

Knickers!

- A 'Brief' Comedy.

By Sarah Quick

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Characters

Terri.....Weight Watchers leader, late forties
Barb.....Diner waitress, late forties
Mary.....Farmer's wife, early-thirties
Amanda.....British, tourism officer, late thirties

Setting

Elliston Falls. A small town in Northern Ontario.

Present day: the play takes place over the period of one year.

Four actresses play all the roles and should be representative of 'real women'
- that is they should be all shapes and sizes ☺

The opening news clips and subsequent radio spots can be pre-recorded but we found it more interesting to do them 'live' on-stage with microphones, with each of the four actors taking one section.

The songs announced by the radio presenter should serve only as suggestions for your production. You are responsible for securing the rights to any music that is used.

Act 1 Scene 1

NEWS ...There was sad news today for the town of Elliston Falls as Flackston International confirmed that they would be closing the Mill there sooner than anticipated. As Mill workers arrived back after the Christmas break for what they expected to be a meeting to discuss future layoffs they were instead told that the mill, which began manufacturing paper products in 1897, was to shut down for good in just two months...

NEWS ...as we walk through the streets here in this run down rural town we can see the effects that the Mills closure has had on every aspect of life here. March has brought no respite to the harsh winter, businesses are closed, more jobs are lost every day and hope has long since been abandoned...

NEWS ...Three months after the Mill's closure unemployment figures have hit an all-time high for this sleepy Ontario town. 13.7%. Over twice the national average.

And in other news Justin Bieber has been arrested following a DUI incident last night that left his Mercedes...

LOCAL ...Rise and shine Elliston. Good morning. You're listening to P-Zaz Radio, your local station for everything you need to know. We're formerly Key 102 and prior to that E.L.A.Y Radio but you've always found us right here at 101.7.

Some *good* news this morning. The job that we told you about last week over at the Lucasville plant has been gotten by our very own Thomas Bonnar. Your buddies are over the moon for you Tommy and we wish you all the luck in the world.

For those of you that aren't riding quite so high this morning here's Rascall Flatts with '*Stand*' to remind you that you're gonna be alright. We can get through this Elliston...

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 2

Lights up. Terri, Barb and Mary are assembled in a meeting room.

(Church basement 'type' place)

TERRI Hello ladies. Welcome to Wednesday night Weight Watchers. I'm Terri and I'm your new leader. Now as it's our first meeting together I'd just like to give you a little recap of the overall programme.
(nervous breath, clears her throat).

So, as I'm sure you're all aware. Everyone is allocated a different number of flex points based on their age, height, weight, gender...male or female...whether you have an active or sedentary occupation and whether you are a nursing mother. Ok?

OTHERS: *(Murmur.)* OK, sure, absolutely.

TERRI Now, Flex points are determined by calculating calories, fat and fibre content of food. You may use your point slider to calculate this or, there is a simple equation (looks at paper) calorific amount divided by 50 plus the fat content divided by 12 minus the fibre content divided by 4. OK?

OTHERS: *(Murmur.)* OK, sure, absolutely

TERRI Oh! *(important)* don't forget that there is a fibre cap so the deduction can only be up to a total of 4 grams.

OTHERS: *(Murmur.)* Of course.

TERRI Thank you for coming and remember ‘Nothing tastes as good as being thin feels’.
(relaxing)
How’d I do?

OTHERS: *(Applaud)*

TERRI Really? You understood?

OTHERS: *(Murmur.)* Sure, of course, absolutely.

TERRI *(unsure)* Really?

BARB Not a clue...

MARY Clear as mud...

BARB What the heck are flex points? *(Grabs a bag of chips and a beer).*

TERRI Oh crap.

MARY I thought I read something about smartpoints?

TERRI That’s the new version.

BARB/MARY Ahhhhhh. New version.

BARB So why-

TERRI I just finished learning *this* version.

BARB/MARY Ahhhhhh.

BARB -And it's great. Perfect! Flex points it is! Cheers!

MARY And you!...*you* were great. You *sounded* great.

BARB It really sounded like you knew what you were talking about.

TERRI Really?

MARY/BARB Really.

TERRI Not too much (*robot*) 'I am your leader'.

BARB Terri, trust us. You'll be fine.

TERRI I don't know. I mean, I'm fine in front of you guys. You've been coming to these meetings for years and you've barely lost a thing so it's not exactly serious-

BARB Charming.

MARY It's true though.

BARB Suppose so. (*Beat*) I mean, if anything I've gained.

MARY Can't think why.

TERRI -But it'll be different teaching the class in Lucasville.

BARB Humm. For a start they'll pay you.

TERRI True.

BARB They each pay \$14 bucks a week to be weighed and told to cut down on the carbonara!

MARY I don't know how they afford it.

TERRI Well, they don't live *here* do they. They've got jobs.

Pause

BARB And now you do too!

MARY Yeah, congratulations eh? (*offers her a beer*)

They drink

BARB Have you heard they're sending grief councillors.

MARY What?

BARB Grief councillors. (*Rummages in her purse for the letter*) The 'Legislative Board' have deemed it 'right and proper' that such issues be dealt with 'head on' and as such any previous employees of Flackston International and their families are entitled to counselling to help deal with the impact felt upon the loss of employment.

TERRI And how much is that costing?

MARY That's ridiculous. They're paying a bunch of airy fairy assholes who will have no idea what we're going through to look sincere and say 'And how do you feel about that?'

