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Wanted: executive assistant to empty dishwasher Deborah Ross



Oh, to be rich and powerful, like Jermain Defoe, the Premier League footballer who plays for some club or other and who advertised for an “executive personal assistant” on the SecsintheCity website, with duties to include watering the plants, keeping the fridge stocked and making restaurant bookings along with other trifles such as taking care of his mother, creating global recognition for the Defoe brand, increasing his popularity on social media and producing iPhone apps in his name.

Defoe is effectively outsourcing himself, as is the way with the rich and powerful — J-Lo employs an “eyebrow assistant” and also a “coat carrier”, or so I once read — and, the fact is, I’m attracted to the idea, for why attend to your own life if you can make it someone else’s job?

With this in mind, I’ve decided to advertise for my own executive



personal assistant, who would be required to do the following for Deborah Ross (otherwise known as DeRo, for global branding purposes):

- Serve her watermelon with all the seeds removed, possibly while she is on some kind of throne.

- Call her mother regularly — every morning, ideally. (You will not be impeded by her father who, in the rare instances he answers the phone, will almost immediately say, in a panic-stricken manner: “I’ll pass you over to your mother.”)

- Take her fat bits (you’ll find her thighs a particularly rich source) and claim them for yourself.

- Book theatre and cinema tickets and generally keep her amused, even if it means having to trip while running for the bus, which always makes her laugh. (She’s not proud of this, btw; it’s just what happens whenever someone trips running for the bus.)

- Aid her work life by preventing her from spending all morning getting nothing done, then all afternoon asking herself how that was possible, then all evening curled up in a ball of self-loathing. (Should she spend all evening curled up in a ball of self-loathing, she will hold you responsible.)

- Do something, anything, about the garden: it’s crazy out there.

- Read the book of the moment, Hanya Yanagihara’s *A Little Life*, so she doesn’t have to continue — she’s up to page 100, doesn’t believe a word of it — then think of six smart things she can say, all of which must give the impression she made it to the end. (If you can read with one hand, she suggests you might Hoover with the other

while feather dusters, inserted in each ear, could be getting on with the picture rails.)

- Boost her Twitter popularity, which over the years has been hampered because she isn’t at all popular. Ideally, she would like you to sock it to her peers by having her timeline look like this: @deborahross: “Here is my *Times* column today.” @Salmanrushdie: “Love it!” @JKRowling: “You nailed it as usual!” @WoodyAllen: “Pissed myself laughing.” @God: “Best thing I’ve read in ages.” @martinamis: “Makes me wonder why I bother.” @deborahross: “Thank you. So many compliments can’t reply to all personally! *bashful face*”

- Perform all the household tasks she loathes, to include sock pairing, unstacking dishwasher, chasing coffee grounds along the kitchen worktop with a sponge and scrubbing the blackened roasting pan that has been “soaking” by the sink for about four years now, and has come to represent the power struggle within the house, as to who does what, and who says they are going to do what, then doesn’t.
- Develop the “DeRo” iPhone app to provide live reports, analysis and up-to-the minute news on her exciting life as half-empty husk and half-spoilt child now that she doesn’t have to do a single thing for herself and will shortly even forget how to wipe her own bum.

If you are interested in this position, you can apply at SecsBehindTheRecyclingBins. You will know you have been appointed when you get a letter from yourself, saying this is so.

Old yes, but still not wise

The film *45 Years*, which opens tomorrow, is about a long-married couple (Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay) who are thrown into existential crisis when he receives a letter about his first girlfriend, who died in an accident 50 years ago.

The news quietly discombobulates them both, but what struck me is how it felt truthful and how rarely older people are portrayed truthfully on screen.

Just because you are, say, in your seventies, or eighties, or nineties — the couple in the film are in their seventies, I’d say — it doesn’t mean you’ve stopped thinking about the world around you or your place in it. It doesn’t mean you’ve stopped having hopes and dreams. How often

is this ever shown?

Generally, older people are caricatured as been there, done that, wise now, got it sorted. This contradicts my own experience in that the older I get the more panicky and less confident I feel — my Twitter unpopularity has not helped me in this regard — and as to wisdom, I can’t think of anything of value I might impart.

If someone asked me about the most important thing I’d learnt in life, I think

I’d honestly have to come back with: Muji do the best duvet covers because they are zipped and therefore you don’t have to suffer those poppers that refuse to pop or those buttons that unbutton in the middle of the night. This is worth knowing. And I intend to pass it on to my grandchildren. But that’s it.

