

Daring Violet: Half-Way To Naturism: Volume 1

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Note: In the advert, the missing word was ‘knickers’ of course – this book (and the others in the series) is basically about the ‘no-pants’ craze – which was very popular in the last decade. This book (and indeed the whole series) is fiction.

Note: What follows refers only to Volume 1 in the series – Volumes 2-5 are actually about different young women.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SERIES

These stories, written in “Diary” format, like the story “Girls Bringing on the Revolution” mix erotica with politics. And they celebrate the “no pants” craze of the 2010s.

They are about a young woman, Violet, who is “a bit of an exhibitionist”, and spends her lunchtimes going to “public places” in her hometown, for instance coffee shops or High Street benches, Dressed to Kill (wearing a short skirt or dress and no knickers).

But she is a PhD student, and her degree subject was Politics, Business and Finance. And when she meets people, during her lunchtimes, the

conversation very often gets onto her studies, which are political*.

* (*from the authors*): You are probably wondering, at this point: ‘Well, are the books pushing left wing, or right wing views?’ The answer is neither, really. For example, Violet’s research is actually about the enormous sums of money Tony Blair’s Labour government spent / wasted on Management Consultants – who cost 10 times as much as Civil Servants with equivalent qualifications. But the truth is that during the main period when the diaries are ‘set’ (2011 – 2015), when David Cameron was PM, his Conservative / Lib Dem government was very probably just as bad in that respect.

INTRODUCTION 1

As a Ph.D. student I lead a fairly solitary life during the day. It involves a lot of reading and writing, and research on the Internet, mostly in my rooms in Keble Rd. Once a week I go to the University to see my supervising Professor, to discuss my progress and probably he will read through some of my notes, and we'll discuss them.

I keep busy in the evenings too, in other ways.

But this diary – this particular diary – revolves around what I do lunchtimes. For 2 or 3 lunchtimes a week I indulge in my 'secret hobby'. You see, I am a bit of an exhibitionist. And I love to go out, usually for about 90 minutes round about 1 o'clock to 2.30, wearing a short skirt or dress and no knickers. And I'm not really happy unless someone "discovers" my little secret. And so my diary consists mainly of what happens when they do.

Surprisingly, perhaps, we are going through a time when I am not at all alone in this. There is currently a “no pants” craze going on and it is not at all uncommon for women to go without their panties. So I don’t feel out of place at all. But maybe my skirts are a bit shorter than most of the others!

Dear Reader

Sometimes, when I met someone, the conversation would be a bit extended. If we seemed to be getting on alright, I would give them basically two choices – either I would tell them about my work, or about my social life. Very rarely both. Since for both cases, it was usually mostly the same “spiel”, I don’t want to keep on writing that out in my diary every time I make those “little speeches”. So I will write them out now (for you) and not continually repeat them. (In the diary I will write something like “I gave them my spiel about

my work.” Or “I gave them my spiel about my social life”.) (Also of course, they might tell me about their work and/or hobbies.)

Here they are:

1) My “spiel” about my work

Well, last year I finished my degree in Politics, Business and Finance. I am now doing a postgraduate degree – a Ph.D. actually, specialising in “Use of Management Consultants and IT Systems Consultants in the Public Sector” (and also, the Banking Crash of a few years ago – 2008/9).

[If the person expresses interest I will go further:]

Tony Blair was the big one for using Management Consultants and IT Consultants (though David Cameron might be similar – the jury is still out on that one). While Tony Blair was PM, the country

was practically run by Management Consultants. The civil servants had to take a back seat. The thing is, a management consultant, who might just be a new graduate straight out of university, with little experience, cost £7000 - £10000 a week, over 10 times as much as they would pay a civil servant with similar experience. (A senior management consultant with lots of experience would cost £15,000 to £25,000 a week.) So a typical project with say, 50 people involved for a year, instead of costing about £3 million (with civil servants), would cost at least £30 million.

And some of the IT projects, in particular, were so big that they ran into hundreds of millions, or even billions.

By the way, the junior management consultants who cost the Government £7000 - £10000 a week didn't earn anything like that themselves, of course. Most of the money went to the Partners in

the Management Consultancy, who raked in millions and millions.

2) My ‘spiel’ about my social life

This is about what I get up to in the evenings. Bear in mind that during the day (apart from my lunch hour) I work – about 6 hours a day, on my Ph.D.

But it’s a different story in the evenings. First and foremost, I watch very little TV indeed. I regard that very much as ‘second hand living’. I avoid it like the plague.

At least three evenings a week are taken up by my major hobbies. These are playing chess and playing viola in a chamber orchestra. Wednesday evenings I go to my chess club, and Monday and Thursday evenings the chamber orchestra of which I am a member, practices. And some

weeks we have a performance to give, usually over the weekend.

But 3 evenings a week (or sometimes I swap evenings for afternoons, and do my PhD work in the evening), what you could say is that I ‘party’ – not in the way partying is normally thought of, but it is still ‘partying’ in my view.

You see, I met this girlfriend a year or so ago, in exactly the same way that I have met you – actually in a coffee shop – and she introduced herself: “Hi,” she said, “I’m Vicki” It turned out she is a care worker, and she has the same idiosyncrasy as me – she goes knickerless a lot. We got on like a house on fire on that first meeting. To cut a long story short, we started meeting, usually 2 or 3 evenings a week – to ‘party’ in our way.

That is to say, we think of all sorts of situations that we can go out ‘on the town’, not (necessarily)

to get drunk, but with the purpose that one or other of us, or indeed both of us, will show some unsuspecting person “what we’re made of”. That’s our way of ‘having a laugh’. Over the past year we have come up with all sorts of ideas, and then put them into practice.

That is what we mean by ‘partying’.

INTRODUCTION 2

To be quite frank, every day – every lunchtime, is virtually the same until I enter into conversation with someone.