BARB I can't see any of the guys going. Conner won't even speak to me let alone a suit.

MARY How is he holding up?

BARB Oh you know...I mean, he's always been a miserable bastard. *(pause)*
But this is different. At least when he was at the Mill he had a purpose...a reason to get up in the morning. Now he's just lost.

MARY He's not the only one.

BARB He went to the job centre and they marked him down as an unskilled worker. If a 'Beater Engineer' isn't a highly skilled job then I don't know what is. But he doesn't know how to do anything else...and there's no call for that anymore.

MARY They've centralized their head offices apparently. All the phone calls get put through to someone who hasn't got a clue what's going on and who you can't understand a word of.

BARB They've moved to India?

MARY No, Scotland.
The government there is giving tax breaks to expanding companies. So, there's no reason to stay here. And our government could care less about keeping an entire town of people earning a decent living.

TERRI To Flackston we're just another little town in the cold white North with a name they've never heard of and 400 employees they've never seen the faces of.

BARB Never mind that the place was the lifeblood of our town for over a hundred years.

MARY The Mayor's holding an emergency meeting on Friday night. He's been talking to parliament about getting people back to work.

TERRI Apparently in Saskatchewan they discovered that there is loads of Uranium there that they can mine for.

BARB Ah yes, maybe Superman will swoop in and save us!

TERRI Uranium not Kryptonite. It's true – maybe they'll find something like that here.

BARB Well I hope it happens fast. If Conner mopes around the house for much longer he won't be the only one that's depressed.

TERRI Does he not go down to the community centre with the others?

BARB No. Says he worked out how long his severance pay would last for and it was a dang sight shorter if he was drinking beer and playing pool.

MARY There's none of them really drink down there now.

TERRI Liz runs it more like a social club. Not that they feel very social. But it's a place for them to go.

MARY She's even letting them smoke in there. Says she's no money for a fine and she'd like to see them shut her down after what this town's been through.

TERRI Another 20 just got let go from the party supplies place. Their paper costs almost doubled and they couldn't stay open. They got two months notice 'to find something else' but there's nowhere for them to go.

MARY You've still got your job though eh Barb? That must help pay the bills.

BARB Barely. There are less and less people coming into the diner so Bob's cut my hours right down. Brings me in if there's an executive meeting at the Plant but they're getting less and less. I need to find something else; my credit cards are all at the limit. Oh, I've got thousands of Aeroplan miles... but nowhere to go and I'm scared of heights.

TERRI I know what you mean. If I got my purse snatched it'd be the thief calling the police for wasting his time...

BARB And good luck stealing my identity – I wouldn't wish my life on anyone right now.

MARY Oh Barb. That's not like you.

BARB I know, I'm sorry, but it's infectious. Everywhere you turn there's nothing but doom and gloom. I've always found the positives before but - (*it's impossible now*).

MARY I know – you feel guilty for having fun when people are worried about losing their homes.

TERRI Well the town can't go on like this we have to find something to put a smile on our faces.

BARB It's too soon.

(Pause)

BARB Maybe this meeting is to let us know that they've thought of a way to keep Flackston here.

TERRI Or found another use for the mill, eh?

MARY Something's got to happen sooner or later...

The sound of young voices is heard... getting louder.

TERRI Oh it's the Brownies. Jeez that meeting flew by, eh?

BARB I don't know about you but I feel slimmer already!

MARY *(hugs Terri)* Congratulations on the job darling.

BARB You'll be awesome.

TERRI Aww. Thanks girls!
And remember our motto 'Each time I pee, there's less of me!'

BARB Ah yes but, 'If you want to shrink a bit
Forget the pee, you'll need to-'

There is a LOUD whistle as Brownies are brought to attention!

BROWNIES I promise to do my best,
 To be true to myself, my God and Canada;
 I will help others,
 And accept the Guiding Law.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 3

Lights up. A surreal state. The Gossips are caricatures.

GOSSIP 1 This Mill business is getting worse.

GOSSIP 2 & 3 Mmmmmnnn.

GOSSIP 1 I heard Carl Young said he didn't even want to go on living yesterday.

GOSSIP 2 From who?

GOSSIP 1 From Laine at the Bakers. She was in at the Paint store and she heard him tell Rita at the cash that he would take his life because of how he felt, by jumping off his roof.

GOSSIP 3 I was there. He was telling her he used a steak *knife* to cut the *felt* he was putting *on* his roof.

GOSSIP 1 & 2 *(they're disappointed)* Ohhh.

GOSSIP 3 But maybe I misheard! He did look depressed going into Dr Barnett's office the other day...like there was a huge black cloud following him.

GOSSIP 1 & 2 *(they're intrigued)* Ohhh?

(beat)

GOSSIP 1 Maybe he went in for some of those happy pills.

GOSSIP 2 No. Janice at the pharmacy said Haemorrhoids to me.

GOSSIP 1 I'm sorry?

GOSSIP 2 She said he got Haemorrhoid cream.

GOSSIP 1 & 3 *(they're disappointed)* Ohhh.

(beat)

GOSSIP 2 But, I mean, *they're* brought on by stress.

GOSSIP 3 Are they?

GOSSIP 2 Oh yes.

GOSSIP 1 & 3 *(they're intrigued)* Ohhh?

(beat)

GOSSIP 1 But Trevor MacDonald had them and he's never done a day's work in his life.

