

A colossal volley of flashes goes off

Wow!

Chris goes out. She is the only one who doesn't do "the" pose, having taught all the others to. But then Chris is always different from the others

Black-out

SCENE 4

The church hall. A few days later

Functional, unglamorous overhead striplights come on. Marie enters looking super-flash in her super-white badminton kit (John Lewis branded)

Marie Absolutely not, Ruth. We absolutely carry on. This is only a minor setback.

Ruth follows in her kit — a Westlife tour sweater and jogging bottoms

Ruth Really? I mean is it actually worth playing/ without —

Marie Tuesday night is badminton night and will REMAIN badminton night regardless of whether or not Chris has disappeared to the Yorkshire Show with the badminton net.

Ruth Well I just presume they needed a net/ to —

Marie It doesn't matter what they needed it for, Ruth. Like I said. We won't let it stop us.

Marie does some stretches, as Ruth gets her comparatively battered racquet out

PLAY.

Marie serves (practically over-arm) over no net. Not much chance to return it — didn't look totally legal to be honest. Whatever, Ruth misses

One love.

Ruth Sorry, would that have gone over/ the — ?

Marie That would've gone over the net, yes. One love.

Ruth Well played.

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's 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 per cent 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?

Suddenly the door flies open and Chris backs in, wheeling one end of a badminton net, either post of which have been made into sunflowers, and on whose net have been pegged bright pieces of card spelling the words "WI CALENDAR". Annie follows, pushing the other post

Chris *(on high octane)* ... OH MY GOD! ELEVEN CALENDARS?

Annie He bought one for each of his cricket team!

Chris NO!

Annie Seriously!

Chris That is UNBELIEVABLE! I mean — *(Seeing Marie)* Marie!

Annie Oh God. "Tuesday badminton". Marie, we should have said we were borrowing the net.

Chris *(cursorily)* Oh right. Sorry, Marie. HEYY! Ruth! You know what happened today at the Yorkshire Show?

Ruth *(really uncomfortable)* Yes. No.

Chris We sold out of calendars in thirty-eight minutes!

Annie This woman bought the last five and there was practically a fist fight in the queue!

Ruth That's incredible!

Chris Honestly, Ruth, it was/ just —

Annie You should've been there!

Celia and Cora burst in, Cora carrying a wicker basket

Celia There is a gentleman out here who has driven from North Wales to get a calendar today, only to find we'd sold out.