It is either a nice day, or a lousy day, weather-wise.

If it is a nice day – dry, fairly warm, the sun shining maybe, I will find a place to sit out in the open – a park bench, a high street bench, maybe I'll take a picnic and sit on a blanket on the grass in a park. If it's a bench it'll have to be with a nearby bench that someone can 'join me at' when they notice me. There are really only a very small number of places that fit the bill.

If it is a lousy day – raining, snowing or bitterly cold, I will choose instead a café, or a coffee shop, or a pub, or the library even. There are really not many places to choose. With any of these, I will choose a seat where hopefully there are a number of free

seats nearby – fortunately that is not usually a problem, by 1 o'clock or certainly by 1.30, coffee shops for instance are getting less busy, their busiest time probably being between 10.30 and 11.30.

Again, there are only 5-6 places I tend to choose – a couple of coffee shops, a café, a couple of pubs and maybe occasionally the library.

Now remember that this diary goes on for 7 years. If I was to describe in detail, every day, how I came to a decision of where to go (out of a choice of no more than a dozen places), me getting there etc, it would become very boring for you the reader, very soon.

Suffice to say, that whether rain or shine, I find somewhere to sit, with preferably other places nearby where someone who “notices” me can also sit, and start a conversation. And my diary

entry will start with the start of that conversation. That is the only way I think I can proceed.

Note (by G Burnell): *There are a few ‘unrealities’ in this first volume. Probably the main one is that Violet doesn’t meet the same person more than once, even though she keeps going back to the same places.*

Tuesday January 4

“Do I call you Sharon Stone?”

“Yes, I have heard of that film, though it was a bit before my time. ‘Basic Instinct’, wasn’t it?”

“That’s right. I was about 25 when it came out. Quite a shocker, it was. As are you, Miss No Knickers.”

“Oh well, that long behind the times, am I? Actually, it’s me that’s following the trends. Haven’t you heard of the ‘no pants’ craze? You should go to the nightclubs. Half the girls are wearing no knickers.”

“Really? Maybe I should go then. Do you think they’d let me in? I’m not an old age pensioner yet.”

“Well, you could give it a try. What’s your name? Mine’s Violet.”

“I’m Richard.”

“And what do you do for a living, Richard?”

“I’m a Video Editor.”

“Oh, what does that involve?”

“I prepare video tape for the production of the final version of a television programme. I arrange shots, enhance the quality of pictures, and add special effects. We use all digital equipment these days, so I need to know about editing software.”

“Well, I’m a student.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“What are you working on this week – apart from prancing around Basingstoke without any knickers on?”

“One thing I’ve been finding out is that two thirds of Management Consulting projects in the public sector give disappointing results. One of the reasons for this is that most consultancies have just a few experts in any particular area of work, but a lot of inexperienced people. Because the experts are so few and far between, they are put on several projects at the same time and so can devote only a little time to each project. Most of

the men and women on the project will be so-called ‘green beans’ or ‘warm bodies’, who have little or no experience, and quite frankly aren’t much use – even though they are probably costing the department £7,000 to £10,000 per week.”

“Yeah, I wish someone would pay me £10,000 a week.”

Wednesday January 5

“Are you enjoying the view?”

“Oh, you noticed I was looking, did you? As it happens I’m enjoying it a lot, yes.”

“Don’t you think it would be more polite not to make it so obvious that you were looking?”

“I suppose so. More brainy, too, because I’ve noticed you’ve closed your legs up now, spoiling the view.”

“Well, that’s because you’re so cheeky.”

“But you don’t really mind me looking, then?”

“Not really. I’ve been known to go on a nudist beach, you know.”

“Wow – what, in Brighton? That’s the only one I know of quite near here.”

“A few times, yes. And abroad, too.”

“Wow.”

“What’s your name?”

“I’m David.”

“What do you do for a living?”

“Oh, I’m a coach driver.”

“Well I’m a student. Got to go back to my rooms and continue with my dissertation in 40 minutes or so. Then tonight I’ve got my chess club. I’ll see if I can win again, like last week.”

“Oh, you play chess, do you? Are you any good?”

“Not bad. I’m at the stage when you use the proper openings, at any rate. Last week I was Black (that means I go second), and I used the Dutch Defence, which can be risky – but I did win. Do you have any hobbies?”

“Yes, I make model boats. Takes up most of my evenings actually. Partly because I can’t stand television.”

“No, there’s never much on, is there?”

“Never much to see. Unlike here today. I must admit I can’t take my eyes off you.”

“No, I can see that. Well I must go. Nice to meet you, David.”

Tuesday January 11

“Do you mind if I stay here looking at you all day?”

“I think that would be a bit extreme, don’t you? Besides, I won’t be here in about 10 minutes. (Things to do and all that.) What is your name? Mine’s Violet.”

“Harold.”

“Nice to meet you, Harold. What do you do for a living?”

“I’m an ‘Equality and Diversity Officer’, and I work for the council.”

“What does that involve?”

“We have to make sure that people who work for, or come into contact with, the council, receive equal opportunities. I’m currently writing my yearly equalities report which sets out how the council is doing in relation to equalities and diversity. And what do you do?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“That sounds very interesting indeed. So what are you working on at the moment?”

“Oh, this last fortnight I have been looking at how the MoD (Ministry of Defence) uses Management Consultants. It is clear from the MoD’s annual report that they have been using the Balanced Scorecard consulting tool, which really had its heyday several years ago. It is now outdated. It is par for the course that government departments are generally a few years ‘behind the times’ compared with leading Western companies.

The information I have is that the MoD has spent several hundred million pounds recently with both McKinsey and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), mainly on logistics and procurement projects. McKinsey is American, while PwC is one of the ‘Big 4’ Accountancy firms (turned Consultancies) in the UK.