GOSSIP 1, 2 & 3 *(they're disappointed)* Mmmmmn.

(beat)

GOSSIP 3 *(perks up)* are you going to the Mayor's meeting later?

GOSSIP 2 Oh Yes.

GOSSIP 3 He'll be sure to know what's best for Elliston.

GOSSIP 2 Oh for sure, *Robert's* great in a crisis.

GOSSIP 1 I was only saying to *Bobby* the other day how lucky we were to have him.

GOSSIP 2 *(Pause)* He's very friendly with my next door neighbour, you know? They play golf together. I've seen him at BBQs

GOSSIP 1 Over the fence?

GOSSIP 2 Yes.

GOSSIP 1 He's actually *my* second cousin.

GOSSIP 2 Oooh.

(Beat)

GOSSIP 3 I slept with him once!

GOSSIP 1 & 2 *(they're excited)* Ooohhh.

GOSSIP 3 Before I was married of course.

GOSSIP 1 & 2 *(they're disappointed)* Ohhh.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 4

Lights up. Meeting hall. The sound of a large crowd of people.

MAYOR *(He is pleasant and affable but prone to 'government speak')*
Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for gathering here this evening.
Thanks especially go to the members of the Crochet Club for giving up
their meeting tonight so that we can use the hall ... and to the Friends of St
Bartholemew's for providing the refreshments.

CROWD Get on with it/Enough already etc...

MAYOR I am of course aware that you are all eager to hear the conclusions reached
by our Economic Development committee who have been liaising with the
Ministry of Trade and local MPPs since Flackston International's
announcement that operations at the Elliston Mill will be ceasing.
Let me first reassure you as your mayor that we are committed to keeping
jobs available to the population of Elliston Falls and ensuring that the
community not suffer any long-term negative effects and minimal
collateral damage.
By working together we must create an environment of prosperity. At City
Hall we are dedicated to finding a viable outcome that embraces fiscal
prudence and yet takes advantage of our area's strengths. We must assess
the regional demographics and utilize our natural resources to provide our
future generations-

MAN 1 Bingo!

MAN 2 What!?! – No way.

MAN 3 I'm checking it. Negative effects, collateral damage, fiscal prudence, regional demographics, future generations...it's a good bingo!

MAN 2 Ah Jeez. No way...all I needed was 'long-term sustainability'

MAYOR with a solution that exemplifies long-term sustainability.

MAN 2 I don't believe it.

MAYOR *(clears throat to regain attention of the audience)* We have looked carefully at all the options open to us and assessed their viability-

REDNECK -We could build a prison, eh?

MAYOR That was certainly one of the suggestions put forward by council.

REDNECK Prison guards earn big bucks *and* we could have really bad criminals in there and tell them what to do and let them know who was in charge and if they escaped the whole town could hunt them down with dogs unless they got a helicopter but then we'd just have to shoot them...

MAYOR ...And thankfully one of the suggestions vetoed by council.
Instead we have thought of a plan to bring a more favourable sector of society to Elliston Falls ...tourists.

CROWD Tourists? *(general murmur)*

OLD LADY *(Screams) Arghhhhh! Arghhhhh!*

OLD MAN Tourists Martha, *Tourists*...not Terrorists.

MAYOR And so, without further ado. May I introduce Amanda Billington-Glass our new Tourism Officer who will explain our new mission – to get Elliston Falls recognized as a vacation destination.

AMANDA *(She is sincere and ready to help but she has no idea what the town is all about or the troubles it has been experiencing.)*
Thank you Mayor Henderson...and thank you people of Elliston Falls. *(Quickly remembering)* and surrounding areas...for inviting me to your lovely region. I understand your town is experiencing some issues – job related. A ‘reorganization’ of lives shall we say? And my job today is to let you know “If life just isn’t playing ball...then it’s time to change the game.” We are not ready to accept economic hardship; instead we must explore other avenues...different industries. In short we must embrace the industry that is tourism.

BARB Why should we believe any of this? For years they’ve been ‘focused on growth’.

MARY For years they’ve been ‘committed to economic development’ and ‘being progressive’.

TERRI The only thing around here that’s progressive is the senior’s euchre tournament.

AMANDA Because tourism is a growth industry. More and more people have disposable income which allows them to travel.

BARB Lucky them.

AMANDA We can build a destination using the resources we have and market it in such a way that people will travel here and will spend their relaxation dollars on what the region has to offer.

BARB A huge swamp, mosquitoes the size of dragonflies and a walking trail that's been renamed crack alley?

MARY - And not just because Dom the resident bum moved there and likes to drop his pants at passers by...

BARB Though he does have larger than the average crack...

TERRI This might make sense if we were on the coast. If the fishing industry dies a little, sure build some resorts, or even if we were surrounded by lakes I could see it but we're not. We're in the middle of nowhere!

AMANDA Exactly. It's tranquility. People want to escape from their day to day pressures. They want to go somewhere where they're not on their cell-phone all the time.

BARB Well that's good coz the reception here sucks!

AMANDA Somewhere where blackberries aren't used to communicate – their picked to go in pies. Somewhere where bloggers can spend their days with loggers...

TERRI Mary?

MARY Yes?

TERRI Can you make sure I don't say yes to anything? – Only I feel like I'm being interrogated in a foreign language.

AMANDA ...With a new province-wide initiative called rustic rambles & woodland wanderings, we can bring hordes of people to this area to see the wildlife you have to offer. Rare birds like the Black Tern and the Red-headed Woodpecker.

