

# 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 bobble hat

What's a chap to do about a new girlfriend's passion for kitting him out in the latest infantile fashion fad?

**D**amn, it's snowing!" As he stood at his bedroom window in his boxers, looking out at the idyllic winter street scene below, Adam wished – not for the first time in his slightly fraught adult life – that he was six and three-quarters instead of 36 and three-quarters. After *The A-Team*, the bright hopefulness of a snowy morning had ranked as his favourite childhood thing.

But that was in the days when life was full of surprises; those halcyon pre-tablet days when you didn't know 10 days

beforehand that it was going to be slightly foggy in Weston-super-Mare until 11.08am. The fact that Adam had known that it was going to snow didn't make it any easier.

Because today Adam was to meet his (relatively) new girlfriend for an organic venison burger and sweet potato chips at Marylebone Farmers' Market, arranged 12 days ago before she went skiing. So for 10 days now Adam had known that it was going to snow, and that Lindy would thus expect him to wear the bobble hat she had given him for Christmas. And Adam knew for a

fact that every other man at the market would be wearing his.

Daffodils may be sprouting, but this sartorial plague was showing no signs of passing. Six months it had been. As soon as they had got back from summer holidays and sharpened their pencils for the September return to work, grown men had donned these ridiculous hats, morphing into munchkins – and they had not taken them off even for a day, despite a perfect Indian summer followed by unseasonably warm winter days.

If the ubiquitous hat had been sported with even the faintest hint of irony, it might have sat more comfortably with Adam. But trying to have a serious discussion about the catastrophic state of the world with a man who was dressed as a four-year-old was nigh on impossible, especially when said man-child had a full beard. "It's like babies with earrings... or,

or nappies and tattoos!" he had ranted to a bemused taxi driver after a particularly bobbly bonfire night in Queen's Park.

In his more serene moments, Adam's heart went out to fashion-conscious men. How was *anyone* supposed to make an interesting statement within the confines of the male uniform? All variations on the basic shoe-trouser-top combo had been tried and tested, and tried again, more often than not with dire consequences. Skinny jeans? Disaster unless you were skinny. Grandpa cardigans? Utterly emasculating unless you were David Gandy. Skirts? Don't even go there.

"And why does modern life decree that we all do everything exactly the same as everybody else anyway?" Adam demanded of today's taxi driver, who seemed more interested in listening to the World Short Track Speed Skating than to Adam's fascinating musings on the sorry state of male dressing.

The main problem, Adam thought as he twisted his innocent-enough bobble hat in his hot hands, was that he liked Lindy. Really liked her. And she had been so glowingly adorable as they had exchanged their first Christmas presents. "I hope you like it," she had said, with a very winning bite of her bottom lip, as the ominous bobble peeped out of the wrapping. "I think you'll look really sexy in it."

As Adam slithered not remotely sexily down Moxon Street towards the venison stand, he was forced to admit that his bobble hat, which was doing a very fine job of keeping his ears warm, was not without its practical uses. And visibility was so poor that he couldn't see 3ft ahead, let alone how many other middle-class chumps were bobbling around with marshmallow-filled hot chocolates that had cost twice as much as a manly ale. He peered through the snow to try to spot

Lindy, and felt a flutter of excitement at the thought of seeing her again. So what if they both looked like they belonged in a Swedish kindergarten? They were Happy and In Love and surely that was all that mattered?

"Hello, you!" Lindy's voice in his ear made everything instantly OK.

Adam turned to look at her. "Oh," he said, trying not to sound horrified, and striving for something kind to say. "You look like a teddy bear," he spluttered.

"Ear muffs!" she grinned, cheeks pink with childlike enthusiasm. "Everyone's wearing them these days!" **CHLOE FOX**

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