

# all over the shop

## THE CULT SHOP

A pleasing purveyor of quality and quirk

## FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

A trinity of channels for charitable urges

## THE GANNET

Tucker tips for the galloping gourmet

## THE GOBLET

Raising the bar on snifters and vinous libations



WRY SOCIETY

## the catastrophist

Anticipating the collapse of the global economy and civilised life as we know it, a father gets his familial priorities straight...

Freddy!"  
"Oh, hi Dad."  
"Has it arrived?"  
Freddy had never been entirely sure why his father had to shout like a sergeant major whenever he used a mobile. He thought it was probably a generational thing, a bit like his father's strange love/hate relationship with his iPad. He was either extolling its virtues to anyone who'd listen – "Jolly clever the way the photographs know where they were taken" – or frantically stabbing the screen with his only

non-arthritic finger, accusing it of being a "blasted stupid machine."  
"You don't need to shout, Dad."  
"What?"  
"I said you don't need to shout."  
"But I'm in the car and my blue whatsit is playing up."  
"Your Bluetooth."  
"Yes, that's the one. Blasted stupid machine. Shut up, Bender!"  
Bender was his parent's incontinent Labrador who, in his infirmity, had taken to barking whenever he saw a white Transit van. After much yelping and

bellowing, during which time Freddy put down his mobile and went back to trying to book tickets for Glastonbury, his father finally found his way to the original reason for his call.

"I've bought you a generator."

"A what?"

"A generator. For when the lights go out."

It was a topic his father had obsessively returned to since he ran out of people who agreed Nigel Farage was the best thing to happen to the country since Geoff Boycott took up cricket commentating.

Nothing (apart from the *Daily Mail* crossword and an industrial-strength G&T) made Freddy's father happier than a good dose of doom and gloom. Until recently, his concerns had been fairly broad – the tax man; the calibre of castaways on *Desert Island Discs*; roadworks; women in trainers – but since Brexit ("only good thing about Europe is the cheese") and Donald Trump's rise to

US president ("I see his point about the wall"), he had decided the global economy was going to hell in a handbasket.

"Best be prepared for these things."

"What things are those, Dad?"

"End of the world as we know it!

Collapse of the global economy, soaring cost of living, displaced nations..."

"Melting of the ice caps?"

"What? Bunkum! Planet is in fine fettle – my camellias have never been happier. No, Freddy, I mean the collapse of world order. Mark my words, what's coming will make the Great Depression look like a day at the races, and I'm damned if I'm not going to make sure we are all prepared."

Freddy was bored now and feeling slightly obtuse. Despite having been on the website since 5.22am, he was still only ninth in line for tickets.

"So I've bought you a generator. And I would start squirrelling away some cash. I've got £2,000 under my mattress from the rent we get from our Airbnb."

"The world's not going to collapse..."

"What? I can't hear you! Bender, if you don't shut up, I'm going to shoot you!"

"I said, the world's not going to collapse. I'd put money on it."

"I wouldn't do that – you aren't going to have any by Christmas. Food's going to be scarce too. Better plant some potatoes. Pink Fir Apples. Lovely with a bit of salmon. Do you have a shotgun?"  
"Why would I need a shotgun?"

"Guard your patch."

"Stop them eating my Pink Fir Apples?"

"Are you mocking me, Freddy?"

Bingo! He had his tickets. Ed Sheeran was headlining and all was well with the world. As long as his parents would babysit. "No, Dad, I'm not mocking you. You're right. I'll call accounts and ask for

my salary to be paid in cash from now on."

"That's the spirit!"

"Before you go, Dad, any chance you could babysit the weekend of June 24? We need to stock up on bottled water and sandbags."

"Good for you! We can't though. I've just booked us onto an eight-week world cruise. Thought we'd squeeze in one last holiday before it all goes belly up."

"Steel yourselves for the fight?"

"Quite. Actually, I was going to ask if you'd have Bender. You won't regret it. He's turned into the most brilliant guard dog in his old age." **CHLOE FOX**

**"The Great Depression will seem like a day at the races"**