AUDIENCE Boo/Boo/Booooooo.

AMANDA (*Confused and wrapping up quickly*) In conclusion, on behalf of everyone here at City Hall we want to assure you that we believe in Elliston Falls. (*Quickly*) and surrounding area. And, I look forward to meeting many of you over the next few weeks. Thank you and goodnight.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 5

Lights up. Barb addresses the audience

BARB I don't let things get me down.
I'm the 'upbeat' one. The one they all see as being a laugh. 'Hey! Barby's here...see? She's still smiling...' It's like everyone else can be miserable but if *I* stop smiling...then we're really in trouble.
So I do. I keep smiling. Nobody wants to be around someone who'll make them miserable eh? Only...*I* am. I am surrounded by people that are miserable. Day in. Day out.
I don't smile when I'm on my own anymore. Although with Conner at home now that's barely ever.

Yes. I've thought about ending it all. I mean, who hasn't?
I got as far once as putting all the pills I had in the medicine cabinet on the dining room table. Piled them all up into a little mountain.
Tiny yellow ones, pink ones, square ones, huge ones the size of your thumb nail, blue ones that Connor swore were a free sample he'd gotten from a friend.

It would have taken me hours to swallow them! I'm no good at taking pills. As it was the phone rang and once my back was turned the dog ate the lot! She was fine. Turns out that the ones the size of your thumb nail were fibre supplements so they went right through her.

Good job I didn't take them though – I'd have died of embarrassment if I'd been the one that made the stain on Mrs Danzinger's beige carpet.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 6

Lights up. An elderly couple sit on a sofa and are interviewed for TV.

INTERVIEWER This is Mable and Ted Graham. They both worked at the Mill in Elliston Falls for over 45 years. Ted how do you feel about the news of the mill's closure?

Ted is unresponsive

INTERVIEWER Ted?

MABLE *(shouts)* Ted! Answer the lady.

TED *(Shouts)* What?

MABLE She's after asking you about the mill.

TED *(Shouts)* What?

MABLE The Mill.

TED I spent many good years at the Mill.

MABLE He hated every miserable minute of working there. There were days when I had to literally roll him out of bed or he'd never have made it to work. Mind you he was never very fond of work in general.

TED We were like a family at the mill.

MABLE A family that couldn't stand each other most of the time. Bickering, fighting, everyone in everyone else's' business...

TED I used to love the roar of the machines.

MABLE God awful racket it was. Couldn't hear yourself speak. Clattering, banging and screeching away for your whole 12 hour shift.

TED Of course the machines, they left me slightly deaf eh.? *(He approaches the interviewer as if to whisper an aside. He shouts.)* Which I'm not entirely ungrateful for...

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 7

Lights up. Terri, Barb and Mary are back at Weight Watchers. One week later.

TERRI Hello ladies

BARB Hi. *(She immediately goes for the beers)* How did it go in Lucasville?

TERRI I think it went alright. They were all really serious, you know, they knew the plan better than I did and there's a few of them there that have lost over 50 pounds!

BARB Erm, hello, I've lost over 50 pounds.

TERRI What?

MARY No you haven't!

BARB I have! I've lost the same 5 pounds over 10 times now.

MARY Ah yes, very true.

TERRI So how's the weight loss been this week?

BARB No idea.

MARY Haven't got a clue.

BARB Conner busted our scales trying to weigh some tractor part to see how much it would cost to mail it in for repairs.

MARY I've been trying to exercise. But every time I decide to walk into town at least five people stop to offer me a ride!

BARB Anyway, you know that Weight Watchers is just an excuse to meet up.

TERRI That's true. I can't imagine the men complaining about us trying to lose weight. But doesn't Connor notice if you don't at least lose a pound or two.

BARB Connor wouldn't notice if I lost 30 pounds.

TERRI I wish Bill was the same. He's always pointing out if my pants are a bit snug or asking if I 'need it' when I reach for dessert.

MARY But you've done great!

BARB Oh I wouldn't stand for that! You're gorgeous!

TERRI *(truthfully)* I do try.

BARB Oh I wouldn't put up with it! *(to Mary)* You wouldn't put up with Scott doing that would you?

MARY No way. Mind you it's not Scott that's the problem – it's his mother.

TERRI She wants you to lose weight?

MARY No, she wants me to put it on.

BARB What?

MARY She's desperate for me to get pregnant. She doesn't stop.

BARB If it bothers you – tell her it's none of her business.

MARY It does bother me. We've been trying for a while now and it's hard enough without her reminding me all the time.

BARB Remind her that it's not that easy. It can only happen at a very specific time each month.

TERRI Yeah. - In our house it's when he's not had too much to drink and I've had just enough!

(They all laugh)

There is a knock on the door and AMANDA enters.

She sees them drinking beer and is confused...

AMANDA Is this the Weight Watchers meeting?

BARB No. I mean, yes, I suppose it is...technically.

TERRI Er Yes, yes it is. Please come in...
So, erm. This is Barb and Mary, and I'm Terri.

AMANDA *(Shaking Terri's hand)* Amanda.

MARY/BARB Hi Amanda.

BARB We saw you at the Mayor's meeting last week.

AMANDA That's right, I'm the new Tourism officer for Elliston Falls. *Awkward pause.* I, erm, I'm sorry to just barge in. I guess...it's just... I've just had a bad day...actually make that week...and I usually reconcile that by ordering a large pizza and a bottle of chardonnay but I couldn't find a takeaway open and apparently the LBCO closes at 6.

