

## CALENDAR GIRLS AUDITION PIECES



**CHARACTER:** Chris – (f) - around 50

**DESCRIPTION:**

You want Chris at your party. She will talk to people she doesn't know, find things to say to fill silences and generate laughter. Without Chris in her life, Annie would be better behaved, her life less fun. The two of them are like naughty schoolgirls. Ideal car – who cares, as long as it's a cabriolet. Ideal holiday – Algarve.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**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, guys, some things are bigger than council approval. And 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*.

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**CHARACTER:** Cora – (f) - around 40

**DESCRIPTION:**

Cora's past is the most eclectic. She is the joker in the pack, but never really plays the fool. Her wit is deadpan. It raises laughter in others, but rarely in herself. Her relationship with her daughter is more akin to that between Chris and Annie. Cora doesn't need to sing like a diva but must be able to sing well enough to start the show with *Jerusalem* and sing the snatches of other songs required. The piano keyboard can be marked to enable her to play basic chords should she not be a player. Ideal car – who cares, as long as the sound system is loud. Ideal holiday – New York.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**Cora:** "Can we just stand by?"! This must be what it feels like to be Kylie. (*She claps*) D'you think they'll want a bit of *Jerusalem* in the background? I could jazz it up a bit.

Ruth Cora, don't mess round with it. It's a religious song.

Cora It's not "messing around", Ruth. It's bloody jazz. It's the blues. That's where it was all born, spiritual music. That's why it's all – (*she gestures "linked"*) – related. God, our band at college, me and Ruby's dad, all the time we'd be in and out – rock to blues, bit of classical, hymns ... He said when it comes to music, there should never be any rules.

Jessie Absolutely. That's why at my leaving service I scrapped all hymns and taught the kids to sing *The End* by The Doors.

Cora Eh it's sodding dangerous though, Jess, if you end up a church organist. I tell y' one time, someone's funeral, Dad's in the pulpit, I'm playing on grief autopilot. (*She starts plonking out "Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind" on the piano like a steamhammer. Singing*) "Dear Lord and Father Of Mankind – " (*Speaking*) Suddenly I look down at Ruby in her carry-cot and honest to God, next thing I know I'm playing – (*She starts playing "Stormy Weather" and sings the first two lines; then, speaking*) Looked round, the congregation are going "What the HELL - ?"

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**CHARACTER:** Jessie – (f) – late 60s/70s

### DESCRIPTION:

Get on the right side of Jessie as a teacher and she'll be the teacher you remember for life. Get on the wrong side and you will regret every waking hour. A lover of life, Jessie doesn't bother with cosmetics – her elixir of life is bravery. Jessie goes on roller coasters. Her husband has been with her a long time and is rarely surprised by her actions. Jessie bothers about grammar and will correct stallholders regarding their abuse of the apostrophe "s". Ideal car – strange-looking European thing which is no longer manufactured. Ideal holiday – walking in Switzerland or Angkor Wat.

### AUDITION PIECE:

**Jessie:** You know, the last time I heard the phrase "a woman of your age" it was my new, young head teacher explaining his reason why I should retire. The following week I had to take over the school trip halfway up Plover Hill after he collapsed with exhaustion. (*She pulls her coat on*) I have never had a problem with my age, my dear. It has only ever had a problem with me. (*She puts her scarf on*) Any teacher who has seen the years pass with lengthening legs and shortening skirts has felt old since she was thirty. And the danger, girls, of age, is what you think age expects of you. Witness my mother, who at the age of sixty considered a day when the postman and the gas man called to be one where she was, quote, "run off her feet". Why? Because the small incidents of life will expand to fill the hours you allot them, and the saddest thing on God's earth is those with the fewest hours left allowing less and less to fill more and more. (*She heads out the door*)

**Chris** (*stopping her*) S-sorry, Jessie. Just to clarify - ?

**Jessie** No front bottoms. (*Beat*) I'm in, as long as there's no front bottoms. That's a sight I've reserved for only one man in my life.

**Annie** Right. D'you think your husband will mind?

**Jessie** Good God, love, it wasn't my husband.

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**CHARACTER:** Ruth – (f) - around 40

### DESCRIPTION:

Ruth's journey is from the false self-confidence of the emotionally abused to the genuine self-confidence of the woman happy in her own skin. Despite being Marie's right-hand woman she is desperate to be the spine of the WI and keep everyone happy. She has a spine herself – if she was too wet, no one would want her around. But they do, and they feel protective of her because they sense there is something better in Ruth than her life is letting out. They are proved right. Ideal car – at the start, whatever Eddie wants; at the end, whatever she wants. Ideal holiday – at the start wherever Eddie is, at the end, wherever he isn't.

