

If you stick them on the mantelpiece they fall in the fire and the next thing you know Blue Watch has kicked the door down and your front room has

more water in it than the Mississippi Delta. Hang them round the pelmet from a length of cord and your thumb turns into a giant purple aubergine from repeated misses with the hammer. And if you give up and shove them away in a drawer, everyone thinks you're a sad bastard without a friend in the world.

It isn't as though you're surprising anyone. It's a bit like sex after 20 years of marriage - everyone knows all the moves by heart.

Harry down the road has been sending me the same chubby little robin pecking at the same pile of Christmas pudding crumbs for the last 30 years. When his card drops on the doormat it's about as exciting as a circular from the Abbey National. When you think about it, the only people worth sending cards to are the ones you hate - the neighbour who plays Meatloaf at full blast at three in the morning; the owner of the cat that pees over your rhubarb; the grass at work who told the boss about that regrettable incident with Miss Brightwell the day the lift

doors jammed. The idea is to think of the card they would least like to receive, and send it. Like an irritating tune that gets stuck in your mind, it will work its slow poison for the whole festive season.

For instance, teetotalers get Victorian inn scenes, full of red-faced Mr Pickwicks, buttons straining on their waistcoats and strumpets sitting on their laps, raising tankards brimming with mulled wine.

Vegetarians get the beaming father around the festive table, carving knife in hand, about to dismember the turkey - just the thing to drive them crazy with jealousy as they contemplate their own miserable Christmas dinner of Quorn and lentils.

Risqué cards are a big growth area and are ideal for spinsters, maiden aunts and those of a puritanical disposition. They normally feature things like a randy Father Christmas leering down the chimney at a naked blonde lying in front of the fire and saying something suggestive like, "Any chance of coming down and getting my chestnuts roasted?"

You can now get absolutely enormous ones - cards that look like they've been fed more steroids than an East European weight lifter. They cost about a tenner and are far too big to go through a letterbox.

They have to be left outside the front door leaning up against the wall, where they look like a section of fencing that's just been delivered from the garden centre.

What better than to send one to someone with a really tiny flat, so it dwarfs all the furniture and instantly turns the place from looking fashionable in a twee sort of way to really cramped and poky hovel.

All it needs is a bit of research. For somebody really houseproud I recommend hunting down one of those really cheap, old-fashioned ones that drops glitter everywhere. As

as she opens the envelope, the front-room carpet will disappear under an avalanche of silver confetti. If she avoids having a heart attack on the spot, she'll be down on her knees with a pair of tweezers until at least New Year's Eve. ■



The idea is to think of the Christmas card your victim would least like to receive - and send it