

Silence. Lady Cravenshire is the first to laugh. Then Marie, out of naked relief

Music plays

The laughter ripples back until everyone is laughing and clapping. The unfettered camaraderie unique to a group of women together. Amid this Chris curtsies. On stage. A little bit of a star

We move to a time outside the seasons, a space between hall and dale. Annie wheels John to a position where he reads his speech to the girls, off the paper bag which contains the sunflower seeds

John (reading) "The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty.

The women listen

"But the last phase is always the most glorious.

Seeing what we're seeing, we'd have to agree

"Then, very quickly, they all go to seed.

There is gentle laughter amongst the women in the room

"Which makes it ..."

He stops. He gets up out of his wheelchair and puts the speech down where he sat. And walks out through the girls

The girls don't notice. They keep looking at the wheelchair where he once was

Annie goes over to the wheelchair and picks up the bag to read

Annie (reading) "...Which makes it ironic my favourite flower isn't indigenous to the British Isles, let alone Yorkshire. I don't think ..."

She can't. She passes it to Chris

Chris (reading) "I don't think there's 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's Chris's turn now to find it impossible to continue

As if in understanding at this, John's own voice (recorded or from a microphone offstage) takes over, in the air above the dales

It is those dales which now appear, as the scene change takes place as he speaks

John's voice "Not because it 'looks like' the sun. Because it *follows* the sun. During the course of the day, the head tracks the journey of the sun across the sky. A satellite dish for sunshine. Sow these seeds on the hill and you'll see ...

Chris passes the bag round and the girls sow the sunflower seeds. Annie lays John's rug on the ground

... that wherever light is, no matter how weak, these flowers will find it. Which is such an admirable thing. *(Beat)* And such a lesson in life."

SCENE 4

John's hill. Early summer

Birdsong. We are high above the River Wharfe, in Yorkshire's green and pleasant land

Chris, Celia, Ruth, Jessie and Cora are all staring up, slightly wincing into the sunlight, with their own thoughts. At the front, Chris goes to Annie

Chris Are we gonna do this, then? You want to do the talking?
Annie *(smiling gently)* I'll be your glamorous assistant.

Chris gives her a squeeze

Chris RIGHT. Let's get going!

They all start doing the "Heaven And Earth" t'ai chi move

Cora OK so remind me — do we milk the yak or shoot it?

Chris No no no forget the t'ai chi. Jessie, pass me that bag?

Jessie *(giving Chris a plastic bag)* I thought you were boycotting that new supermarket because of its low-priced imported flower policy.

Chris I was. But that supermarket also happens to ...

Celia gets out a fold-out microstool and perches on it

... Ceel, what're you doing?

Celia Just 'cause I moved to Yorkshire doesn't mean I have to sit on it.
(*Of her trousers*) These are Gina Pellegrini.

Chris (*raising her eyes to heaven, continuing*) That supermarket happens to have a key-cutting and engraving booth which I needed-d — for THIS. (*To Annie*) Exhibit A.

Annie takes a shiny gold plaque from the bag and hands it to Chris, which she passes to the girls

Ruth (*reading from the plaque*) "The John Clarke Memorial Settee."

Chris Which will be placed directly above the settee which thanks to US will be replacing the man-eating settee currently in the cancer wing of Skipton General. Exhibit B.

She nods to Annie who takes a ripped-out page of a catalogue from the bag and hands it round

Annie It's number six.

Chris What d'you think about THAT settee?

Jessie (*taking it*) Oh now.

Cora I think that is probably the settee that God has.

Chris But then I thought, "Hmm. Likely proceeds from next year's calendar?" Marie's "Bridges of Wharfedale"? All I'll say is remember the look on the face of that RSPCA bloke when we handed over last year's cheque? Kind of: (*frowning*) "Cheers girls, that'll just about pay for a hamster's leg splint".

Jessie So ...?

Chris "So" what did Celia discover in the market square at Christmas? Flesh sells.

Annie takes a selection of calendars from the bag and hands them out to them all

My glamorous assistant will give you now, OK, a selection of calendars.

Annie Statistically according to Roy in the post office all of these last year raised more money than "Views Of Local Churches".

There is a pause. They all look at what they're holding

Annie and Chris stand back together to gauge the group reaction