For example, one of the big projects done by McKinsey was the multi-million pounds Smart Acquisition system – a way of running defence equipment procurement projects.

Harold, you haven't been listening to a word I said – you've just been looking at my legs.”

“No, I have been listening – about the MoD, isn't it? Well, if you end up in the Sergeant's Mess at Tidworth or somewhere – or with someone like you it'd probably be the Officers Mess, I suppose – I wouldn't recommend you dress like that.”

“No, you're probably right.”

“Give those army Captains and Majors too much excitement and there's no telling what they'll get up to.”

“No.”

Wednesday January 12

“Anyone would think you’ve not seen a naked woman before.”

(when he shows surprise)

“Well, it doesn’t happen to me very often, a woman showing her twat in the middle of Basingstoke.”

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s pretty common in nightclubs, you know. Even living in Basingstoke, haven’t you heard of the ‘no pants’ craze?”

“Yes, I have heard of it actually. But I don’t go to young peoples’ pubs and nightclubs now that I’m, like, middle-aged. I must say, all the girls used to keep their knickers on when they were out, when I was young.”

“Well, they don’t now. I don’t either. I’m Violet, by the way. What’s your name?”

“It’s Ian. Do you go to work dressed like that, then?”

“Actually I don’t have a “proper” job. I’m a student. What’s your job?”

“I’m a care worker. But it’s only a job. If it wasn’t for the fact I need the money I wouldn’t do it. I live for my hobby, which is sailing. I even do it in the winter, though it means wearing a wetsuit then. How long have you been going without your panties, then? Is it all the time?”

“No, I wear them when I play chess, for instance.”

“Oh, you play chess? That’s your hobby, then.”

“One of them. I also play viola in a chamber orchestra. I’m doing that tomorrow. I shall be practising in my room this afternoon. At the moment part of the orchestra (including myself) is working on Beethoven’s String Quartet in E-flat major, Op 127 – this was one of Beethoven’s later string quartets, composed after he had gone deaf. It is a work for 2 violins, a viola and a cello – and pretty difficult, I can tell you.”

“Well, I must be getting along. Nice to meet you.”

“Yes, goodbye.”

Monday January 17

“My, my – you can sit in front of me any day of the week.”

“I wonder why. You’ve not been looking up my skirt, by any chance?”

“Been? I still am. So long as you’re going to keep on showing what you’re made of, I’m going to look, if you don’t mind.”

“Well, I suppose if I really minded, I’d have dressed differently, wouldn’t I?”

“That’s just what I thought. Hole in one. Or one hole, in this case.”

“Now, now, that’s quite naughty language, isn’t it?”

“Yes, well, you inspire it, as I say, dressed (or undressed) like that.”

“Oh, so I’m the one who should apologise, am I?”

“There’s absolutely no need to apologise – I like it a lot, actually.”

“Glad to hear it. I’m Violet – what’s your name?”

“I’m Darren. Do you come into this coffee shop a lot?”

“Not very often, no – it’s the first time for about a fortnight.”

“Oh, well I’ve started coming in here nearly every day, to have my cappuccino, and I’m sure I would have noticed you before, if we’d both been in at the same time.”

“Yes, I expect so.”

“Especially if you were dressed like that. Are you usually?”

“I’d rather not say – I’m not when I go to my chess club on Wednesday evenings, they’d probably say I was cheating!”

“I bet. Are you good at chess, then?”

“Quite good, I suppose. I’m in the club team. We travel to other clubs sometimes. Do you have any hobbies, or do you play any sports?”

“I go skiing – I go about 4 times a year, to Norway usually.”

“Sounds nice. Fraid I don’t do any energetic sports like that.”

“Well, I’ll say cheerio. I’m waiting for someone – she’d better not find me talking to you, I don’t think.”

“No, I understand.”

Wednesday January 19

“It must be my lucky day.”

“I could pretend I don’t know what you’re talking about, but I think I do. You’ve been looking up my skirt, haven’t you?”

“I can’t pretend otherwise. Yes I have.”

“One day, probably when I’m about 40, I’ll get round to putting some knickers on – but right now I prefer not to.”

“Well, as I say, I’m not complaining.”

“Good. What’s your name, anyway? I’m Violet, by the way.”

“My name is James. Does your boss mind you dressing like that?”

“Well, I kinda don’t have a “proper” job. I am a student – a Ph.D. student actually. A lot of my work is done on my own, in my flat, and I’m not seeing my Professor today. I only see him once a week. And my social life is pretty unusual, too – really “off the wall”. What would you like to know about – my work or my social life?”

“I think a Ph D sounds a bit over my head, so let’s hear about your social life.”

(I gave him my spiel about my social life.) He listened agog.

“Yeah, sounds exciting. A bit more adventurous than my life. I watch TV most evenings. Tell me what you’ve been getting up to with your friend Vicki, then. Your “situations”?”

“I met her yesterday, actually. We played our game “Get a double decker bus to anywhere.” That involves us getting on a double decker bus, it doesn’t matter that much where it’s going (as long as it’s a regular service). This time it was the 76 to Andover. We were dressed, as usual, in short dresses and no knickers. We had coats on too, as it’s winter, but they were only jackets – only coming down to the same length as our dresses. We sat about 4 rows back, on the left. And then we waited. We were waiting for a “likely lad” to come in and sit in front of us.

At about the 4th stop someone did. A man about 40, I suppose, with dark hair. He sat 2 rows from the front, on the left. An ideal position. That was our cue. It was Vicki's turn. She got up and ascended the stairs. It was my job to record a video of it all on my camera/phone. You should have seen his face."

"I bet."

"And then on the way back it was my turn. This time our "victim" was a man about 10 years older, with greyish hair.

(We went as far as Oakley, got off and got the next bus back – we had to wait about half an hour.)"

