

SIDE 1 – MARIE

Marie. LADIES! We are in NO sense ready for our harvest supper. Our guest speaker Brenda Hulse is coming up the path – (Barking Instructions) – we have no CHAIRS, Cora. No PROJECTOR, Ruth. Come ON ladies.

Chris, where are the flowers?

Chris. Ah, Now

Marie. (*Her world collapsing*) Oh. Chris-s

Chris. Marie, the thing is—

Marie. You said you'd bring in leftover flowers from the shop!

Chris. Yes. Well much against eh run of form, this week we actually sold some.

Marie. Oh/God –

Chris. We're not in a position to turn down any sales at the moment.

Marie. The thing is you *promise* these things Chris, and you don't deliver.

SIDE 2 – MARIE

Marie. What happened with Jenny is actually a perfect illustration of Cheshire as a whole. In Yorkshire... In *Yorkshire* the story would've been "teacher seduces sixth year girl". In Cheshire, in a private school, it was "young slut leads astray brilliant head of physics who had a ninety percent A-star pass rate." And the moment, Ruth, from THAT... (*she clicks her fingers*)...moment, the doors shut like – (*Beat*). We might as well have been going round Wilmslow selling lucky heather. (Calming) Yorkshire's just got a better class of person. Few notable exceptions of course...although I've decided not to make an issue of the calendar. For you, Ruth, to be honest. I know you didn't want to do it. But Chris...

SIDE 3 – CELIA

Cora. I'm just saying – Celia's front is never backwards in coming forwards.

Celia. And DAMN right it isn't. Which is exactly how it should be. Y'r breasts aren't something that should get hidden away for some bloody social-pathetic-whatever reason but I tell you what, thanks to women like the bloody golf club girls they ARE. And if my mum hadn't been too mortified to show doctors her breasts when the time came, we'd still have the rest of her. *(Beat)* Which is why what I'd like to say to the Hermes mafia of the Ladies Bar is "Get down to the WI girls. Come and hang out with the real women of this country and learn a little debauchery before it's too bloody late."

SIDE 4 – CELIA

One line Read

Celia. (*pulling out a micro stool to sit on*) Just cause I moved to Yourkshire doesn't mean I have to sit on it. (*about her pants*) These re Gina Pellegrini!

Scene Read

Annie. Maybe Marie's right. Maybe we have upset people.

Celia. Good. Some people need upsetting.

Annie. No, I mean...

Celia. I spend half my life with people who need upsetting

Annie. Shouldn't have joined a golf club.

Celia. D'you think I planned to? I was *lured*. I was *lured* to Yorkshire with all this "Ohh come back home love, let me take you back to live in God's country." I agree, we move... Suddenly e comes down with this disease called "golf". And it's terminal. Suddenly if I want to see him it means spending half my life with a group of women who – sorry "*ladies*" – who pathologically make rules to make sure *no one* gets upset! Rules for the putting green. And the locker room! And the car park. And the bar. And – God's SAKE – "Convention Codes for the Captain's dinner" so we don't stray off the subject of golf when all you can basically say about golf is "I didn't hit it straight so it missed the hole but if I had've hit it straight so it would've gone in the hole.

Cora. I I think you might need some counseling about this Ceel.

Celia. And of course all the stuff they really want to say still gets said. Just behind people's back. Usually mine.

SIDE 5 – JESSIE

Jessie. You know, the last time I heard the phrase “ a woman of your age”, it was my new, young headteacher explaining his reasons why I should retire. The following week I had to take over the school trip halfway up Plover Hill after he collapsed with exhaustion. I have never had a problem with age, my dear. I have only ever had a problem with me. Any teacher who has seen the years pass with lengthening legs and shortening skirts has felt old since she was thirty. And the danger, girls, of age, is what you think age expects of you. Witness my mother, who at the age of sixty considered a day when the postman and the gas man called to be one where she was quote, “run off her feet”. Why? Because the small incidents of life will expand to fill the hours you allot them, and the saddest thing on God’s earth is those with the fewest hours left allowing less and less to fill more and more.

SIDE 6 – JESSIE & RUTH

Jessie. No, I'm sorry Ruth. I know it's a very sad state of affairs, but I have come to dread this Spring Fete, I REALLY have.

