

# Relationships

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## OUT THERE

How to cope with life in the emotional jungle

### How Sleeping Beauty touched my 'art



CIARA FERGUSON

ONE of the handy things about having walls is that you can hang paintings on them. My husband Mr C says I am not a greedy person, except when it comes to art. Something happens to me, he says, like I'm possessed and insatiable. He indulges me because he's kind and he understands. It's a kind of madness. I got from my father, like an abstract gift, and one I can get away with as long as, well, I spread things around so no one notices. But now that we are coming back to Ireland it's all supposed to be about consolidation. And that means facing up to the colourful, strange, and sometimes disturbing truth. Oops. Just yesterday at a gallery in Shanghai, my heart started beating faster, the adrenaline pumping, butterflies in the tum... was it perhaps a kiss from my beloved? Alas no, it was another painting to rescue. This one was a painting of a little girl — who happened to be in a coffin, mummified actually. I didn't let the placing flowers and lighting candles sidishow put me off. It wasn't creepy. She was a perfect, tiny Sleeping Beauty. The gallery owner told me a young Chinese artist had painted her from a photograph in *National Geographic*. In an inspired touch of Blarney, I was also told the wee one was from Ireland and died during the Famine. Well, of course I had to bring her home there. Later, online, I found the photo and discovered she was Italian, her name was Rosalia, she died in 1920 when she was two, and she resides in a glass box in the catacombs of Palermo. She is also the most perfect example of embalming in the world, and the doctor who did it died without ever recording how.

Next stop Sicily then. Not so much wherever I hang my hat as my heart.

### Ages later, I'm back to telling fibs



ELEANOR GOGGIN

WHEN I was about 14 I made the grim and costly discovery that lying is really not the way to go. One invariably gets caught out. I told my parents I was playing a hockey match in Youghal, when in reality I was meeting a fella and we were off to the pub for the day. He was a few years older than me and I knew his attentions would not go down well with my parents. Hence the lie. And of course I blew it. I came home later than any reputable school would have released us, especially the convent school where I was supposed to have been.

They gave me numerous chances to come clean but I stood my ground. My mother became quite menacing. "I'll ring the school!" She won't. I thought, there's no way she would ring a convent at this hour of the night, and I continued to face them down. But she called my bluff, grabbed the phone and in a sickly sweet voice checked the validity of my story with whichever nun answered. And that's when I got the clatter of the wooden hanger. So I've never really lied to my parents. There's been the odd white lie. If I ever do tell a lie I end up by telling the person the truth by the end of the conversation.

But the whole ageing thing is getting to me, and when I was walking the dogs the other day, I met a youngish woman with a dog the same as mine. We chatted about their docility and when she said she had three teenage children who adored him, I found myself saying "so have I". The fact that my daughter was 30 recently is definitely taking its toll. A woman in the queue in Tesco yesterday told me she had four girls in their 20s and yet again I found myself telling her mine were much younger. I just hope my mother isn't looking down from above brandishing a wooden hanger.

### No child brought out only child in me



ANNE MARIE SCANLON

AN American friend of mine gave birth to her only child around the same time that I had the young master. Maternity leave in the US is paltry, and she had to return to work when her baby was barely two months old. "You must be missing the baby," I commiserated in a phrase call "Nat at all," she replied cheerfully. "It's great being around other grown-ups."

I was shocked because at that point it would have taken a force of wild horses to separate me from my son. Four years on, things have changed mightily and I've just spent a week apart from the young master. Far from fretting about my child, I really enjoyed the fact that I could spend time around other adults without being constantly vigilant in case my son was in the process of destroying himself/another child/his immediate surroundings. In fact, within hours of saying goodbye to the young master and all the responsibility being a mother entails, I had reverted to my default setting — pampered only child and very much centre of my own universe.

I have always been very independent, but I've realised that since I had a child of my own and I was no longer my own priority, that I've always enjoyed being spoilt as well. And so, with no child to distract me from being me, I resumed my position as princess, a princess with a willing retinue of helpers.

"How do you do that?" one of my colleagues asked in bewilderment. "How do you get people to willingly do stuff for you all the time?" I said it was a talent unique to only children. It's not. It's very simple. If you want something — ask. Ask properly obviously, don't forget Ms Manners, but just ask. Simply.

## BONDINGS

# It's a creative kind of love



Caroline Hubner and Scott Redden tell **Andrea Smith** why the Atlantic was no barrier to being together after meeting at an artists' retreat

THE retreat Cill Rialaig in Kerry seems to have some magic-in-love magic. Many people have been known to fall in love with one another while staying there. Just ask Belgian divorcee and mother-of-two, Caroline Hubner, 43, who recently fell for single New Yorker, Scott Redden, also 43, while both were staying there.

Scott and Caroline are clearly besotted with one another, holding hands and touching often throughout the interview. Then again, they have been a couple for only a few months, and have spent much of that time living on different continents.



SEA OF LOVE: After falling in love with Caroline Hubner, Scott Redden is leaving New York to join her in Antwerp. Photo: Tony Gavin

Having both been drawn to Cill Rialaig after hearing so much about it from other artists, the pair met while staying there for two weeks in October. One day they both got completely engrossed in painting a particular mountain from the Skelligs range, and even though they didn't speak until they were finished, they felt a blossoming connection.

"When we came down from the high of painting, we just looked at one another," says Scott. "We started talking about literature and painting and discovered that we had a lot in common, and it felt natural and real and honest. Caroline is amazing and I was drawn to her on everything from the physical to what she was reading to what she was talking about. I think being in Cill Rialaig opens up that side of you quite naturally, because it's such a beautiful, romantic landscape, where you find yourself philosophis-

ing and looking at nature."