MARY Ah yes, welcome to Elliston Falls.

BARB There's no McDonalds, no Pizza Hut...it's a wonder we need a Weight Watchers at all.

AMANDA I spotted a coffee shop or something just past the Dry Cleaners.

TERRI Tim Hortons.

MARY We may be a small town but we're a Canadian small town.

BARB It closes at 6 too though. They all do...except the 7-11.

TERRI *It* closes at 5 so that Doug can make it to the curling club on time.

MARY Still, what made you come here? Are you a Weight Watcher?

AMANDA Oh, I find it a good place to meet people. I travel. A lot. But, whatever country you're in there's always a slimming group to join. I should be the size of Kate Moss with all the different weigh-loss methods I've learnt.

TERRI Are they different then...in each place?

AMANDA Kind of. Even Weight Watchers is different depending on where you are. In England we judge each point to be 70 calories instead of the 50 in the

US and you only count saturated fat not regular. Not sure if you've started using these new smartpoints yet?

TERRI No

BARB Nooooo. We like our...our-

MARY Flex

BARB Flex!

BARB/MARY -Points-

AMANDA Oh, I'm old school too. They tried to convert me in New Zealand to their new points plus but I said "no way hose – I'm a flex girl" - points not limbs, ha! Yeah, so. In New Zealand they use the same calculations as Australia which uses the English 70 cal system but converts the formula to Kilojoules so its Kilojoules divided by 4.184 divided by 70 plus sat fat divided by 4. Oh, and there's no fibre in the formula hence no fibre cap like there is in South Africa, Hong Kong, Finland and the Camen Islands.

The others look at her completely baffled

AMANDA So what do you do at Weight Watchers in Canada...eh?

TERRI Erm

MARY Well I'm not sure that we're representative of the whole of Canada-

BARB - but I'm going to say gossip and snack mainly. Chip?

AMANDA Thanks.

MARY So what do you do. How come you travel so much.

AMANDA Oh, I work for different governments. I'm a freelance troubleshooter.

TERRI Sounds very James Bond.

AMANDA Well I don't kill people and I don't really have any cool gadgets. But I have seen a few exotic places. I was in Moscow straight after I graduated trying to encourage travel after the dissolution of the USSR. I spent many years in Prague and now it is one of the top European holiday destinations and I've been to all the usual hotspots, Milan, Melbourne, the Maldives...

MARY You must be very good at your job.

AMANDA I'm OK. Enjoying a torrid affair with the President of the World Tourism Organization certainly helped. I could pretty much choose my next destination.

(They are all thinking the same thing – What happened?)

TERRI So? Erm-

AMANDA Ah. Why am I *here* right?

BARB Yep. I can understand people wanting a challenge but really-

AMANDA Well, s I flew here from Azerbaijan I did ponder whether I'd been entirely prudent in telling the president's wife about our little shenanigans. I was hoping that he'd leave her...

MARY He didn't?

AMANDA Actually he did, but not for me. He took up with a younger colleague, resigned from his job so as not to cause a scandal and is now running an organic vegetable farm in Northern Croatia.
Of course bloody women's lib means the new president is a woman and as I'm a strictly 'Men Only' kinda gal I guess I'm stuck here.

MARY A few weeks in this place and you might be looking at her differently!

AMANDA Nope. It's definitely not my cup of tea; I already tried that at boarding school. Well let's face it there were 440 girls and only one gardener...frankly he only had so much energy.

BARB So you're stuck here like us eh? Freezing your ass off in winter, sweating your ass off in summer.

TERRI Evidently building it back up to size in the two week interim.

AMANDA Looks like it. But Elliston Falls must have its good points. Why are you still here?

MARY Not really got much option.

BARB Where would we go?

TERRI How would we get there?

MARY This place is all we know.

BARB We went on a girlie weekend to Toronto a couple of years back.

TERRI I found this hotel which took airmiles-

MARY Together we had about 600.

AMANDA 600?

TERRI You can get them from the liquor store.

BARB Only problem was that we had to go on a weekend and the bus to Toronto only leaves here every other Tuesday.

TERRI But, the bus to Casinorama leaves Lucasville every day.

MARY So we took that one and then got a different bus from the Casino to Toronto.

TERRI 5 bucks it cost us!

BARB And that included a buffet!

MARY Eight of us went down. It made us very thankful that we lived here.

AMANDA Really? But Toronto's a great city, great food, great culture.

TERRI Unfortunately our trip coincided with the great garbage strike of '02.

MARY It was really hot so everything stank and the ferry to Toronto Island wasn't running.

BARB We couldn't stay in the hotel because the bar area had a great big water feature that sent cousin Yvonne's bladder into overdrive.

TERRI It did lead to a very animated discussion as to whether the correct phrase was 'bladder the size of a Pea' P E A or 'size of a pee' P E E. But that was about as exciting as it got.

BARB We thought it was a possibility when Sandra said she'd heard there was a hoedown on Jarvis street.

MARY Turned out to be a slight miscommunication-

BARB -Although the lady that we spoke to outside the Harvey's certainly gave us a few interesting options of how to party.

TERRI It was a freaking nightmare just trying to grab a coffee. We went into Starbucks and we must have been in there for ½ hour just figuring out what to order.

