

ANNIE

40 – 60, Annie will join in mischief, but is at heart, more conformist and less confrontational than Chris. After Chris has put a waiter's back up in the restaurant, Annie will go in and make things right. The mischievousness Chris elicits saves Annie from being a saint. She has enough edge to be interesting, and enough salt not to be too sweet.

Chris turns back to her oldest friend and knows what's going on in there

Chris How does he do it? How did such a beautiful man end up with an old git like you?

Annie *(Annie manages a smile)* He'll freeze. Where's that blanket Ruth knitted for Africa and they sent back?

Chris *(“I'll get it”).* How was today?

Annie Fine. Long as it's not septicaemia, we're always fine.

Chris Right. That's...?

Annie Septicaemia means the chemo stops working. *(Beat)* Mind you it's me who's gonna get septic off that bloody settee in the relatives' room.

Chris Oh God thank GOD you've said that. I thought it was just me putting on weight. It's lethal isn't it? Bloody prongs... They're gonna need another wing soon, for relatives of people who got injured in the bloody relatives' room. *(There's a car horn outside)* Did I ever show you where it scratched me?

Annie *(re Chris's dress)* No, love. But one gust of wind tonight –

Chris Get OFF!

A sudden harsh spotlight slices through the darkness. Annie walks with trepidation towards it, into the limelight. The warning light pings to green. She can go.

Annie Ladies of the WI. *(Pause - It echoes “WI ... WI ... WI ...” It freaks her.)* We of the Knapeley Branch have been asked here to National Conference, to – to – *(she swallows)* explain... *(she breathes in)* what we're trying to do is a calendar... *(she nods)* A WI ... to sell at the Yorkshire Show. To buy a seat. *Settee.* For the hospital. Skipton Gen...

There's a buzz. The amber light comes on. It throws Annie completely

General. Which is where John... *(Beat)* My John ...

Annie loses all speech when she says that name. It is still like a bee sting in her mouth. A short buzz for the red light makes her jump. The warning light changes to red.

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

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

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

Chris Yes. I do. And I think John'd think you were acting –

Annie Let me tell you what *I* think John'd think, OK? "Annie, you're a woman who once took her clothes off because of me, and who now takes them off because 'that's what she does'."

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

This hurts

Chris and not YOU of course? Not bloody – Florence Nightingale. Sleeping in churches. Answering letters. LOADS of people lose partners to this disease. I bit 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. Beause I would rob every penny of this calendar to buy one more hour with him. *(Beat)* And you've still got yours.

Annie starts to cry. And it's the crying she always needed to do

(In tears) And you're here!

Chris was the cloudbuster, who now can't go to her because of the Grand Canyon that's opened up between them. Annie leaves.