### AUDITION PIECE:

**Ruth:** Although I think with me it was likely more finding your underwear in the map pocket of Eddie's Peugeot. *Pause. Elaine stops the beauty treatment.* You know? The little red ones? I mean I'm not surprised you didn't notice you hadn't got them on afterwards, they couldn't've provided much insulation. But there was one of these? Little business cards? Must've fallen out of your bag in the whole ... (*she "smiles"*) ... melee, you know? And that's when I thought, "Well maybe he'd see me in a different light if I went and did this calendar!" Pointlessly, as it turns out. 'Cause what I hadn't realised is that a woman who takes her clothes off on a calendar is a "tart" whereas one who does it in a lay-by is a really good sport. But hey. (*She stands*) What I DID get to realise is that Eddie Reynoldson is one of

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those guys who wouldn't understand beauty if it was staring him in the face. And you know how I worked that out, love? (Beat) Because it was. Now, in fairness, fuck off back to him.

**CHARACTER:** Marie – (f) - around 40-50ish

**DESCRIPTION:**

Marie has gradually built the current 'Marie' around herself over the years as a defence mechanism. She went at 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. Ideal car – something German and well-valued. Ideal holiday – a quasi-academic tour of somewhere in Persia advertised in a Sunday Supplement which she could then interminably bang on about.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**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 chi!" "Pow! I'm organising a vodka night."

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**CHARACTER:** Elaine – (f) – 20ish

**DESCRIPTION:**

Elaine really doesn't mean to be so patronising. But Jessie seems from another world. The world of her Gran.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**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 organiser, 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?

*Ruth doesn't reply*

Suddenly got the confidence up! It's funny how that happens, isn't it? You know, a lot of ladies find that when they've had our "Dead Sea Salt treatment", they get this (*gesturing loosely*) inner kind of – "wha"? To do things!

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**CHARACTER:** John – (m) - around 40-50ish

**DESCRIPTION:**

John is a human sunflower. Not a saint. Not a hero. Just the kind of man you'd want in your car when crossing America. When he dies it feels like someone somewhere turned a light off.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**John** Ohh God. That's it. It knew it'd happen. I've turned into the third person.

**Marie** (*remembering*) Right. Sorry. (*Beat*) How's the -?

**John** My treatment's going fine love. And you know what cheers me up? That WI calendar with your lovely photos of Yorkshire churches. Being able to mark my chemotherapy appointments under images of misty graveyards. Serious. I'd taken it in and one of the guys at the hospital, porter, Lawrence, great lad, great photographer - (*to Annie*) God you should see some of the ones he's done of his parents -

**Annie** (*smiling*) Finish your story.

**John** (*nodding at Marie*) About your calendar. Very complimentary.

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**John** Come here, you. (He kisses her)

**Annie** How was your day?

**John** Thrill me. Tell me something I didn't know about broccoli.

**Annie** I asked first.

**John** Fine. Morning I went up Grizedale Park. Oversee some of the junior rangers putting up forest fences. God, they all look about twelve.

**Annie** I know.

**John** This afternoon I nipped in to see ol' Doc Morton.

**Annie** (*instantly turning to ice*) Today?

**John** Now don't - ("get het up")

**Annie** I thought you wanted me with you.

**John** Mrs Clarke, there isn't a day goes by when I don't. (*Beat*) I just kind of needed to get the results on me own.

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**CHARACTER:** Rod – (m) - around 40-50ish

**DESCRIPTION:**

You have to be a certain kind of guy to stick with Chris and Rod loves it. He can give back when he gets, and has a deadpan humour which has always made Chris laugh. He drinks a lot but never so much as to have a problem. He would work every hour to make his shop a success. And John was his mate, even though the relationship was originally channelled through their wives.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**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 leaves, Rod is wounded* Never, Annie, make a business out of something you

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love. (*He just about finds a smile for Annie*) I go for a walk now up to Grizedale, see all the flowers and I think, "It's you little bastards who are screwing us over." (*Beat*) You feel like running through 'em all, kicking all the bloody heads off. (*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.

**CHARACTER:** Lawrence – (m) – 20s

**DESCRIPTION:**

Hesitant without being nerdy, Lawrence is a shy young man with enough wit to make a joke and enough spirit to turn up at the WI hall in the first place. When he arranges the shots he is close to female nudity but sees only the photo.

**AUDITION PIECE:**

**Lawrence:** Right. Well. When you – *Chris gestures to him to address the group*  
... when they came in the hospital – Chris and Annie – about this – this calendar what you're wanting to sell at the Yorkshire Show ... what it ... what they er ... (*He swallows, nervous*)

**Cora** Christ, love, if you're intimidated NOW, what are you gonna be like when Celia takes her blouse off?

**Chris** Cora.

**Celia** Mesmerised.

**Lawrence** (*swallowing*) It should be like what John said. *This all quiets them slightly*  
When I was pushing him round. Talking to him about what it was you all did in here. He reckoned all the jam-making and knitting was basically a front for a load of respectable middle-aged women to get together and go nuts. (*Pause, building confidence*) That's what your calendar should be. (*Gets drawings out*). At first glance the photos should look like your classic WI calendar. All your traditional ... cakes, jam, sewing an' that. *Everything* y'd expect. Except for one tiny thing. The person doing it is naked.

**Chris** Nude.

**Annie** You're right. John would've loved this.

**Lawrence** (*warming to his theme*) See so each month, y'see, y'd get a different girl ... (*he hands out pages*) – painting, knitting, gardening here, see ... until December when I thought we could do a group one of you all together singing Christmas carols.