Ruth. Oh come on Jess, it's fantastic, having it on home soil! It's always up at High Ghyll! AND we've got a full turnout! Annie's baking one of her cakes, Cora's doing "Tea Tray Decorated on an international Theme"...

Jessie. Precisely. The events are completely ridiculous. I mean for a kick off – and I know you don't like bad language but you are dressed as a bloody mouse!

Ruth. I'm a rabbit. I was up all night making this. I just eed some coathangers to keep me ears up. What's you're event?

Jessie. *(Bitterly).* "Arrangement of Flowers Inspired by a Song." Shoot me now.

Ruth. I think Marie in fairness just wanted to make sure we had an entry in each category because –

Jessie. Because she's toadying Ruth. Because the judge is Lady Cravenshire. She's got me decorating baskets for a landowner's wife. Now if that makes you feel good, fine, but it makes *me* feel like a bloody feudal peasant.

Ruth. Jessie.

Jessie. Sorry *(She tips a basket of flowers upside down)*

Ruth. Well what song's that?

Jessie. "Where Have All the Flowers gone?"

SIDE 7 – RUTH / ELAINE

Elaine. SO. Let's just pop yourself down on that, my love and make you comfy. I'm Elaine from the Craven Health Spa. There's my card.

Ruth. I've already got one.

Elaine. Lovely. What I'm going to do be doing for the television is a little basic T-Zone and A-Zone. Have you ever had that done before?

Ruth. No

Elaine. Oh you'll love it. Cause you're the lady – wasn't it the organizer, Chris, wasn't she telling me they were all going to do it and you WEREN'T and then you suddenly changed your mind at the last minute?

Suddenly got the confidence up! Its funny how that happens, isn't it? You know, a lot of ladies find that when they've had our "Dead Sea Salt treatment", they get this inner kind of – "wha"? to do things

Ruth. Possibly.

Elaine. Absolutely

Ruth. Although I think with me it was likely more fiding your underwear in the map pocket of Eddies Peugeot.

You know? The little red ones? I mean I'm not surprised you didn't notice you hadn't got them on afterwards, they couldn't've provided much insulation. But there was one of these? Little business card. Must have fallen out of your bag in the whole... *(She smiles)* ... melee, you know? And that's when I thought, "Well maybe he'd see me in a different light if I went and did this calendar!" Pointlessly, as it turns out. "Cause what I hadn't realized is that a woman who takes her clothes of on a calendar is at "tart" whereas one who does it in a lay-by is a really good sport. But hey. What I DID get to realize is that Eddie Reynoldson is one of those guys who wouldn't understand beauty if it was staring him in the face. And you know how I worked that out, love? *(Beat)*. Because it was. Now in fairness fuck off back to him.

SIDE 8 – BRENDA

Brenda. *(as she presents a slide show)* Ladies. This harvest come with me, as I invite you into the fascinating world...of broccoli.

Broccoli has perhaps one of the most surprising lineages of any vegetable, and yet many persist in ranking it along merely with the carrot... or sprout... It is perhaps also the only vegetable rumored to share a common ancestry with *this* man. James Bond.

Yes, “Cubby” Broccoli who produced ALL the James Bond f.. (projector breaks)

Marie. Oh for crying out loud – RUTH! Brenda, I’m so sorry!

Brenda. Has it broken? I can’t do it without the slides.

SIDE 9 - JOHN

John. Ohh God. That's it. I knew it'd happen. I've turned into the third person.

Marie. Right Sorry. *(Beat)* How's the...

John. My treatment's going fine, love. And you know what cheers me up? That WI calendar with your lovely photos of Yorkshire churches. Being able to mark my chemotherapy appointments under images of misty graveyards.

Serious. I'd taken it in and one of the guys at the hospital, porter, Lawrence, great lad, GREAT photographer. *(To Annie)* God you should see some of the ones he's done of his parents –

Annie. Finish your story.

John. *(to Marie)* About your calendar. *Very complimentary.*

SIDE 10 – JOHN & ANNIE

John. Come here, you. How was your day? Thrill me. Tell me something I didn't know about broccoli.

