

CHRIS

40 – 60 Chris is the life of the party. She will talk to people she doesn't know, fill any awkward silences and generate laughter. Chris is at home in a crowd because she loves holding court and being the centre of attention. Without Chris in her life, Annie would be better behaved, but she wouldn't have as much fun. When they are together they are like naughty schoolgirls.

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!

Chris HOLD ON, HOLD ON A MINUTE WITH YOUR BLOODY BUZZER *(She takes the stand)* Sorry, but the OTHER delegate for 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 cake, I hate *knitting* – and in fact 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 FRANKLY if it meant we'd get – *(she 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 y', I would run round Skipton market smeared in plum jam with a knitted tea cosy on my head singing *Jerusalem*.

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.