

Audition pieces

Annie:

Chris says not to worry and I always do what she tells me! That's how I ended up in the bloody WI. It was a lucky day that Chris ended up being my best friend. The teacher asks Chris to tell us where Mount Kilimanjaro is and Chris asks me for the answer. I looked her in the eyes and said 'It's in Wales'. She got a detention for that, actually she got a detention because she already had a reputation. On which subject, can I say, Marie's gonna get suspicious if these projector bulbs keep blowin' every time we have a dull guest speaker.

(talking to John in the garden)

So, how was your day? The hospital rang? So they've had all the ...? You got the results back? Not that it matters that much 'cause it's fixable anyway – with blood. Whatever. There's transfusions and god knows what. Transfusions and.. and....

(arguing with Chris)

No, y'see what's actually happened, Chris, what's *actually* happened, is that this calendar's made YOU a success. How dare you suggest that I am a successful "bereaved woman". A – a -a "celebrity widow". I am not a saint. Because I would rob every penny of this calendar to buy one more hour with my husband. And you've still got yours ... and you're here!

John:

The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty. But the last phase is always the most glorious – then very quickly they all go to seed. Which makes it ironic that my favourite flower isn't indigenous to the British Isles, let alone Yorkshire. I don't think there is anything on this planet that more trumpets life than the sunflower. For me, that's because of the reason behind its name. Not because it 'looks like the sun'. Because it follows the sun. During the course of each day, the head tracks the journey of the sun across the sky. A satellite dish for sunshine. Sow these seeds and you'll see that wherever light is, these flowers will find it. Which is such an admirable thing and such a lesson in life.

Chris:

(addressing WI National Conference)

Hold on! Hold on a minute with your bloody buzzer! The other delegate from Knapely's here and about to commit heresy. I hate plum jam. I only joined the WI to try 'an make my mother in law happy. I'm crap at cakes, I hate knitting and in fact there seems very little reason for me to stay in the WI. Except we want to raise money in memory of a man who we loved. Everyone at our WI loved. And to do that – instead of a conventional calendar – we want to do an alternative one. And by 'alternative' we mean 'nude'. And if you guys don't agree then we're going to do it without the approval of this convention because frankly frankly.... some things are bigger than conventional approval. If anything meant we'd get that much closer to killing off this shitty, cheating, sly, conniving, silent bloody disease that cancer is then God, I tell y', I would run naked round Skipton market, smeared in plum jam with a knitted tea cosy on my head singing 'Jerusalem!'

Lawrence:

(Nervously introducing his idea for the Calendar)

I've had a chance to think about the photos so ... I'd. Yes. Right, ok. So....Ok. I do wildlife. I only did that portrait of me gran 'cause John got me to. Well, nagged.

Most people in the hospital never ask what I do, y, know? They mostly talk about themselves. But he was the opposite an' I won this camera. So I reckon I owe him one. Also, he said he reckoned the W.I. counted as 'wildlife'.

Which made me think. That's what your calendar should be. 'Creatures in their native habitat'. At first glance, your classic W.I. calendar. All your traditional cakes, jam, sewing an' that. Everything y'd expect. Except for one tiny thing. The person doing it is ...is nude.

Cora:

If y'r a single mum whose dad is a vicar sadly 'alternative' is not a good thing to be. How can I be a 'great' mother if I started my career as a mum round the back of Morrisons with a blues guitarist ... I know I said I met Tommo's dad studying classical music and I did ... in the blues club where I went to escape the other people studying classical music.

My dad's a bit of a snob. I needed a roof over our heads. I knew he could just about cope with the idea of me being seduced by a classical violinist. God could that guy play the blues

Ruth:

It'll be the fuse! My Eddie always says "Check the fuse!" Nine out of ten times it's actually the bulb that's gone.

Why did I join the WI? In fairness, I joined for baking. My Eddie said no-one made scones like his mum an' I thought 'I will meet that challenge!'

I asked Marie to come an' help plant John's sunflowers because she's on her own an' it can get lonely, y' know? Sometimes some of us who've got fellas can forget that.

Nude calendars! Oh I get it! I see what you're doing. Ok, well, look, I have to say it's not – as you'll appreciate – normally my kind of thing, but if it helps raise money for a good cause, I don't mind buying one.

