

Life and Times

Sophia Money-Coutts



Yes sir, I can boogie

The journalist and novelist on enduring acutely embarrassing moments



THE LIST

Watching

American comedy series *Succession* – again, ahead of the second season in August. *King Lear* meets the Murdoch family. Properly excellent.

Reading

Rubbernecker by Belinda Bauer, a superlative crime writer nominated for the Booker last year (although don't let that put you off).

Loving

Seedlip, the non-alcoholic spirit. A glass with tonic and ice at 6pm is almost convincing.

Hating

Leg-shaving season. Such a bore.

MY EXTENDED FAMILY gather for a weekend in Spain, home to my father and stepmother. There are siblings, step-siblings, uncles... It's rare that we're all together, so to celebrate we sit in the garden for a long lunch of tapas and Spanish rosé – and for the annual reading of sex scenes from my latest novel. Since my first book came out last year, it has become a tradition for my brother or sister to find the fruitiest pages and read them aloud. Last year, my stepbrother Harry stood on a chair to share a rude shower scene – imagine a porny version of Kenneth Branagh doing his St Crispin's speech in *Henry V*. This year, my little sister Rosie fills her glass and begins a reading, only pausing to wipe the tears from her eyes. A particular, ahem, oral practice in my forthcoming second novel causes a heated discussion. 'Would that really happen on a first date?' asks my brother. 'Yes!' scream some. 'Surely not,' say others. 'I don't enjoy it myself,' adds another. My dad chooses this moment to go inside for another bottle of wine.

I'M STILL IN SPAIN when I am WhatsApped a video of a couple's first dance at a posh wedding in Britain. I

don't know the bride and groom, but the clip has gone viral on Sloaneys phones. There they are, whirling elegantly to *Stand By Me* when a male guest in a morning suit staggers out and tries to dance with them. Have you ever seen that clip of Mr Bean attempting to seduce an uninterested woman at a nightclub? It's like that. Excruciating. The chap jabs the air and pelvic-thrusts his way around the newly-weds, while the bride makes pleading faces at onlooking guests. Eventually, an arm shoots out and yanks him away. It reminded me of a friend's wedding some years ago when I overdid it on the home-made apricot vodka and leapt on to the dance floor with terrific enthusiasm. I grabbed the father of the bride (I figured that any male aged between nine and 90 would do), and danced as if it was my last night on earth. This performance earned me a group applause over lunch the following day. Let this viral video be a warning to us all as we

I grabbed the father of the bride and danced as if it were my last night on earth

limber up for weddings this summer – wait for the signal summoning everyone to the dance floor before doing so. Alternatively, if you're single like me, pick that moment to go to the loo.

'OH MY GOD, she's in labour!' shouts my friend Cara over lunch. She means the Duchess of Sussex, although Cara herself is pregnant with twins, so her announcement startles both our table and several around us. We are on holiday in Spain (my friends came to meet me after my family departed) – a world away from royal-babymania in the UK, and yet I admit to reaching for my own phone for the latest news. Rumours that baby Archie was born in The Portland remind me of my stay there a few months ago. You don't want the medical details, but I can confirm the menu is laughably impressive. Smoked salmon, rack of lamb, even a wine list. I was wheeled back from recovery, still gaga from the anaesthetic, and because I'd been under nil-by-mouth instructions for the previous 24 hours, decided to order a club sandwich. A uniformed waiter delivered it under a silver salver shortly afterwards and I tucked in. Why did no one tell me that you're often sick after a general? When the surgeon did his rounds later on, he looked at my congealing sandwich with horror. 'You didn't order that, did you? I should have told the nurse soup only.' I hope Meghan fared better. *The Plus One*, by Sophia Money-Coutts (HQ, £7.99) is out now