Annie. Put it this way. I now know as much about broccoli as Chris knows about t'ai chi. (John laughs). The only difference is, I don't try to teach a class on it.

John. Hey. Don't knock it. Thirty years ago if that woman hadn't fallen off a table trying to get a whole Chinese restaurant singing Jumping Jack Flash, you and I would never have met. I only plucked up courage to ask you to the cinema cause I was picking noodles out of your hair.

Annie. You were up to Grizedale?

John. I was. Overseeing junior rangers putting up forest fences. God, they all look about twelve.

Annie. I know.

John. *(After a beat).* This afternoon I nipped in to see ol' Doc Morton.

Annie. (Instantly turning to ice). Today? I thought you wanted me with you?

John. Mrs. Clarke. There isn't a day goes by when I don't. *(Beat.)* I just kind of needed to get the results on me own.

Annie. So what did it? ... The blood, the cells, what was it in the end? They think it's OK. *(Telling him the answer she wants to hear. It isn't)* Fixable. With blood. It's just – transfusion, isn't it? Did he say...? What er – what it'll take?

SIDE 11 – CHRIS AND ANNIE

Annie. Chris?

Chris. Oh Annie, can you come over here?

Annie. Why aren't you at the bridal fair?

Chris. I'm not there because –

Annie. Where's Rod?

Chris. (*Slightly irritated*). He's – just... I'm not there because of John, Annie. To be honest. Because I woke up this morning and asked myself, what's more important? That we raise enough for that settee or that some drippy girl from Hull gets a lily-of-the-valley bridal posy? Wasn't much of a competition. John comes first.

Annie. Does he?

Chris. What's that supposed to mean? Is there a problem?

Annie. Please don't ask me if there's a problem, Chris. When we're selling soap wearing dayglo sunflowers.

Chris. For a photoshoot, I am. For John. (*Annie snorts*). What?

Annie. "For John" That's good. That you still think that.

Chris. Is this 'cause I've organized it? Got us a sponsor? Finally followed through on something? Finally made the calendar a success?

Annie. No. Y'see what's actually happened, Chris, what's actually happened is that this calendar's made YOU a success.

Chris. And not YOU, of course? Not bloody - - Florence Nightengale. Sleeping in churches. Answering letters. LOADS of people lose partners to this disease. I bet THEY don't get FAN MAIL. Wouldn't you say that's made YOU a "success"? A very successful... "bereaved woman"? A-a- a "celebrity widow? (*Beat*) "Saint Annie of Knapeley?" Eh? (*Beat*) Hey?

Annie. I'm not a saint. Because I would rob every penny of this calendar to buy one more hour with him. (*Beat*) And you've still got yours. (*in tears*) And you're here.

SIDE 12 – CHRIS

Chris. Ladies, I have just set a world record for Knapeley. In ONE morning, I've done three radio interviews, PLUS a magazine...

Cora. Did they ot want to talk to all of us?

Chris. They – yes. They will eventually. PLUS STANDBY. STANDBY FOR THE BIG ONE. ANNIE? I have recently been exchanging phone calls with a very nice lady in *London, OK*, who has asked if we'd agree... Annie, are you getting this?... Tomorrow, OK, in this church hall... to be on *television*.

Annie. For the calendar?

Chris. They're sending a *beautician* out – look – from the Craven Health Spa... And this is the best bit – how about THIS? I suddenly think “there's a move to be made here.” Straight on the phone to Dickens and Bent in Skipton. “Hello Miss October here.” Knew *exactly* who I was! “Going to be appearing on television, how's about you making a little donation to the cause? Ta- daa!

SIDE 13 – CHRIS & ANNIE

Ruth. This isn't your event. Wasn't Annie down for the baking?

Chris. Annie has currently got more on her plate than cakes.

Ruth. Oh, but still she won't forget. Normally Annie is the one who NEVER...

Chris. Ruth, she's spent the last three months on the 59 running John in and out of Skipton Hospital. "Normally" has gone out of the window.

Annie. CHIRS-S! THE CAKE! OHM MY GOD! THE STALL – OUR ENTRY – I WAS SUPPOSED TO BAKE A CAKE.

