

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.” (*Pointing*) Knew *exactly* who I was! “Going to be appearing on television, how’s about you making a little donation to the cause ...?” (*She unzips one of the suiters*) Ta-daa! (*She unleashes a chic black dress*)

Jessie Oh now *hell-o*.

Celia They’re not Pellegrini ...? (*She checks the label*) Oh my God! They’re Gina Pellegrini!

Chris What did I tell you? Coordinated image! Picked up like THAT! Go on. Try them on. We’ve got to phone back any changes.

Celia, Cora and Jessie exit into the kitchen with some excitement and cross-chat

Ruth is still looking at the card intently, so Chris puts a triumphant arm around her

Chris (*to Annie, indicating Ruth*) Look at this! Stunned to silence! Top drawer, that, isn’t it Ruth, hey? The Craven Health Spa? Isn’t that where Eddie goes?

Beat

Ruth (*finding a smile*) Yeah. Yeah, it’s er —

Chris (*herding Ruth off*) Go on, go on, get those measurements! Annie!

Ruth exits

(*Honing in on Annie*) Annie-e! What d’you think?

Annie (*quietly*) It’s happened to them.

Chris What?

Annie shows her a letter

Annie Just like it happened to me.

Chris takes a letter and looks at it

What do I say? I mean, I can’t not ... (“Respond”. *Beat*) It’s like they’ve written to me for help.

Chris You *are* helping them. You did a calendar, remember?

Rod (*off*) LADIES AND GENTLEMEN ...

Rod enters with a bunch of sunflowers

Rod It’s Mister October!

Chris Rod —

Rod grabs Chris and hugs her

Rod Has anyone ever told you, you’re the most b-yyyooootiful wife a man could/ ever — ?

Chris (*being hugged*) Rod what are you playing at?

Rod So what, a husband’s not allowed to buy his wife a bouquet now, for a celebration? Where d’you want them? (*He heads towards the kitchen*)

Chris Rod, you can’t — (*She pulls him back*) There’s naked women out there.

Rod Love, it’s Knapeley. There’s naked women everywhere. (*He winks*) Hey, Annie.

Annie (*slightly embarrassed*) Hi, Rod.

Chris We had these in the shop?

Rod (*dropping his head in mock shame*) I had to go to Tesco. (*To Annie*) John wouldn’t bloody approve of THAT, would he, eh? David has bought these from the hand of Goliath.

Annie They’re beautiful.

Chris How did you know?

Rod What?

Chris (*confused*) You said you bought these to celebrate —

Rod I did! 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!

Chris (*slightly irritated*) What?

Rod (*holding up a necktag*) ... and has consequently pulled out of the Northern Bridal Fair in Leeds! We’re in! (*Putting it on himself*) Tomorrow my darling we are stand number two-one-nine!

Chris No, “we” can’t be. “We’re” going on *television*!

Rod What?

Chris Isn’t it great?

Beat

Rod Right. But at these fairs you’re better at all the actual selling, “meeting people” stuff. You’re just ... (*Feeling awkward in front of Annie. He smiles at her*) She’s fantastic at that.

Chris Rod! (*As if this explains everything*) It’s **TELEVISION**!

Rod *(suddenly hard as nails)* Chris, we're going to the bridal fair. We don't have the luxury not to.

Chris knows they don't. But she wants that TV so badly

Chris looks at Rod and his flowers but has no words. So she just leaves. And leaves behind a rather messy silence

Annie looks at Rod, who is clearly slightly wounded by this

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. *(He just about finds a smile for Annie)* 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." *(He looks to the sunflowers)* 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. *

Annie lets this settle. It's true

Annie Rod, how bad ARE things with the shop?

Pause

Rod Try and keep 'em cool.

Rod leaves. That's answer enough

Annie watches where he went for a beat, then takes the sunflowers out

SCENE 6

The church hall. The next day

New day. New girl. Elaine enters, a younger beautician, stunningly white in a pharmaceutical dress

Elaine No no no no, this is fine, ladies, there's enough light in here. We'll do it in here.

Ruth and Jessie enter from the kitchen. They have paper collar-protectors round their necks

(Steering Jessie to a chair) This is where they're going to be filming you so if you look all right in here, we're winning aren't we, hey?! Just wait one second. I'll get the magic make-up.

Elaine exits

Ruth and Jessie watch her go

Jessie D'you think people like her get a kick out of treating people like they're Special Needs? D'you reckon it's some kind of psychological inversion that makes her feel younger if she treats everyone else like they're senile?

Ruth Well I suppose in fairness she/ just —

Jessie Ruth, I have never met anyone who uses the phrase "in fairness" as much as you do.

Ruth Well, I'm sorry./ I —

Jessie No no, don't apologize. It's not wrong. It's the better way. *(She fiddles with her collar)* Don't get drawn into agreeing with my bitter ruminations. That's just me, grown venomous by years of exposure to schoolchildren. *(She rubs Ruth's arm and smiles)* Much softer is our Ruth.

Elaine returns with her magic box

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

Jessie *(in a gummy senile way)* Who's moved me television?

Elaine *(stopping and frowning)* What was that?

Jessie Never mind. *(She nods at Ruth)* Do her first. I'm going round the back to score some crack.

Jessie leaves

Elaine *(a little confused)* Right-t. SO. Let's just pop yourself down on that-t, my love, make you comfy. *(On autopilot she produces a pink business card)* I'm Elaine from the Craven Health Spa-a ... *(She offers Ruth the card)* There's my card.

Ruth I've already got one.

Elaine Lovely. What I'm going to 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? Is that right?