Twitter Thread by Sarah Oxford-Laughdugry, 4

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I'm just back for a COMPLETELY NECESSARY trip to a supermarket.

And... something dramatic happened.

So, okay, looks like we're going to have a little bit of a THREAD.

Buckle up for an unbelievable anecdote that gets to the heart of London life in this nightmarish pandemic.

(I won't name the supermarket, NOT because I don't want to shame the members of staff [I will be doing that privately by reporting their actions to the police later today - as soon as I've finished tweeting this thread], but because I don't want to give them free advertising.)

Okay, right. I'm still shaking so I'm struggling to write this out. I've opened a bottle of Campo Viejo Rioja (an underrated affordable offering which is currently on special offer at Tesco) to steady my nerves. No shame in that.

So. Yes. I was walking down the dairy aisle...

I saw a northerner.

(apologies for the delay, I'm on the phone to an upset friend - her husband of 15 years has just confessed to an affair with her own sister. It's not really the sort of situation where you can say, "Excuse me Julie, awfully sorry but I'm writing an incredible thread on twitter!")

Still going. She's really upset ■■ Lots of sordid details. Sounds like Tom had a hitherto unknown predilection for sex on public transport. This is why I warn all my friends on their wedding day: "marriage is a war of attrition, pre-empt what they might do and do it yourself."

I'm trying to wind things up now. I am painfully aware I've rather left my thread hanging on the "I saw a northerner" part which, take out of context, may well make me sound a bit odd.

For the record: I know lots of northerners, I respect many of them, some are even friends.

FINALLY! (her newly estranged husband has no siblings so I've told her to seduce her father-in-law. He's 84 and debilitated by severe arthritis but - thank god! - Viagra is easily obtained nowadays)

Right, so, where was I?

I saw a northerner in the dairy aisle of a supermarket.

I could tell from the accent (he was on the phone to someone, possibly a wife or a lover, something about what ingredients were needed for a tiramisu - at least I think he said tiramisu).

I recognised the accent. Manchester, or maybe Newcastle. Possibly even Geordie.

Okay, let's roll this back. Let's rewind.

A bit of context.

Since the start of the pandemic the population of London has declined.

Yes, you've read that right. The rats have been leaving the sinking ship.

And it has really hit landlords such as myself.

London landlords feel the burden of buy-to-lets

The pandemic has delivered a blow to this once-thriving market

I'm a single mother*. I've been debarred from the legal profession following really quite jumped up charges of kidnap, so, yes, after DECADES of training and hard work I am, for want of a better word, unemployed. Possibly even unemployable. My buy-to-lets are my ONLY income.

* - Technically my children have all left home after I kicked them out for supporting the Labour party under the leadership of the disgusting marxist Jeremy Corbyn. But I still claim the child benefit so don't you DARE claim I'm not a parent. I worry CONSTANTLY about them.

So, yes, I am absolutely petrified about what is happening to London.

Do we really want to go back to the bad old days where the city is hollowed out?

Do we really want to return to the 'expecting something for nothing' city of Ken Livingstone's unelectable hard left GLC?

Do we really want the only people who move to London to be oddballs and wastrels looking for cheap housing?

Because that is what you'll get unless drastic action is taken.

I honestly believe the government must send in the army to force the covid-deserters back into the city.

Of course, this was all at the forefront of my mind when I saw that northerner in the dairy aisle.

How else was I supposed to react?

I lost control of myself. I glared at him at first, trembling with rage. I kept hissing to myself, "Let him finish the phone call first, Sarah."

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THAT'S how polite I am, in case anyone is thinking of claiming what I did next was in some way unexpected or out of order.

I waited.

As soon as the phone call ended I let rip.

"How DARE you." He pretended to not hear.

"HOW DARE YOU!" I screamed. He turned round, feigning confusion.

By this point I was already sobbing uncontrollably. I tried to say "Have you seen the reports in the Financial Times?" but...

...he looked at me completely oblivious.

I gestured round at the sparsely peopled supermarket, usually so busy on a Saturday morning, and said in as composed a manner as I could: "You did this. You and your people."

Again he just - infuriatingly - looked at me blankly.

(Okay, I hold my hands up - on reflection it occurs to me that the supermarket was so empty primarily because of their social distancing entry policies, but I don't think that in any way, shape or form detracts from the wider point I am making.)

I tried my very best to explain it as rationally as possible to him, but couldn't get the right words out so I just screamed "WHY HAVEN'T YOU LEFT THE SINKING SHIP YOU FILTHY RAT?" in his face.

Now, I'm not sure if you've ever been in this sort of 'public altercation' situation,

but I have and it has an incredible effect on you. There comes a moment where you have crossed a rubicon - not between right and wrong (I'm always in the right), but between socially acceptable and socially unacceptable. And it's really quite liberating. But also imprisoning...

You realise that you can't back down. You've gone too far. Carrying on becomes the only rational option.

So I continued screaming in his face. "YOU RAT", "YOU RODENT", "YOU'RE STEALING FOOD OUT MY MOUTH" etc.

It's an incredible wave of energy that you never realised you had.

And then I attacked him.

I pounced on him. Purely instinctual. Like a lioness protecting its young, or a particularly maternal arachnid.

Caught him unaware, flat-footed, he fell back, his head smashed a shelf full of of single cream and double cream, their cheap plastic packaging snapping and spilling.

We wrestled on the floor, slipping in the cream. He was bigger and stronger than me BUT I had the advantage of knowing deep in my heart I was in the right (and also he was suffering quite a bit of bloodless from the back of his head). I pinned him down and straddled him.

Still overcome with that raw animal defensiveness, not fully in control of my own body, I started clawing at his eyes.

He was panicking. His accent became stronger with each desperate yelp - which only drove me on. I felt like the star of a David Attenborough nature documentary.

My forefinger slid into his eye socket, lubricated by single cream it was surprisingly easy.

For an incredible moment I realised with one flick of my finger I could send his eyeball shooting out across the supermarket aisle.

But at that exact point the adrenalin ran out...

I suddenly realised the implications of the situation. That, to the untrained eye, taken out of the wider socio-economic context, this could look a lot like I was randomly attacking a man in Tesco.

I didn't want to go to prison (I'd miraculously avoided it after the kidnapping).

Very, very carefully I slid my finger out from inside his eye cavity. I lent close to his ear and whispered, "Let's agree to disagree." It was a surprisingly tender, intimate moment.

I picked myself up. A small crowd of gawping onlookers had gathered.

"HAPPY NOW YOU IDIOTS?!?!"

I'm home now and I'm safe. I'm still smeared head to toe in cream. I will be taking a WELL DESERVED bath once I've spoken to the police about the DISGRACEFUL actions of the staff who were too concerned with stacking shelves to de-escalate the situation.

I have Lush bath bombs ■