BARB *(starting to giggle)* The girl behind the counter suggested Sandra go for a tall non-fat caramel Macchiato and she thought she was trying to fix her up with the guy pouring the coffee!

MARY *(laughing)* She shook hands with him and everything!

TERRI Turns out the girl was a trained Barrister so it shows we're not the only ones with unemployment problems.

BARB I think everywhere has its problems. May as well stay here where you know what's what.

TERRI Bill'd never move. He gets panicky if we have to go to Anderstown to watch Martin play hockey and that's barely an hour's drive.

AMANDA Is that your husband?

TERRI The one and only. He was my high school sweetheart. Dating from the age of 12.

AMANDA Wow

BARB Same as me and Connor. That's just the way it is here. No need for a high school reunion – just go down the Handle Bar on a Friday night and everybody's there.

AMANDA Really?

TERRI Listen to this then. When Bill and I wanted a little time together we always used to go to the cemetery behind St Josephs. That's where I lost my virginity. Second gravestone from the wishing well. It was only after we'd erm, completed the mission that I realized the gravestone was that of my Great-Great Grandfather.

Unfortunately at the same time Bill realized the same thing!

AMANDA Bloody Hell!

TERRI Well some of the family had moved away and his Grandma is one of seven sisters so the family name was different – we had no idea!

BARB This used to be a great place to live. The Mill meant plenty of jobs, which in turn meant plenty of money to spend in town. So we had some nice shops, a couple of restaurants, all we needed really.

TERRI Now they're all but closed down. The main street is nothing but dollar

stores and I don't know how Bob is keeping the diner open but it's practically the only store front without a 'for sale' sign.

AMANDA Did you work there? At Flackston?

MARY I did.

BARB Connor was there almost 23 years.

TERRI Bill had just done 30.

MARY It wasn't ever going to make us rich but we knew when we were well off. They paid over minimum wage-

BARB And in American dollars.

MARY It was all we ever needed.

AMANDA What happened to it.

BARB Oh, lots of things, I guess.

TERRI There was this initiative a few years back to keep the wildlife safe which meant tougher regulations on the Mill which in turn meant higher costs. I think from then on they were looking for an excuse to close it down and move somewhere else.

BARB Somewhere where people take priority over the Red-headed Woodpecker.

AMANDA Ahhh. And the Black Tern. Now I realize why I was booted at the meeting.

MARY You have to understand. This has turned peoples' lives upside down.
Destroyed everything they knew.

TERRI Every kid grew up here knowing that when the siren sounded for the shift
change it meant racing home to get there before your mum or dad.

BARB *(somewhat bitter)* And everyone who grew up here knew that as long as
the chimneys had smoke coming out that there would be a meal on the
table.
(Pause)

AMANDA Well you can't just give in. Maybe this tourism thing could work.

TERRI There's no way. Ontario might be 'Yours to Discover' but our slogan
would have to be 'Oops, sorry you found us!'

BARB Yeah. What's the website going to be? www.ohwhatashithole.com

MARY Forward slash 'yes really'

AMANDA Is there any money coming in from the government as assistance?

BARB They don't reckon so. We don't even qualify for the chest fund that all the
other towns seem to be getting.

AMANDA Chest fund?

TERRI Set up by Ontario Hydro for all the towns that they used to get water from
to generate.

MARY Apparently ours was the only town for 560 km that had a privately owned waterway.

TERRI Some paperwork dating back to 1878.

BARB So whilst Lucasville is getting \$4.5 million from the fund...we get zip.

AMANDA OK, well we can work on fundraising ideas, apply for grants, we just need ideas for projects. Drive and enthusiasm are just as important as money.

BARB Well they're in even shorter supply. The men feel useless. They've all but given up & I can't say I blame them.

TERRI Barb thinks it's too soon to start rallying the troops.

AMANDA Better than too late surely?

MARY It can't hurt to try and come up with some ideas.

BARB I suppose so. (*thinks*) I get some of my best ideas staring over the fields by my place.

TERRI The Milroy farm you mean.

BARB Humm.

TERRI That wouldn't have anything to do with the Milroy boy having turned into rather a stud now would it?

BARB He does have a very 'inspiring' body.

MARY They're all gorgeous that family – it's in his genes.

BARB You can say that again.

AMANDA Where's that?

TERRI You go left at the crossroads.

AMANDA By the bank?

MARY There is only one crossroads.

AMANDA One crossroads in the whole downtown?

BARB One crossroads in the whole of Elliston.

TERRI Then turn right at the stop sign-

BARB -Again, the only one.

AMANDA Oh I know where you mean. It's beautiful up there.

MARY *(excited)* What if we asked other people for ideas too. We could get them to announce it on the radio. Make it like a competition...a reality show type thing.

BARB Without \$100,000 as a prize.

TERRI We could have a small prize...for the best idea.

BARB Even small is way over my budget at the moment.

AMANDA I could put up \$100. I have a budget that's assigned to 'garner public support' and 'assist community liaison' – I think this qualifies...if you think it would help.

MARY For a hundred bucks everyone'll want to think of a way to help the town.

AMANDA I'll contact the radio tomorrow

The sound of young voices is heard again

TERRI Oh Jeez, it's the Brownies. (*Quickly putting the beers back in the case*)
Well, thank you for coming and to sum up...er...eat less this week.

Blackout

Act 1 scene 8

Lights up on microphone

RADIO Ok then Guys and Gals, listen up. This is P-Zaz radio. Coming at you all over Elliston...unless you're behind the big hill South of St Peter's in which case we'll be with you any day now...I've just got to get our engineer Patrick to do some fiddling.

