

# 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 party planner

Can Zarina pull off a couple's elaborate Winter Wonderland wedding, or is she skating on thin ice?

**H**ow's the ice sculpture? Over." Even though Greg, her head barman, was only in the next door marquee and she could have bounced in there in her box-fresh Stan Smiths to see how he was getting on, Zarina still opted to communicate via walkie-talkie. It made her feel like a Bond girl.

"Just melting it now."  
"Over!"  
"Sorry?"  
"You didn't say over."  
"Oh, right. Over!"

"Good. Now what the bloody hell do you mean you're melting it? Over."

Zarina had planned a lot of parties in her time, but this one – to celebrate Sheikh Al Farquar's sister-in-law's engagement to last year's *X Factor* winner – was really pushing her to her limits. She had organised the Sheikh's second wedding in Dubai last year and had secretly hoped, in view of his open-minded take on polygamy, that it would mark the beginning of a beautiful working relationship. The Big Top theme had been absolutely inspired, although

getting the entire Cirque du Soleil troupe back to Vegas in time to provide the visual backing for Elton John's *Greatest Hits* concert the next night had been a logistical nightmare. Still, the Sheikh had been delighted and sent a gold Rolex as a marker of his gratitude.

She looked down at her wrist and tried to still the surge of panic with a bit of mindful breathing. Just over three hours until kick-off.

As was so often the way, the trouble hadn't come from the expected source. Amina, the bride-to-be, was charm personified – gracious, doe-eyed and gratifyingly quiet. No, it was the groom, Ollie Simkins, who was proving the prima donna. Only last night he'd emailed her a shot of his fiancée smiling by the penguin enclosure at London Zoo with the message: "She loves penguins!"

This Winter Wonderland theme, she thought, as she leant against a crate full of the squawking birds to sign a

disclaimer ("We, Boom Productions, understand that working with these live animals is undertaken at our own risk", etc), was more trouble than it was worth. Flying *Frozen* star Idina Menzel in from New York to sing *Let It Go* had been the easy (albeit blood-freezingly expensive) part, and even persuading Torvill & Dean to reprise their Olympic medal-winning *Bolero* on the purpose-built ice rink had been less tricky than she'd thought. But serving 750 guests caviar on plates made entirely from ice? This alone had meant hiring 20 extra freezers, buying Nanotech gloves for all the waiting staff and kissing her hefty deposit on the reindeer-hide tablecloths goodbye.

For a quiet moment Zarina looked at her signature on the page, while the fish-fingered penguin keeper jabbered jibberish to his friends in the crate.

Zara Winslow. How long ago it seemed that she had been that girl, squished into taffeta, hair ringleted by her misguided mother, sitting at the edge of the dance floor while thin girls in black Lycra kissed spotty boys to a *Lovecats* soundtrack. Ever since then, she had made it her mission in life to be at the centre of all the best parties. And changed her name to Zarina, because it sounded thinner.

If she had time to think about it, she'd be proud of what she'd achieved. Only last month, her *Great Gatsby*-themed bash (replete with rhinestone dance floor and Leonardo DiCaprio as the guest of honour) for the JBM tractor heir had been listed by a glossy magazine as the second most glamorous party in history, after Truman Capote's dratted Black & White Ball. And then there was the marriage proposal from Ronnie Wood she'd turned down after the 70th she'd organised in Mustique.

But now wasn't the time to dwell on past glories. She had a party to put on. She lifted her walkie-talkie to her mouth: "I'm coming to see the sculpture. Over."

In through the nose, out through the mouth. She really mustn't lose her temper with Greg this evening.

When she saw it, her stomach dropped to her feet. An 8ft ice sculpture of Ollie, legs apart, holding his microphone down between his legs for guests to get down on their knees and drink a shot of vodka. And beside it, Greg grinning with a blowtorch.

"Just melting his microphone, you see, boss. Otherwise this party won't have even started before it's over. Over." **CHLOE FOX**

**Walkie-talkies made her feel like a Bond girl**