So I’d recommend *45 Years*, since it says what may in fact be the case: older people don’t cease being complex, and can be a mess too.

To beat ageing

Forget the old-style ‘skin stretch’ at 50. Gerald Imber, surgeon to the New York elite, says small procedures, done often, are the secret. By Barbara McMahon

Not long ago, the general approach to cosmetic surgery was as follows. Women didn’t feel they could do anything about ageing until things got really bad. Then one terrible day they looked in the mirror and saw the tired faces of their mothers looking straight back. That was enough to send them stampeding towards the scalpel, demanding everything the surgical fountain of youth could offer. Result? More often than not, disaster. With too much surgical work too late, women ended up with overstretched and unnatural-looking faces that screamed: “I’ve had work done.”

Today’s women are more knowledgeable about cosmetic surgery and make wiser choices. They opt for unobtrusive refresher procedures, regular tiny fixes and gentle surgeries that hold back the years in sophisticated, subtle ways. As 57-year-old Sharon Stone, posing nude and looking sensational in *Harper’s Bazaar*, said recently: “It’s so common now for people to have fillers, it’s almost like a beauty treatment.”

The actress and mother of three adopted sons, and a spokeswoman for the filler brand Restylane, added: “It’s a far better alternative than having your face cut apart and ending up looking like you got sucked into a wind tunnel.”

Some of this change in attitudes is down to the efforts of Dr Gerald Imber, a pioneer in the field of subtle facelifts and the go-to person in Manhattan for women of a certain age who want to remain... looking a certain age. The king of the tweak, master blaster of wrinkles and skilful upholsterer of sagging jawlines has a philosophy of self-help and less invasive surgical procedures performed throughout the thirties, forties and fifties that has helped thousands of women (and men) to age more gracefully.

“Most women don’t want to sit around and wait for ageing to become pronounced enough to need the old-fashioned, too-tight facelift that has given plastic surgery a bad name,” he says.

We are in his Youth Corridor clinic, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where most New York cosmetic surgeons work. Imber, who is in surgical scrubs, has carried out two facelifts this morning, each lasting about two hours, and the reconstruction of a nose lost through cancer. “Oh yes, we’ve got victims all over the place,” he jokes, as we pass the door to the operating suite.

Recognised as being among the top 1 per cent of cosmetic surgeons in the United States, the 74-year-old says most of his clients are women in their fifties. “I like to describe the people

I take care of as being more women-who-work than women-who-lunch,” he says. “I have lawyers, psychologists, professors, writers, politicians and people in film and the theatre. They’re some of the most powerful women in the country and what they want is to look as vital on the outside as they feel on the inside.”

Name names, I say. “Absolutely not,” says Imber. “When women come to me they are admitting there’s something they don’t like about their appearance. Their psychological defences are down and my job is to help them, not to trade on their names.”

He says he would not tell his globetrotting wife Cathryn Collins, who owns the luxury cashmere label I Pezzi Dipinti, if her best friend came to see him. “It’s a trust that I take very seriously.” All he will say is that he has worked on people in the last six administrations in Washington, has high-level clients in the media and has treated Oscar and Tony-award winners.

Trained as a general surgeon before moving into cosmetic surgery, Imber

“Don’t wait until you’re unhappy with what you see in the mirror

has shaken up the establishment several times. He was the first doctor in Manhattan to build an operating theatre on his premises. Then he began to question the one-size-fits-all facelift. “I thought we were doing too much surgery. Everybody got the same operation, everybody got their skin pulled. You did the same for a 54-year-old as you did for a 74-year-old and it didn’t make sense to me.”

At the time, he says, there was an attitude in his profession that the early changes in appearance brought about by ageing were not worth dealing with. “I thought that the earlier we became involved, the better. We had to help people to avoid the loosening and wrinkling that becomes severe enough to bring them to surgery because some of those things can never be reversed — or not fully reversed — and still look natural,” he explains.

He developed the limited-incision facelift, also known as the short-scar facelift, a less invasive procedure that has become the gold standard among plastic surgeons. He also popularised microsuction, a refined liposuction that removes jowls and tightens the jawline.

So what is the peculiar-sounding “youth corridor”? “The youth corridor is that time in life when you radiate beauty, health, energy and vitality,