Thursday January 20

“You can come shopping with me any day of the week.”

“Yes, well are you offering to pay the bill at the checkout, then?”

“Well, I wasn’t going to go as far as that. But I’ll buy you a drink if you like.”

“What, 4 cans of cider?”

“I was thinking more of a drink down the pub.”

“Oh, I’m afraid I’m tied up,” replied Violet, “otherwise engaged.”

“I was going to say that I’ll tie you up, if you like.”

“I bet you would – I’m sorry but that’s out of the question too. What’s your name? I’m Violet.”

“I’m Lee.”

“And what do you do for a living, Lee?”

“Oh, I’m a Sports and Leisure Centre manager.

That means I look after both the routine administration of the leisure centre, and the organisation and development of sporting activities.”

“Really? And what would you like to know about me? About my work or about my play?”

“About your play, I think.”

(I gave him my spiel about my social life.)

“Tell me what you’ve been getting up to with your friend Vicki, then.”

“Oh yes. I met Vicki two days ago and we played our “Conversation by the railings” game. You know Festival Place is on two levels?”

“Yes.”

“Well, we were standing on the top level by the railings, having a half hour conversation, knowing full well that anyone on the lower level, if they looked up, would get a very good view indeed.... And quite a few people did.”

“Well, I must admit that I can’t match that. But my main interest is football. I support Manchester United, and I played football till 2 years ago.”

Tuesday January 25

“That’s funny. I think I’ve just seen a minky.”

“Really? Who’s might that be, then?”

“Yours, actually. Haven’t you forgotten something today?”

“It’s the fashion. Haven’t you heard of the ‘no pants’ craze?”

“Yes, I have heard of it. It’s been on the TV. But I didn’t think it happened in Basingstoke.”

“Oh yes. You should go to the nightclubs. Not a pair of knickers in sight. And that’s not just because the girls keep their legs together or wear trousers.”

“Well, maybe I will.”

“I’m Violet. What’s your name?”

“Oh I’m John. Nice to meet you.”

“Are you not working today?”

“No, I’ve got the day off. But I’m a Farm Manager. I work on a farm about 8 miles away, near Overton.”

“What does that job involve?”

“As the farm manager one of the most important things I am responsible for is that the farm makes a profit. So I have to make budgets and see that they are stuck to.

I have to decide on things like buying and selling things like seeds, crops, livestock, machinery and fertilisers.”

“Sounds a very responsible job. Well, I’m a student.”..... (I gave him my spiel about my work.)
“What are you specialising on at the moment?”

“I’m working on the NHS :

In the massively expensive NHS “Connecting for Health” (CfH) system, which cost £30 billion, 2 of the “modules” are the “Choose and Book” system and the “Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions” (ETP) system.

As far as the “Choose and Book” system is concerned, there are a lot of question marks over whether it is very useful. When hospitals run at nearly full capacity (as they do in this country much of the time) it just doesn’t work – patients have no choice but to (hopefully) go where there’s space. Also hospitals use a triage system where they “prioritise” the most urgent cases, and this wasn’t taken into account of in the design. (Durr!) This was unbelievably incompetent and caused big delays and a massive increase in cost.

Also for various reasons the “Choose and Book” system isn’t very popular with doctors surgeries – they just don’t really want it. On the other hand “Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions” is quite a good idea, and is popular with GPs.

So the underhanded thing the Government/NHS have done is say that GPs can only have the “Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions”

software (which they want) if they also order the “Choose and Book” software (which generally they don’t want). This is called “bundling” software, and is thought to be illegal because it’s anti-competition – but the government gets desperate when it has spent so much money on systems – as it has with CfH.”

“Seems to me, with that Choose and Book system, you’ll get some hospitals completely full, and others more or less empty – depending on what the league tables say, or whatever. Not sure that’s a very good idea.”

Wednesday January 26

“Have you finished looking yet?” (When he’s been staring for a long time.)

“Oh sorry to make it obvious, but this kind of scenery doesn’t happen very often in the middle of the afternoon in Basingstoke town centre.”

“So you might as well make the best of the opportunity, you mean?”

“Sort of, yes.”

“Well go right ahead. I really don’t mind. I don’t mind on Brighton beach, so why should I mind here?”

“No, I see what you mean.”

“What is your name? I’m Violet.”

“It’s Lee.”

“What do you do for a living, Lee?”

“I’m a driving instructor. Self-employed – I work for a franchise actually. You know, the only trouble is, there’s a hell of a lot of regulation in it these days. For instance, you must pass a qualifying exam – “Approved Driving Instructor”.

It took me a year to train for it. And registration has to be renewed every 4 years, and we are regularly re-assessed (by a supervising examiner).”

“Yeah, well I’m a PhD student..... (I gave him my spiel about my work.)”

“Really?” said Lee, “tell me what you’re working on at the moment.”

“Have you heard of PFI (Private Finance Initiative)?”

“Vaguely, yes – I don’t know much about it though.”

“In the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), the idea is that private companies (rather than the public sector) pay for new hospitals, schools, prisons and work on infrastructure like roads and railways. And they would recoup their investment through annual payments from the Government for many years into the future – sometimes as many as 50 years.

Before Labour came to power, in 1997, Labour politicians in the Shadow Cabinet argued against PFI. For instance, Harriet Harman (shadow Health Secretary) said in 1996

“if the private sector is designing, building, financing, operating and running the hospital, and employing the doctors and nurses, that is privatisation.”

But after Labour came to power, they forgot their misgivings about PFI, and it was full steam ahead. This was for the whole of their time in Government – until last year, that is.”

“All that must keep you really busy. But you must have some spare time. What do you do then, apart from sitting on High Street benches with no knickers on?”

“Well, I play chess. I play for a club – got a match this evening, in fact.”