Jessie:

'Age'? ... was 'age' the word cowering at the end of that row of dots? I keep telling you, my dear. By the time I was compelled to retire I had been a teacher nearly fifty years. Being a teacher is a very singular profession. You watch the years advance with lengthening legs and shortening skirts in a relentless calibration of time passing. And what, you may ask, does it make you? An expert in being old. 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. And so the thing is girls no front bottoms. I'll do your calendar as long as there's no front bottoms. That's a sight I've reserved for only one man in my life.... And it wasn't my husband.

Marie:

(to Chris)

I've just passed Ruth outside the Co-op, asked where she'd been and she told me what you were all doing in here! Could almost see her thinking 'should I tell her, should I say?' But she can't lie, can she, Ruth? So accommodating. But then isn't everybody round here? This gang. This poor little beaten-down group who've lived their entire life in the tornado path of your great ideas. Tell me Chris out of interest seriously... is there a part of you that actually believes people might want to spend January looking at you naked behind a malt loaf? But the truth is who cares what other people want as long as they get to see 'Chris Harper'. 'Former Miss Yorkshire'! At least be honest for once, you are doing this for Chris Harper! Why should I care if you try to attach this to the name of the Women's Institute? If you feel your duty is to strip off behind a malt loaf you knock yourself out Chris, but please appreciate mine is to protect an Institute I love.

Rod:

(to Chris)

What my mum said was "Rod, don't go out with Christine Butler". What John Clarke said was "Rod, go out with Christine Butler". And what happened? You dragged Annie up to dance on a table and it collapsed and then John ended up asking his future wife to the cinema. Our married life has been a series of bad ideas. "Let's dance on a table." "Let's open a flower shop." "You can't get pregnant after a curry." Not one of 'em hasn't worked out. Your son needs to learn that life is all about coping fabulously with terrible mistakes. And while he learns, I'm not having him change my wife. I didn't marry you for an easy path, Chris Harper. I married you for crazy paving.

Celia

Do you think I planned to join the golf club? I was *lured*. I was *lured* to Yorkshire with all this “Ohh came back ‘ome, love, let me take you back to live in God’s county”. I agree, we move suddenly he 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 - sorry, ‘*ladies*’ – who pathologically make rules to make sure no one get upset! Rules for the putting green. And the locker room. And the car park. And the bar. And “Conversation Codes for the Captain’s Dinner” so we don’t stray off the subject of golf. There’s a new sign in the ladies locker room requesting members ‘monitor their cleavage’. And of course all the stuff they really want to say still gets said. Just behind people’s backs. Usually mine.

Jenny

(offering a drink to Danny who refuses)

Y’ve just seen y’r mum get her gongs out on a hill. Tell y’ what though. Won’t stop her telling you how you should behave. Havin’ a car crash of a marriage doesn’t stop her givin’ relationship advice. First thing she said when she came down off the hill was ‘Jennifer – in the lounge”

(speaking to Chris about joining the WI)

Do I need to fill somethin’ in to join? Me mother didn’t put me up to this. She thinks I’m upstairs revising. Hey, an’ don’t tell her I helped y’ make this calendar will you? I wanna be the one who does that. And don’t tell me girls like me don’t join the WI, because they do – you did.

Tommo

Actually they said single parents didn’t have to bother with parents evening. Y’know. ‘Two chairs’. ‘Are we waiting for dad to come – oh there isn’t one’. Awkward. That kind of thing.

(at the fete)

Oh my god Danny, I am in. I am in! With Celia. Your mum’s mate with the impressive rack of I am being groomed mate. I am being groomed. It can

only mean one thing when an older woman looks deep in y'r eyes and starts talking about courgettes

Danny

(Rehearsing for his election hustings for head boy)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. CANDIDATE THREE FOR HEAD BOY, DANNY HARPER!

(he goes for 'stern')

Students of Knapely High. My name is Daniel Harper.

(tries suave)

Hi, students of Knapely. The name's Harper, Danny Harper.

(tries cool)

Yo, yo, students of Knapely. Wass 'up! Dan the man is h-oh for f – what is that?

Notes:

Marie, Lady Cravenshire and Brenda Hulse are non-singing parts, but can be drawn from the ensemble.

The Miss Wilsons have almost no dialogue but join the ensemble songs and take part in the photo shoot!