"Getting to know someone like that is so different," adds Caroline. "Normally when you start seeing someone, you dress up and wear lipstick, but here you're paint-spattered and wearing no make-up, so it's very pure."

Caroline lives near Antwerp in Belgium, and she grew up as the only child of Rolf, a professional pianist, and Paula, a professional ballet dancer. As they were often away on tour, she spent a lot of time with her grandparents, but wasn't encouraged to follow in either of her parents' footsteps.

"I wasn't allowed to take ballet classes or learn an instrument, because my dad thought that the artistic life wasn't stable," she says. "He was keen for me to have a proper education. I had a nice

childhood and was loved, and I went on tour with my parents during the holidays and whenever I could."

**'It is very nice to have someone who doesn't get upset because you have to sit on your own island'**

Her art is influenced by growing up in opera houses and theatres, so it's figurative with costumes and movement featuring throughout. She also has an interesting career in writing for funerals, where she composes and reads prose and poetry eulogies to capture the spirit of the deceased.

Having married very young and divorced 10 years ago, Caroline has two children, Laura, 19, and Daan, 17.

Meanwhile, Scott grew up in New Jersey. His mum Debbie worked as an artist and art teacher, and his uncle, Geoffrey Steiner Scott, was principal of Crawford College of Art

in Cork, where Scott spent his junior year at university.

Here he met his great friend Rod Coyne from Dun Laoghaire in Dublin, with whom he is now exhibiting. Having studied art at college in Syracuse University and Hunter College, New York, he started exhibiting and selling his work immediately and has a studio in New York.

He and Rod applied to stay at Cill Rialaig — which was founded by Noelle Campbell Sharp — and once there, the other artists present began to pick up on the chemistry between Scott and Caroline.

"I was drawn to the fact that Scott was very attentive to me and is always into the moment," she says. "I like his state of being because he is generally very calm and thoughtful. We can be quiet together and can communicate without

overlap with the people I follow. I have a window into the world getting the views of people who would not take my phone calls. If someone bores me, I stop following them. I have ended up with a group who say interesting things and I have never laid eyes on many of them. Some, I do know, and have known for a long time, and it is fascinating to see what they say because in a busy world you often do not get the opportunity to chat. Before Cheltenham, I had no idea how many I have never met. Or that they watched so much television.

Twitter has completely changed my television viewing. People watch and tweet, without anyone saying "sssshhhh!" It is reassuring to see someone else writing exactly what I was thinking. It improved the election beyond measure. And rugby matches. It is a good way to learn that there is something actually worth watching on another channel. People tweet things that they think will interest other people, and apart from the occasional show-offs who are only interested in their own asinine views, you can begin to feel like part of a conversation. I enjoy watching the personalities emerge. I do tend to follow people who take something of a fun outlook to life. There are those seldom tweeters who, when they do, always say something fascinating. There are those who take you through their quirky day. There are those who give you the feeling they are talking directly to you.

I like to begin my day knowing that Yoko Ono has something to say to me. And the days are gone when you watch the golf and wait to see what Rory McIlroy says in the interview. Now you read what he tweets as well.

The icing on the cake is that you do not have anyone requesting to be your "friend".

## SMUG MARRIED

# When being liked is more flattering than being loved

FROM the time Number Two was a baby, I've gone on little jaunts, with friends or alone. The whirling in my brain just needs, rest sometimes, a place where all I have to think is "What page am I on?" and "What will I eat?"

By and large, the jaunts last from two to four days.

Apart from resting the whirling, the jaunts mean the children see me as a person, not just a ma, and Beloved gets a chance to try out the whirling. I organise for the school collections

Absence makes the heart grow fonder but it can also divide our children's affections, says **Aine O'Connor**

and afternoons to be covered, but otherwise Beloved steps in. Beautifully. It's great, but frankly I think that a man who leaves his woman to come home to a messy house and piles of laundry needs a good kick in the

head. (In case you're worried about him, Beloved travels and socialises a lot for work, he and the lads also take off on little "gold" outings — "we'll rent the clubs over there.")

If Beloved and I both go away, I pine for the children

more. Even though they're in the loving care of my parents, I worry that they are finding it hard out of their comfort zone, for very often all my presence actually means is constancy, routine, a touch point. When they are at home with their father their touch points remain much the same and I pine less.

Recently, however, I was away for a full week — my longest trip in a long time. Beloved was at home with them, all was well but I got these little tragic texts from

our 10-year-old, "I'm missing you so much my heart is sore, in fact I think it's ripping."

And it dawned on me that for the first time she actually missed me. Not having me around, or having me pick her up from school, but as an actual person. When they were very little, they would punish any absence, either through dirty looks and distance or slightly brattish behaviour. I'd so look forward to seeing them but instead of good cuddles

they'd be a right pain in the face. It was my punishment for upsetting normal.

When bigger, they would both profess acute suffering in my absence, but upon my return look expectantly at my suitcase for gifts and promptly toddle back to whatever more interesting thing they were doing.

When Number One was around 10 and his sister five, there was a stark contrast between them for he seemed to have started to genuinely miss my presence, while she still

hadn't got there. Now pushing 15, Number One says he misses having me around because he being around is comfortable, is normal, safe, but he has lots of his own stuff on so the heartache doesn't exactly keep him awake.

Number Two, though, has entered the zone of actually missing me. Another of her tragic texts announced that she had had "a little weep" for me one night (I said "weep" because I thought it sounded less than "cry").

It's funny to see how the relationship evolves from need-to-be-conscious-love. Or is it around as comfortable, is underrated but integral ingredient? In lots of ways a child's "like" is much more flattering than its love. Unfettered by convention, they either do or they don't, as their parent they will love you even in extremis, but they won't necessarily like you, and as the relationship evolves perhaps that's the most important part.