Chris. (*To Ruth*) Told you

Ruth. It's all right. Chris has saved the day

Chris. Ta-da!

Annie. You *baked* something?

Chris. Look, I'm not a total dead loss as a woman you know. I can't knit or make plum jam but I can bake a bloody Victoria sponge.

Annie. All right, all right. Thank you.

Chris. I mean I haven't baked THIS one, like. I got it from Marks and Spencers, but in PRINCIPLE...

Annie. WHAT? MARKS AND SPENCERS?

Chris. We have to enter something for the points

Annie. You can't enter a bought cake!

Chris. Why not?

Annie. I am not entering a BOUGHT CAKE!

Chris. Right. Then / will. Make way for my glorious cake!

SIDE 14 – CHRIS

Chris. (*Cutting in when Annie could not go on while trying to explain about buying the bench for the hospital where her husband died*) HOLD ON HOLD ON A MINUTE WITH YOUR BLODDY BUZZER. Sorry but the *other* delegate from Knapeley's got something to say and she's about to commit heresy. (*Loudly*). I HATE plum jam. I only joined the WI because it made my mother-in-law happy. End of Story. (*Counting on her fingers*). I'm crap at cakes, I hate *knitting* - and in face seeing it's unlikely George Clooney would ever come to Knapeley to give a talk on his collection of slightly- too – small swimming trunks, there seems very little reason for me to STAY in the WI. *Except* - SUDDENLY I want to raise money in memory of a man we all loved. And to do that I'm prepared to take my clothes off on a calendar. (*Beat*) And if you guys don't agree then I'm going to do it without council approval because FRANKLEY, guys, some things are bigger than council approval. And FRANKLEY if it meant we'd get – (*gestures a "tiny amount"*) – THAT-T much closer to killing off this shitty, cheating, sly, conniving, silent bloody disease that cancer is then God, I tell ya. I would run around Skipton market smeared in plum jam with knitted tea cozy on my head singing *Jerusalem*

SIDE 15 – ROD

Rod. *(After having had a couple of beers).* HA HEY! Has anyone ever told you you're the most byyyootiful wife a man could ever have?

Chris. Yes. You, every time y've had more than two pints.

Rod. Are you aware that Marie is walking round in a hat the size of a NASA satellite dish?

Chris. She'll be tracking Lady Cravenshire. Any money, by now Marie will have started speaking like she's at the Cheshire Polo Club. How are we doing out there?

Rod. The latest results from Knapeley Springs Fete. *(Announcing Into a beer bottle microphone).* High Ghyll have scored five point sevens in baking with a display of synchronized flapjacks. West Hedben however have been disqualified from Garden Produce after their winning courgette was found to have been born a cucumber...

Chris. Y'know what, go back to your beer tent!

Rod. Results from the lemon curd are delayed until the judge has finished being sick.

Chris. Look – I am only here at ALL 'cause of you, Rod Harper. I oly joined the WI to make your mother think I was respectable!

Rod. Didn't work.

SIDE 16 – ROD

Rod. I bought them to celebrate the fact that somewhere out there across the dales of Yorkshire, a manufacturer of personalized wedding cakes has come down with a summer cold? And has consequently pulled out of the Bridal Fair in Leeds! We're in!

Chris. No "we" can't be. "We're" going to be on television!

Rod. Right. But at these fairs, you're better at all the actual selling, "meeting people" stuff. You're just.... (to Annie) She's fantastic at that.

Chris. Rod! It's *television!*

Rod. Chris, we're going to the bridal fair. We don't have the luxury *not* too.

Annie. We'll be fine Rod. She doesn't have to be here.

Rod. But I want her to be here Annie. That's the thing. I want her to have all this. (*Beat*) Never make a business out of something you love. I go for a walk now up Grizedale, see all the flowers and I think. "It's you little bastards who are screwing us over." (*Shaking his head*). Then again, John managed it, didn't he? (*Beat*) Worked that park for thirty years, never stopped banging on about how beautiful it was. Couldn't bloody shut him up.

SIDE 17 – LADY CRAVENSHIRE

Lady Cravenshire. Oh now this is certainly Victorian... (*beat*) I mean the main church building certainly has the feel of Victoria.