An exciting announcement today for you folks – the Wednesday night Weight Watchers who meet at St Elizabeth's are holding a competition. Nooooo, it's not to see how long they can last without chocolate...they want to hear your suggestions for making Elliston Falls a thriving town again. They want all you budding entrepreneurs out there to inspire them and the winner will receive \$100. Wohooo! That has to be worth getting the brain into gear for eh?

I think that's a great idea ladies and well done to you guys for sending some positive energy our way. Here's Dolly with 'A Better Place' sending some right back atcha...

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 9

Lights up. Terri addresses the audience

TERRI Bill had been there 30 years last September. At the Mill. Started at 16 he did. A job for life. They all thought it. It was. A job for life.

He spent more time there than he did at home. That's the way he liked it. Even on our wedding day he went in for an early shift. He turned up at the church spotless but smelling ever so slightly of damp sawdust. And when our Bella was born it was the first place he went. To let the guys know. He bursts through the Loading Bay doors and shouts 'Just call me Papa!' And they did...ever since. Somewhere along the way it got shortened to Pap. But everywhere we went it was "Alreet Pap!" The younger ones probably thought that was his name.

He said the work changed a bit when Flackston took the Mill over from Devlin Enterprises. More rules...and management decisions being made with no knowledge of what it really took to work there.

But however hard it got, he gave it his all. He didn't like the way Flackston ran things but he never forgot who paid his wages and what he was paid to do.

He never thought for a second they'd close the place down.

He was really proud when he reached the thirty years. They had a little do for him, stopped the machines and everything! They gave 'im a clock, which drove me mad at the sound of it ticking, and he got his 30-year service ring. *(pause)* Only it wasn't a Mill ring. Like his dad and his Granddad had had. It was a Flackston International ring with a great big F stamped on it. I could tell he was disappointed. They'd made it all about them.

When they shut us down he stopped wearing it. Stopped winding up the clock. The clock just sits there now, useless.

The ring he threw down the can.

It's been there a few months now, making a copper coloured mark on the bowl. I don't really mind though...At least it's given him something to aim at.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 10

Lights up on the Gossips.

GOSSIP 2 Did you hear on ELAY about the competition?

GOSSIP 1 I did. The 'Bulges' Battle' they're calling it.

GOSSIP 4 'Chubbies Champion Elliston's Revival' the Echo's headline was this morning.

GOSSIP 1 I don't know how they think they can find the discipline to run a successful fundraising initiative when they can't organize a little calorie control.

GOSSIP 2 They're asking people for ideas. You could offer them some of yours from the last EFHS meeting.

GOSSIP 1 Waste of time. Better we concentrate on the really desperate causes that need our charity.

GOSSIP 4 I read this article in my Readers Digest about the trading of drugs & arms between countries being synonymous. I mean drugs are bad enough but trading in limbs is absolutely disgusting and must be stopped.

GOSSIP 1 I think it's fantastic what the EFHS does. How much did you raise at your Spring Thing?

GOSSIP 4 \$342.

GOSSIP 1 You see? That's great! I think our fundraising efforts for the EDVWS are just getting way too grand...we should try something small like you for next year.

Blackout

Act 1 Scene 11

Lights up. The four ladies are back at Weight Watchers. One week later

TERRI I give up. We've no ideas.

MARY I think it was when Al Hickston made his suggestion about discovering a way to use his pig's manure to fuel cars I realized we were grasping at straws.

BARB *(handing out the beers)* I'm going to start on those sex lines.

OTHERS What?

BARB I'm going to become a sex line operator. I was looking through the jobs section of the Courier yesterday and those 1-800 ads caught my eye. There were hundreds of them. Frigging expensive too so someone's got to be earning some cash.

MARY And plenty of people phone them, obviously.

TERRI Father Lewis.

BARB What?

TERRI Father Lewis uses them.

BARB Father Lewis...*Our* Father Lewis. From St Andrews?

TERRI Uh huh. I used to work for him, just filing, paperwork, you know? Well, I saw his phone bill and let's just say that I don't think it was the Archbishop charging him \$4.95 a minute.

MARY \$4.95 a minute! I'd want a direct line to the big man himself for that price.

AMANDA It won't be you that makes the money – it'll be some big company somewhere.

MARY It's a good point though. Sex sells. It's a huge industry. Why can't we capitalize on that?

AMANDA *(excitedly)* Pants!

MARY There's no need to be rude, It was only a suggestion...

AMANDA No *(more excited)* pants!

TERRI Pants...as in *(points at her trousers)*?

AMANDA No! Pants as in knickers! Skivvies, trolleys, undercrackers, briefs,

TERRI Panties?

AMANDA I really hate that word.

BARB Me too, it just conjures up pictures of pervy old men.

MARY I like the word knickers.

BARB *(with enthusiasm)* Knickers! *(pause)* What about them.

AMANDA Have you seen how much they cost? It seems that the less material you use the more you can charge – the perfect solution to the profit v costs conundrum. And everybody wears them!

MARY Well not everyone. It seems if you're in the public eye going commando is de rigour these days.

BARB Oh yes – who was that film star who had her crotch on display last week? Said it was to highlight the effects of global warming.

TERRI Well it'd certainly encourage me to go green if the alternative is having their nether regions on display.

MARY Did she have one of those Brazilians?