“Oh yeah. My main hobby is cricket, actually. I watch Hampshire quite often during the season

(and the Test matches, of course). I used to play for Basingstoke Cricket Club.”

“My, you must have been pretty good at it. Were you a bowler or a batter?”

“Mainly a bowler. Quite a fast bowler.”

“Well, I must be getting along. Got a bit of writing to do this afternoon. Nice to meet you.”

“Yeah, goodbye.”

Thursday January 27

“Are you looking at something?”

“Yes, your muff.”

“Yes, well that’s what I was implying actually.

Isn’t it a bit rude to make it so obvious?”

“Oh sorry, I was just in a state of shock – pussy isn’t what you expect to see when you’re walking along minding your own business and thinking about the next spreadsheet at work.”

“Oh, are you in finance or something?”

“Yes, I’m a trainee accountant.”

“That’s funny. I’m in a similar line – sort of. You see, I did a degree in Politics, Business and Finance, and now I’m doing a PhD.”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Really? That’s very interesting. But I prefer not to talk about work if I can help it. What do you do in your spare time?”

“Well tonight, for instance, I’m going to be in part of a chamber orchestra in town. I play the viola. Tonight we are going to be practising Haydn’s

String Quartet in D minor, Op 64 – known as The Lark Quartet, which is considered one of his finest. It's for 2 violins, a viola and a cello.”

“I suppose you will be somewhat differently dressed this evening, then?”

“Oh yes – well, I'll be wearing a longer dress anyway.”

“I see. I expect so. For my part I am not really very musical. But I'm into sport in a big way. I play hockey.”

“You don't play chess either, I presume?”

“Fraid not, no. At least, not very well.”

“That's my other main interest. I'm doing that on Wednesday.”

“I thought it was mostly men that played chess?”

“Yes, we girls are a bit outnumbered by the men, I admit. But I very often beat the men at it.”

“The nearest I come to chess is I play cards. Poker mainly. I play in “The Lamb” on Thursdays. Not much point in playing poker with you – not strip poker at any rate!”

“No, I don't think so.”

Thursday February 3

“What shop are you going to next? I’ve just decided I need something there.”

“Oh, Mystic Mick, I presume. What is your name, by the way – mine’s Violet?”

“Roger.”

“Roger the watcher – it rhymes, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, I’m trying to think of something that rhymes with fanny.”

“How about Danny? That’s my husband.”

“Is it really?”

“No, I made it up. I’m not married actually. But I might as well be, the amount of chance you’ve got with me.”

“No, well I wasn’t getting my hopes up too high anyway – I must be about 30 years older than you.” .

“Well, what do you do for a living, Roger?

Something exciting, I hope.”

“I’m a Health Promotion Practitioner.”

“Oh, what does that mean?”

“In our job, we promote healthy lifestyles, for example related to diet, exercise, alcohol, drugs and sexual health. I personally, as part of a mental health campaign, am visiting schools to try and deal with bullying. Bullying might impact on a child’s mental health because it can cause panic attacks or depression.”

“Who do you actually work for, Roger?”

“Oh, the NHS. Does your boyfriend mind you dressing like that? Or come to that, your boss? What do you do for a living, by the way?”

“Well, I’m (I gave him my spiel about my work.)”

“Yes, well, what are you working on at the moment?”

“At the moment I’m looking at the various scams that Management Consultancies can get up to, like for instance the travel expenses scam – where management consultancies negotiate to get a kickback from travel agencies for putting a lot of business with them (for hotels, travel etc),

but don't pass the rebate onto the client. (This can amount to millions of pounds per year.)

In the US there is now a law to combat this, and whistleblowers can receive up to 25% of any money recovered – in some cases up to \$10 million, making it very much worth their while. But in the UK we don't have this, so there is no incentive for the whistleblower, who takes an enormous risk – they would most certainly lose their job and probably wouldn't be able to work in the industry again.”

“I expect, on a windy day, you get plenty of whistleblowers when you're walking along and the wind blows your skirt up. Does your PhD take up all your time? Or do you have time for hobbies?”

“Oh I have hobbies, yes. Tonight, for instance, I am playing viola in a chamber orchestra.”

“Wow, you're not just a pretty face, are you? Or more to the point, a pretty pair of legs.”

Wednesday February 9

(Outside a cinema.) “They don’t show many blue films anymore. But this kinda makes up for it.”

“Yes, well don’t get too excited will you? You probably won’t see me at a regular time each week, like you can go to the cinema.”

“Oh, so you keep irregular times? Would it be too irregular if I asked you out for a drink?”

“Fraid not – my boyfriend wouldn’t like it.”

“I knew my luck wouldn’t hold out – but I count myself lucky that I’ve seen one of the best views in Basingstoke today.”

“Anyway, what’s your name? Mine’s Violet.”

“My name’s Robin. And I’m an emergency control room operator. We answer 999 calls. I specifically deal with calls for ambulances. We need to be trained in first aid, for example resuscitation techniques. The fact that I am a good audio typist was an advantage in getting the job because you have to record info about each call in some detail, and you need to be quick. We

need to do different shifts because the control room is running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. For example, I am often working nights.”

“Have you ever had to give instructions for delivering a baby?”

“Actually I haven’t, I have only been doing the job for a few months. But we were trained for that, yes. The training was quite extensive and lasted a long time. What is your job then? Surely you don’t go to work dressed like that?”

“I’m a student actually. I’ll either tell you about my studying during the day, which I am about to get back to in 10 minutes or so, or about my social life. Which would you like to hear?”

“I think you can tell me about your social life – I’d prefer that.”

(I gave him my spiel about my social life.)

“Wow, you do quite a lot, don’t you? It’s Wednesday today, so you’ve got chess this evening, haven’t you?”