Marie. Wonderful. Lady Cravenshire, please do come in.

Lady Cravenshire. Ladies. Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of your Spring Fete. I do LOVE coming down this part of the dale. As ever, it's inspiring to see the amount of enthusiasm on display in all disciplines, especially those in the "fancy dress" competition, which of course this year is on a theme of "Cowboys and Indians" (*collective groan – she is way out of touch*).

Some of the baking categories have been judged and I'm pleased to announce that the winner of this year's May Wilkinson trophy for Victoria sponge maximum twelve inch diameter is Knapeley entry 2-1-3! AND I'm ALSO proud to announce that this cake also wins the overall Lady Cravenshire Discretionary Award!

SIDE 18 – LAWRENCE

Lawrence. (*Nervous as hell.*) Right. Well. When you – when they came in the hospital – Chris and Annie – about this – this calendar what you’re wanting to sell at the Yorkshire Show...what it... what they er...

CORA. Christ, love, if you’re intimidated NOW, what are you gonna be like when Celia takes her blouse off?

Lawrence. (*Swallowing almost audibly.*) It should be what John said. When I was pushing him round. Talking to him about what it was you all did in here. He reckoned all the jam-making and knitting was basically a front for a load of respectable middle aged women to get together and go nuts.. That’s what your calendar should be.

At first glance, the photos should look like your classic WI calendar. All your traditional... cakes, jam, sewing an’ that. *Everything* y’d expect. Except for one tiny thing. The person doing it is naked.

Everyone. Nude

Annie. You’re right. John would’ve love loved this.

Lawrence. (*Warming up.*) See so each month, y’see, y’d get a different girl... - painting, knitting, gardening here, see...until December when I thought we could do a group one of you all together singing Christmas Carols

SIDE 19 – CORA

Cora. There's one small problem. He's a *bloke*.

Jessie. I thought the point was we're not actually going to be showing anything.

Cora. On the *photographs*. I imagine there's going to be considerably more on display in the actual bloody *room*.

Chris. Cora, we've been through this. An artist doesn't see a naked woman. He see's a "life model".

Cora. Look. I'm sorry, OK. I'm sorry. It's just – Ruby has already ... got me down as a woman who makes a habit of "parading herself in front of men."

Chris. Why?

Cora. *Because I lost touch with her dad, Ceel.* Because I'm the kind of mother who "loses touch" with the father.

Chris. Cora – a...

Cora. I am a vicar's daughter, a single mother and the church organist.

Chris. And?

Cora. *(the sudden summation of her life hits her out of left field.)* And if I'm not gonna get them out now, when am I? (*Beat*) Lord forgive me, I know not what I bloody do.

SIDE 20 – CORA

Celia. Why did you lose touch with Ruby's dad? It always sounds like you loved him.

Cora. *(Beat. She did love him.)* I lost touch in return for board and lodging. Which is what happens. If you're young and pregnant. And scared. And you're father's a vicar who professes to love all men but when it comes down to it not actually black American's that much.

Celia. Have you not just told Ruby this?

Cora. Yes. Oh God, Celia. But at the end of the day she wants to find her dad. An' I don't blame her. An' believe me, it's not for want of trying.

SIDE 21 – LIAM

Liam. Hello?

Chris. I think – might be a problem with some of the others....

Liam. Right. Well. (*Beat*) Looks like it's just you. I'll let the agency know but they'll be cool with that. End of the day all they want is someone from the WI, nude. That's all it's about, isn't it, all this? That's the *frission*. ANDY, CAN YOU CLEAR THE KITCHEN? (*To Chris*) Little bit of privacy. *You* cool with it? Being just "you?" (*Smiling*) Don't mind being the "star"?

SIDE 22 – ELAINE

Elaine. No no no, this is fine, ladies, there's enough light in here. We'll do it in here. This is where they're going to be filming you so if you look all right in here, where' winning aren't we, hey? Just wait one second. I'll get the magic makeup.

Right. HERE we are ladies-s! How are we *doing*?

Jessie. Do her first. I'g going round the back to score some crack.

Elaine. *(Confused)* Right-t. SO Let's just pop yourself down on that, my love, make you comfy. I'm Elaine from the Craven Health Spa.