BARB Hollywood apparently.

MARY That's everything off isn't it? (*thinks*) I wonder what a 'Canadian' would be.

TERRI You leave it for the winter months as a barrier to frost bite then give it a quick tidy up with a razor on the May 2-4?

AMANDA Well it strikes me that having everyone know the nationality of your lady garden is a phase that'll pass in no time. And as most of us do wear knickers...

BARB I don't see the attraction of going sans gitch. Part of the fun is taking them off. Conner would be lost – relieving me of my undies is pretty much the extent of his foreplay.

TERRI I am proud to say I have never gone out without my underwear.

BARB Never?

MARY Liar!

TERRI Seriously...never!

BARB Well the ones your wearing now are seriously aflame.

AMANDA ...And as most people do wear knickers, it seems like a good market to tap into.

BARB An expanding market, in some cases.

MARY We could make sexy lingerie for larger sizes.

TERRI Down with granny pants – up with plus-size thongs.

AMANDA No, wait! There's no point in eliminating some of our clients just because they can resist second-helpings. I say we make sexy knickers for everybody. In fact our slogan could be 'everyone can get into our knickers!'

BARB I can see the T-Shirts now...

TERRI Anyone who wants sexy underwear will find it here! Teenagers, young moms...

MARY Middle aged housewives, older ladies...even men!

AMANDA If there's a market, we'll make it.

TERRI What do you wear, Mary?

MARY I'm a G-string girl myself. I was feeling brave one day so I bought them instead of briefs and I've never looked back.

AMANDA Oh no. I like my cotton high legs from Marks and Spencer. Wherever I am in the world I make sure I have a supplier. I couldn't be doing with

spending the day fishing material out of regions previously uncharted by mankind.

TERRI What about you Barb? What underwear do you favour?

BARB Depends.

TERRI Oh.

(There's a pause – the others are somewhat uncomfortable)

BARB *(Looks at them and realizes)* What? Noooo. Not 'Depends'. *It* depends. On whether I'm going for comfort or I've decided to let Conner engage in a bout of marital unpleasantness.

TERRI I actually bought crotchless ones by accident once.

AMANDA What gave it away? The draught?

TERRI No, I took them back to the shop coz I thought the stitching had come undone. I was mortified when they explained I must have been rummaging through their 'novelty' section.

MARY But, even if we were to come up with a line of fabulous lingerie...how would we sell it? The people around here don't have enough to splurge on sexy skivvies and people are hardly likely to travel here-

AMANDA Unless we become a tourism hot-spot.!

MARY Which...sorry Amanda...is *never* going to happen.

BARB What about mail-order? Catalogues?

TERRI Nobody uses catalogues anymore.

BARB Yes they do...I got that blue fleece I was wearing last week from a catalogue.

MARY Oh, that was lovely. I remember thinking it was lovely. Cousin Yvonne has one exactly the same in taupe – she must have ordered from them too.

BARB I was totally going to order it in taupe but I made that mistake once before with a sweater and everyone kept on asking me if I was feeling alright. It washed me right out.

MARY But the blue looked lovely with your eyes. I remember thinking it really brought out the colour of your eyes...

TERRI ...The point is...not as many people are buying from catalogues. This is the age of the World Wide Web.

AMANDA That's right. The internet has established the global economy. Now you can sell anything online to anyone in the world.

BARB Anyone who has a computer.

MARY And uses it for more than online poker!.

BARB It's dangerous. Sheila from the post office tried to sell her Mother's bird cage on that E-bay place and ended up selling her parrot! Reckoned she couldn't go back on the sale because it'd ruin her 100% positive feedback.

MARY That's nothing. Old Mrs Effleman took those computer courses that the library in Angleford offers. She was surfing the Web and tried to look up the latest newsletter from *Ducks Unlimited*. One small typo in the search engine and the internet opened up a whole new world.

TERRI Although there were a lot more people signed up for the class the next week!

AMANDA Sex does sell.

They think

TERRI We could personalize the knickers.

BARB What do you mean?

TERRI Well, we could make them with whatever slogan or logo people wanted on them.

AMANDA That's a great idea. That way instead of having their crotches on display those celebrities could sell them as advertising space!

MARY We could call them 'Bespoke Briefs'.

BARB Or, 'Tailored Trolleys'.

AMANDA Let's all have a think over the next few days, get some ideas and we'll meet again on Monday morning.

(They start gathering their stuff and beginning to exit)

BARB We could meet at the diner.

AMANDA That sounds good. I've been meaning to have breakfast there one morning and then tackle that hill behind the Mill to get some fresh air and digest.

TERRI You've not been to the diner yet then?

BARB It'd take a leisurely stroll up Mount Everest to digest one of Bob's breakfasts.

MARY They say it'll put hairs on your chest...

BARB And not just the men!

Blackout

Intermission

Act 2 Scene 1

Lights up on microphone. The sound of an awful alarm clock 'cockadoodle doo'

RADIO Gooooood Moooorninggggg Eliston Falls!
Important announcement for any of those that have forgotten, the bus will not be running to St John High School today. Apparently it's in for its big clean. I vom and it's a run round with the Vim, apparently 20 and it has to go in for a big one.

Now, the story that's on everyone's lips? Is it [*Something topical that week – eg: Miley's twerking, global warming or Beiber being bad*]? No listeners it's the announcement we made last week that we were discontinuing our funeral announcement segment. You are not happy