“Yes, we’ve got a match on tonight. I’ll be meeting up with the others at 6.45, and we’ll be going by mini-bus to _____ ton about 20 miles away, where the club we’re playing is based.”

“Well, I wish you luck, then.”

Thursday February 10

“First there were drawers, then there were knickers, then thongs – finally there’s what you’re doing – and I must say I approve.”

“Glad to hear it. Some people don’t. Many in the God squad, for instance, are aghast at this ‘no pants’ craze.”

“Well, I can assure you I’m not the God squad.”

“Good. I really can do without some people preaching ‘hell and damnation’ right now.”

“Do they still do that, these days?”

“I expect so, but I haven’t been to church for years and years.”

“Me neither – and I wouldn’t want anyone stopping you doing what you do.”

“Yeah, thanks. What’s your name? Mine’s Violet.”

“I’m Paul.”

“What do you do for a living, Paul?”

“I’m a Credit Controller.”

“What does that involve?”

“We credit controllers have to try to make sure that customers pay their bills on time. We have to have good relationships with our customers so that they usually do. At the outset of someone placing an order we may have to research the company to see if we think they can pay their bills, and we may pay for a credit check from a specialist company.

If someone or a company is in some financial difficulty I have to negotiate with them to see how they can pay, even if it is over an extended period of time. Occasionally we get solicitors involved.”
“Do you work for a large company or a small company?”

“Quite a large company. Actually, there is a team of credit controllers of which I am one. Everyone has a list of customers that they are responsible for.

And what about you? What do you do?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“And what are you working on at the moment?”

“Oh, I’m working on the “revolving door” syndrome.

There is a ‘revolving door’ syndrome now, where senior consultants (in Management Consultancies) temporarily become senior civil servants, who hold the ‘purse strings’ and can recommend the Management Consultancies they previously worked for (with a view that they might return to them at a later date, and be very well rewarded). Also civil servants who recommend certain consultancies may be offered very lucrative jobs with those consultancies in the future.”

“Yeah, it’s all ‘I’ll scratch your back, and you scratch mine in return’. Does your PhD take up all your time, or do you have time for hobbies and things?”

“Oh yes, I have a social life too. For instance, tonight I’m playing viola in a chamber orchestra.

I do that every Monday and Thursday. At the moment we're practising Haydn's String Quartet in G major Op 77. This is for 2 violins, a viola and a cello. It was composed in 1799, and was Haydn's last complete work in the genre."

Friday February 11

“I hope you don’t ride a bicycle to work, dressed like that – you’d cause a lot of accidents.”

“No, I don’t usually ride a bike. But I admit I think I did nearly cause an accident once. I was walking along the pavement of quite a long road, and a gust of wind caused my dress to go up, up, and away. One car actually swerved.”

“I’ll bet. Anyway, what do you do for work?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yes, I never did trust that Tony Blair. He was more Conservative than Labour, I always said. So what are you working on at the moment?”

“I’m looking into the Libra project at the moment.

There was a project to computerise systems in the Magistrate Courts, called Libra. The Department of Justice worked out what they thought they wanted (the specifications), but there was only one bidder – ICL (later Fujitsu). Every other Systems Consultancy ran a mile.

This should have been a warning that the project, as it stood, wasn't feasible, particularly as ICL had dismally failed on two previous big contracts.

But anyway, the Department went ahead. ICL came back with many problems along the way, and the cost of the project nearly tripled (from £150 million to about £450 million)."

"Talking about Libra. You seem to be very librated – you don't fancy making up a threesome with my wife, do you?"

"I'm afraid not. I'm a good girl, you know."

"I'd never have guessed."

Monday February 14

“You can come and clean my windows any day of the week – I’d even lend you a ladder.”

“I’m afraid that’s not the kind of career I have in mind – not after doing a degree in Politics, Business and Finance, finishing last year.”

“What are you doing this year, then? Applying to be an MP?”

“No, actually I’m doing a postgraduate course, a Ph D actually.”

“Really? Tell me more. What subject is it in?”
(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“I’m Violet, by the way. What’s your name? And what do you do for a living?”

“I’m Gerald. And I’m a Water treatment plant operator. I work for Southern Water. We monitor and control the process taking untreated water from reservoirs and rivers into the treatment plant, where it is processed.

I have to operate the pumping equipment. If there is a pollution incident, for instance in a river, we have to stop contaminated water from coming into the plant.

The water is treated with chemicals, and because these chemicals are dangerous we have to wear protective clothing.

What else do you do, apart from your PhD?"

"Well, tonight (Mondays and Thursdays actually), I practise with the chamber orchestra I belong to. I play the viola. At the moment one of the works we are practising is Prokofiev's "Overture on Hebrew Themes" Op 34. A piece for clarinet, 2 violins, viola, cello and piano. This used traditional Jewish melodies. Though Prokofiev was not Jewish, some of his friends were, and he composed it at their request. In fact he composed it essentially in two days, and considered it a "mere trifle"; nonetheless it became very popular, and highly thought of.

And we're giving a performance of it on Saturday night. At the ____ Hall."

"Really? You don't have any tickets for sale, do you?"

"Yes, I do actually. They're £8."

"Well, I'll have one then, thanks. And I'll see you there. By the way, will you have your knickers on then?"

"Maybe. But in any case I'll certainly be wearing a longer dress."

"Oh, shame."

Wednesday February 16

“Don’t get arrested, will you?”

“I’ll try not to. Actually that’s one advantage us girls have over you men. With you, one little exposure, and you’re whisked off to jail, aren’t you? Whereas us girls can go without panties with very little consequence. It’s a good thing considering how many young women do it. You should go to the nightclubs – half the girls are knickerless.”

“Really? Perhaps I will. What’s your job? – what do you do for a living?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“And what’s your job?”

