

# 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 SMART MONEY

Studying form for the speculative enthusiast

## THE GANNET

Tucker tips for the galloping gourmet



## WRY SOCIETY

# the christening

An in-demand godfather begrudgingly gives up another Sunday but will this baptism wash away his original cynicism?

**C**hildren, Simon thought as he tied his Turnbull & Asser silk tie on a Sunday, could really ruin your weekend. Normally he would be in bed right now – preferably with someone he hadn't known this time yesterday – nursing a pleasantly unpleasant hangover and contemplating which boxset to watch with his poached eggs. *Game of Thrones* was usually more than the Chiltern Fire pit in his stomach could handle. *The Affair* was a much

better bet – proof, not that he needed it, that getting married and having children was guaranteed to send a red-blooded man hurtling headlong towards disaster.

What was the point of a christening anyway? The mewling infant didn't know, or care, whether he was part of God's church. The fact this was the first step in getting into the hallowed church school in 10 years' time meant even less to Simon. A lot can happen in 10 years; 10 years ago, Simon had been punching numbers on the

trading floor. Now he had his own hedge fund and a helicopter.

Everything about accruing an absurd amount of money was gratifying to Simon, except the byproduct of godchildren. A new one seemed to appear every crescent moon, his friends popping them out like cartridges out of a shotgun with a careless disregard for the future of their groaning planet. He, on the other hand, was an exemplary citizen. No nappies in landfill, no gas-guzzling seven-seater full of crisp packets. Just a small fridge of cold smoked salmon and the odd condom box in the recycling.

As he admired his handsome reflection in the mirror of his marbled bathroom, Simon tried to remember how many godchildren he actually had. Fifteen? Twenty? Not that it really mattered. Angela, his secretary, had everything in hand. As he'd left the office at 8pm on Friday, she'd handed him a Tiffany box and a travel itinerary for his trip from

## Simon spotted a sultry blonde in the first pew

Chelsea to All Saints on Chiswick High Road. Quite what was wrong with the Savoy Chapel he would never know.

"Hi buddy, great to see you." God, Pete looked exhausted. Both his legs had been commandeered by two snotty sons and a daughter was hanging off his neck whining, "Daddy, where's my Elsa?" Behind him, in the backlit distance, his once pretty, now haggard wife Louisa was jiggling the latest addition – its bald head sticking out of an explosion of lace – on her hip, with a rictus grin on her face.

Simon's wandering eye alighted on a gorgeous girl just coming up the aisle. A fellow godparent? He'd like to renounce the devil with her.

"You should, you know. It's what life's all about." Reluctantly, Simon dragged his attention back to what his schoolfriend – formerly the fastest pint-downer in the south – was droning on about. Children. He was telling him to have children! This from a man who hadn't laughed since 2001 – and whose hair even looked exhausted.

Simon muttered something about not having found the right girl yet, never once taking his eyes off the sultry blonde in the front pew. This christening is really looking up, Simon thought to himself during the service as their eyes locked over the "Light of the World".

Back in the extended, toy-strewn kitchen of Pete and Louisa's terraced west London house, Simon downed two glasses of middling prosecco and waited to go in for the kill. When he saw her slip out onto the Astroturf lawn and start rolling a cigarette, he grabbed another two glasses and followed.

"Fancy a scooter race?" he grinned, gesturing at the huddle of plastic by the garden shed. "My mum always told me not to talk to strangers," she smiled, not taking her eyes off him as she licked her Rizla, her tiny diamond nose stud winking at him in the sun. "Well," he drawled. "Luckily your mum's not here." The girl rolled her eyes. "Oh, I'm afraid she is."

Following her gaze, Simon looked to the French doors to where his old friend Gemma was shooting him daggers. He'd proposed to her once at university, but hadn't meant it. Straightening her wrapdress, Gemma swung open the door.

"Poppy!" she snapped. "If you are going to insist on smoking those disgusting things, must you do it in front of your godfather?" **CHLOE FOX**