

Scene Four

(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. *(Grittily 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