“I’m a physiotherapist. We treat people whose movement is restricted for whatever reason. I personally work with older people – one of the specialities of physiotherapists. I have to work with people who are recovering from strokes, or falls, or who have Parkinson’s disease – for example.

We try to show patients how to make lifestyle changes in order to prevent problems in the future – for example, dealing with obesity. And I might have to give older people training on how to prevent falls, or how to use a wheelchair.”

“Where do you usually see your patients?”

“I may see patients in the outpatients department, or at their own home, or even in a residential care home or day centre.

What else do you do, by the way? Surely your PhD doesn’t take up all your time?”

“You mean apart from sitting on a High Street bench with no knickers on? Yes, most of my evenings are taken up. For instance, tonight I am playing chess at my chess club. That’s one of my hobbies.”

“And do you usually win?”

“Oh yes, very often. I’m number 3 in the team. That’s quite high. Last week I used the Marshall Defence. This is now considered risky against the very best players – but fortunately there were

no world champions in the club we were playing, and I won quite easily.”

“Really? Most of my interests are in the sports line, for instance football – I support Tottenham. But I’m too old now to actually play.”

“I understand.”

Friday February 18

“I can see you haven’t been shopping in Marks and Spencers recently, have you?”

“Oh yes, the ‘knicker capital’ of the world – no, they haven’t drawn me into their web yet.”

“Well, here’s hoping they go broke soon, then perhaps there’ll be more girls like you, to feast one’s eyes on.”

“Yeah, not very likely though is it – that they’ll go broke?”

“Oh I don’t know. I’d say no shop is that safe, now that most people spend half their money on the rent, and about another third on-line.”

“Yeah, there is that. I see what you mean.

What’s your name? Mine’s Violet.”

“I’m Ian.”

“What do you do for a living, Ian?”

“I’m a Food Safety Officer. I am an environmental health practitioner specialising in food safety. Environmental health practitioners work to improve public health. Those

specialising in food safety, like me, are responsible for the safety of food and drink. We visit places where food is prepared or processed, including factories and restaurants. We even have the power to close places down under certain circumstances.”

“Really? Well, I (I gave him my spiel about my work.)”

“Anything interesting going on in your research at the moment?”

“Yes, there is actually. I’ve been working on NHS projects recently.

Most of the NHS projects failed miserably. But just about the only success was where a senior clinician was part of the management team. So the recommendation was made by the PAC (Public Accounts Committee) that a senior clinician should be part of the senior management team of projects.

But the NHS doesn't seem to have learnt its lesson. In the absolutely massive CfH (Connecting for Health) project the 5-person Board of Management is made up of consultants, managers and bureaucrats – not one clinician. This is a recipe for disaster.”

“Yeah, they should have you on the committee, not wearing any knickers – that would wake them up a bit.”

Wednesday February 23

“Rebel, rebel, you didn’t tear your dress – you just didn’t wear anything underneath it.”

“Oh you are observant. Yes – as we all know, most men seem to have a sixth sense when it comes to noticing girls who aren’t wearing knickers.”

“I’ll say,” said the man, “must be through evolution or something, I should think.”

“Or something, I expect – knickers probably weren’t invented the last time evolution played a hand.”

“Well, there is that, I agree.”

“I’m Violet. What’s your name?”

“I’m Ian. You don’t dress like that for work, do you? What is your work, by the way?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yeah, that is interesting. It doesn’t surprise me about the government wasting all that money – not at all. I’m sure your PhD keeps you very busy. But what do you do in your spare time?”

“Well tonight I’m playing chess at my chess club. I do that every week. Most weeks I play for the club team.”

“My and do you win very often?”

“Most weeks, yeah. My grandfather taught me, and he taught me well. He’s still alive actually, and I still play him at chess sometimes.”

“I don’t play chess very well, I’m afraid. My main hobby is model railways – I’ve got quite a nice set-up at home.”

“Well, nice to meet you, Ian. Perhaps we’ll meet again.”

Thursday February 24

“Are you a model? I’ve heard they don’t wear knickers either.”

“You’re a bit behind the times I think. I know they didn’t used to. These days they very often wear thongs, I believe. Now that they’ve been invented.”

“Oh, so you go one further than the models then, these days?”

“That’s right.”

“Well, I must say I approve. It’s got me all excited.”

“That’s good. What’s your name, by the way? Mine’s Violet.”

“I’m Shaun. And I’m a motorcycle technician.”

“That sounds interesting. What does it involve?”

“I work for a small motorcycle dealership. I spend some of my time in the shop selling bikes and accessories, and other times I am repairing bikes, or servicing bikes. We also do bike MOTs.”

“Well, I’m a student.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“What do you do in your spare time, then?”

Oh, lots of things. Tonight I am practising with the Chamber orchestra I’m a member of. I play the viola. At the moment one of the pieces we’re practising is the Septet in E flat major by Saint Saens. This is for 2 violins, viola, cello, Double Bass, piano, and (unusually for chamber music) trumpet.

Saint Saens was an all round genius from a very young man. As well as composing music in a very wide range of genres, he could play stringed instruments, the piano, the organ, all to a very high standard, and was an expert in many other areas besides music. And he lived to the age of 86.”

Friday February 25

“You must be a bohemian – isn’t that what you call it?”

“Ah yes, bohemians. They who go for lots of walks in parks. I suppose they might also go without their panties sometimes.”

“But you don’t go for lots of walks round parks though?”

“Fraid not.”

“Pity. There is a nice park near where I live.”

“What’s your name? I’m Violet.”

“I’m Robin. And I’m an accounting technician. I work for a small company, and I assist the accountant by collecting, checking and analysing financial information. I have to do things like collecting debts and calculating salaries.”

“Well, I’m a student.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“I never did like that Tony Blair very much. He was very good at spending other peoples’ money,

wasn't he? What are you working on at the moment, then?"

