

ALISON PHILLIPS

...and another thing!

Salt & vinegar to go? Packet in

"Noooooo," yelled my seven-year-old son in the supermarket last week, with all the anguish of a martyr being sent to his death.

"What now?" his sister and I snapped in unison.

"Salt & Vinegar crisps. They're going to be replaced with Lime & Black Pepper unless enough people vote for them. It's a disaster. Give me your phone mum, we've got to vote NOW."

His sister, 10, glanced at him with a look of total contempt she has perfected with extensive practice.

"Don't be a total idiot," she replied. "Of course they're not going to get rid of salt and vinegar crisps. It's an obvious advertising ploy to get you talking about crisps, spending more pocket money on buying them and stuffing yourself with more of them. Sucker."

So that's what growing up in a material world teaches you...

Senseless census

The idea that the gender box could be taken off the census to placate the 0.001% of people who regard themselves as "gender fluid" is frankly ridiculous.

Why should the gender that the vast majority of us feel quite confident about be ignored because some tiny minority can't make a decision.

And that's not transphobic at all.

I've watched a friend of mine spend years of heartache and anguish, excruciating surgery and a small fortune in her bid to become a woman.

And as she says: "I've walked through fire to finally have a body which matches my brain. There's not a shadow of doubt in my mind what gender I am."



Louise fooled by an old con trick

NO wonder Louise Redknapp is angry.

Angry enough, it appears, to take an emotional sledgehammer to her marriage, her family and her home.

But then she has plenty to be furious about... because like thousands of other women she's woken up in her mid 40s to discover she's been the victim of one almighty con trick.

The con trick which tells women life can be perfect...that promises them they will be happy, their partner fulfilled and their kids high-achieving.

Just so long as they conform to a few pre-ordained rules of behaviour...

And so they set about pouring every scrap of



SPLIT But says she still loves Jamie

energy into feeding their kids organic yoghurts, dressing them in trendy little outfits and screaming at them to practise their violin.

While also ensuring colour coordinated cushions in every room, a flickering Lime & Basil candle on the mantelpiece and sparkling skirting boards throughout the house. All while torturing themselves to "lose that holiday tum", "lose those ageing wrinkles" and "lose those ugly bingo wings."

It's no surprise so many of us end up losing our minds in the quest to be the perfect wife and mother.

As, it appears, Louise Redknapp has done.

This weekend she revealed she'd walked out on her marriage so she could return to performing and rediscover the person who "got lost" as a stay-at-home mum. I've already written that I think it's unfair for her to talk about the last decade as if she's lived under the lock of her husband's love and key of her sons' adoration.

And there's no good reason why she couldn't have had a rewarding career throughout her marriage and motherhood - had she so wished.

Yet she didn't. So

perhaps her husband is an obsessive control freak who doesn't like her working or partying.

Except Louise has said nothing to suggest it and insists she still loves him.

So, no it wasn't Jamie who was Louise's jailer. It was her own quest for perfection.

Louise Redknapp fell hook, line and sinker for the con trick that domestic goddess breeds domestic goodness. Which sometimes it does. But other times breeds isolation, resentment and frustration.

And it's here my sympathy for Louise wanes. For Louise didn't just fall for the con. She became an active promoter of it - literally the poster girl for "sexy, stylish, modern mum".

She did interviews about how she loved being at home looking after Jamie and her boys, washing their whites in Ariel, feeding them balanced meals, keeping them off the iPads at dinner.

She played her part in making the rest of us feel bad for having

whites not white enough and meals only nutritionally balanced by putting beans with chips.

But there, it's over, and Louise has seen the light. Although I doubt she's really a workaholic, vampish, party girl like the role she's playing now.

Most likely she's like the rest of us - who loves her family and her independence, who wants sparkling taps and sparkling conversation, who enjoys the school assembly and a night on the tiles.

Because we are multitudes. Yes, women too. And as long as we don't imagine any of it is perfect, we can have it all.

Or as born again Louise said this week: "Being fulfilled, being true to yourself, following your passion, they are the things that make you happy."

Heath outcry so sick

There's been a sickening predictability in the knee jerk response to the Wiltshire Police report into allegations of child abuse by former PM Ted Heath.

Of course, his family have defended his reputation - it is what we would expect. But others

have piled in too, pouring scorn on the enquiry with no knowledge of what information police possess, and for no good reason, it

appears, than they can't stomach the idea Heath may have been an abuser.

Chief Constable Mike Veale is not the witchfinder general. He is a highly respected public servant who's given his life to prosecuting criminals.

If he says he has enough information to have met the legal (that's legal - not his personal) threshold to pull Ted Heath in for questioning

were he still alive, why shouldn't we believe him?

It may be some alleged victims who contacted police did lie. But, seriously, could all 26 allegations which will now sit on police records be fabricated? I doubt it.

Yes, of course some of

the alleged victims are "challenged". But who do we think gets abused? Generally vulnerable kids,

often with mental health issues who have a high chance of growing into vulnerable adults, often with mental health issues and a high chance of falling into crime.

None of this is a surprise. Especially that members of the establishment will continue to ensure the weak and vulnerable are rubbished while those in power remain untouchable.



FANDANGO OVER TANGO

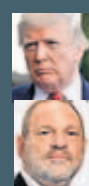
The furore over the "rise and fall" in Charlotte Hawkins' Strictly tango continues apace.

New judge Martine McCutcheon (it is her, isn't it?) claims there was. Charlotte's dance partner, bolshy Brendan Cole, insists there was none whatsoever. Certainly there's no chance Brendan's self-opinion could rise any further, nor his popularity among the judges fall any further.



FALL GUY? Brendan and Charlotte, judge Shirley and lookalike Martine

PS Donald Trump is "not at all surprised" by the string of claims against Harvey Weinstein which paint the movie maker as a manipulative, egotistical old sleazebag. So I guess the old playground adage still rings true: "Takes one to know one."



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