

MARIE

Around 50, Marie has gradually built the current “Marie” around herself over the years as a defense mechanism. She went to her Oz, Cheshire, and found Oz didn’t want her. She came back scorched. The WI is a trophy to her, which justifies her entire existence. There is a lingering part of Marie that would love to be on that calendar.

Marie No, I must say, I was sorry to miss the Yorkshire Show. I do enjoy it. It’s one of the things I missed most when we were living in Cheshire.

Ruth No. Well. Yes

Marie I mean they do HAVE a show, Cheshire. But it’s – *(scrunching her nose)* There is a fundamental difference, you see, Ruth. Yorkshire people go to the Yorkshire Show to see animals. Cheshire people go to the Cheshire Show to see other people from Cheshire. To preen. And peacock. And you know me, Ruth. The one thing I can’t stand is snobbery.

Marie serves again, brutally, and wins the point

Two love.

Ruth *(picking up the shuttlecock)* Talking of Cheshire, actually, Marie... I er... *(waving loosely)* – wondering if you might have a word with Cora?

Marie She’s not thinking of moving?

Ruth No. I mean she’s having a tough time of it with her daughter at the moment. And even though it was a very different thing what happened to your Jenny, I-

Marie *(in like lightning)* You didn’t mention anything?

Ruth Oh no –

Marie To Cora?

Ruth NO, of –

Marie To anyone?

Ruth - course. I never have. I NEVER have, I...

Ruth hands Marie back the shuttlecock

Two love

Marie goes to her serving square, brooding, instead of serving

Marie What happened with Jenny is actually a perfect illustration of Cheshire as a whole. *(She preens the shuttlecock)* In Yorkshire...In *Yorkshire*, the story would've been: "Teacher Seduces Sixth Form 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 tinkers. We might as well have been going round Wilmslow selling lucky heather. *(Calm, calm)* Yorkshire's just got a better class of person. *(Putting her arm up to serve)* Few notable exceptions of course... *(She goes to serve, but doesn't)*... although I've decided not to make an issue of the calendar.

Ruth Oh right. Oh *good*. I think in fairness, Chris just wanted –

Marie For you, to be honest, Ruth. *(She readies to serve)* I know you didn't want to do it. But Chris – *(She bites it back)* You're a very accommodating person. Sometimes it's the ones who are accommodating who get taken advantage of.

Pause. This seems to strike Ruth hard.

Marie serves. Ruth, in an unnatural spasm of grit, plays a great return.

Ruth *(grittedly victorious)* Yes.

Marie Actually, Ruth, I think that would have gone in the net. *(Or if Ruth misses) Ruth, d'you think it's time you had some lessons?*

Marie And well done for staying here, Chris. Well done for staying put in the flower shop. Which is of course what all this is all about, isn't it? Really? The golden girl who was Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. The girl who everyone thought would be a weather girl. The girl who performed in the pencil skirt at the French Evening and got all the lads' tongues lolling and ended up in a flower shop on the Skipton Road and is now just *desperate* for a bit of the front of the stage again? Not a whole play, by the way. Not the hard work, line-learning – God, that takes following things through. No, it's just the little front-of-curtains – *(Putting her arms out)* "Pow"! the little shot of, "look at me, I'm doing t'ai che!" "Pow! I'm organizing a vodka night".