I've been looking into the OGC. The body tasked with trying to ensure that government departments get value for money with their projects (for example Management Consulting projects), is the OGC (Office of Government Commerce) which has an annual budget of £30 million.

One of the main things done by the OGC was develop the "Gateway" process, a project management tool appropriate for large complex projects. In this, there are a series of "reviews" to check that progress is being made in the project. But so many departmental projects are in such a bad way that department people are frightened to use the "Gateway" process. And for example, the final stage of review – which shows whether a project has been ultimately successful – is Gateway Review 5. And a survey showed that

only 13% of projects actually got through Gateway 5. The other 87% stopped somewhere along the way.”

“Yeah, not very efficient is it? Doesn’t surprise me at all. Never mind, keep on not wearing the knickers.”

Monday March 7

“I see you’ve probably read ‘Fifty Shades of Grey’ – there’s a knickerless scene in that.”

“Oh yes, I remember it well. But in her case no-one noticed – except her boyfriend.”

“And in your case – well, I’ve noticed, and I expect quite a few more?”

“Oh yes, I expect so.”

“Well, I’m 70 now, you know. Do you think I’m the oldest bloke who’s noticed?”

“No, you’re not the oldest. There was this elderly gent, he must have been about 90, and he very obviously noticed. He got very excited. I was afraid he was going to have a heart attack or something.”

“Yes, I expect that’s a possibility. I’m Alex. What’s your name?”

“I’m Violet. Have you retired now, Alex?”

“Yes, 5 years ago. I retired a bit early. I was a builder.”

“Well, I’m a student.”

“What are you studying?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“So what are you working on at the moment?”

“Something about Tax Credits :

A big failed government I.T. project was that to do with Tax Credits, a policy which Gordon Brown hoped would help the low paid and most vulnerable members of society. It was introduced in 2003.

But the I.T. system, designed and implemented by EDS, was so badly designed that it was beset with all sorts of problems.

Firstly, there were more claimants than were envisaged in a short period of time, and the system crashed extremely frequently. Secondly, there were routinely large delays in making payments, which caused considerable hardship to hundreds of thousands of hard up families –

and in one year there were 100 million telephone calls to the Tax Credit helpline, and over half of these went unanswered.

Thirdly, because of faults in the system design, hundreds of thousands of families received overpayments which would later have to be paid back. Since most poor people spend their money as they get it, suddenly having a bill for, say, 3 or 4 thousand pounds caused immense hardship. Some people couldn't afford their mortgage payments and were re-possessed.

There was over £2 billion of over-payments in each of the first 2 years of the policy operating. To add insult to injury, the way the government went about recovering this debt was so heavy handed and insensitive that the government was taken to court over it by a leading charity.

Also the system was very open to fraud, and the government lost 100s of millions of pounds to criminals – making payments to them.”

“Yes, sounds like a complete mess, doesn’t it?”

Wednesday March 9

“You should wear one of these tops that say ‘nothing to wear’.”

“Funny ha ha. Stop looking up my skirt, you naughty boy.”

“Well, if you didn’t wear nothing underneath, I might not bother.”

“I should have thought you were used to it by now. It’s quite common, you know. Haven’t you heard of the ‘no pants’ craze?”

“Well I haven’t noticed it before. Not in Basingstoke.”

“Perhaps it’s not so common in places like this – but you should go to the nightclubs, for instance. Half the girls don’t wear knickers these days.”

“Well, I’m a bit out of the age-range for that, I think.”

“Oh, I don’t know.”

“Now that you’ve told me that I might even give it a try. I’m Phil. What’s your name? And what do

you do for a living? (Not today though, I suppose?)”

“I’m Violet.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“And what do you do?”

“Oh, I’m a Picture Framer. We work on pictures and other display items, making frames for them and mounting the pictures (or whatever). We have to make frames for all types of pictures; or also mirrors, photographs etc. And we mount them.

We have to advise customers on what frames are available. We have a selection of mouldings for frames. We also advise customers on colours, and for instance, what type of opening – oval, square or rectangular. We have to make careful measurements of all the things we work with. The picture needs to be fixed to the mount. The glass needs to be polished.

Being a picture framer is not as simple as you may think. So tell me what you're working on at the moment."

"I've been researching about the Child Support Agency.

One of the big government I.T. projects that was a failure was the £450 million project by EDS for the Child Support Agency (CSA).

Although switched on two years late, a year after this less than half its 300,000 applications had been dealt with, and the cost of doing it was much higher than had previously been the case (before the system had been introduced).

Also the system worked so slowly that many callers were kept on hold interminably. Many of the staff on the frontline, responsible for using the system, were reduced to tears.

And there were often delays in setting up maintenance payments of 22 weeks, when the target had been 6 weeks.”

“Yes, doesn’t surprise me at all. Actually, I am divorced, and have children, and I saw some of that stuff at first hand.”

“Oh, sorry to hear it.”

Thursday March 10

“Didn’t your Mum tell you to keep your legs together when you’re dressed like that? Come to that, I doubt if your Mum told you to dress like that. Come to that I think I’m coming – you can probably see the wet patch on my jeans?”

“Oh dear. Accidents will happen. Yes, I think I’m the cause of a few accidents, some a little more dangerous. Once, when I was walking along the road, a gust of wind caught me unawares and my dress lifted right up, and a man in a car did a noticeable swerve, and an accident nearly happened.”

“Yes, I bet. My name’s Steve. What’s yours?”

“I’m Violet. What do you do for a living, Steve?”

“I’m a screen printer. We use a fibre screen method of printing to print designs and pictures onto a variety of materials. And what do you do – apart from coming into coffee shops with no knickers on?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yes, not very left-wing, the Labour party these days, is it?”

“You can say that again.”

“So what do you do in the evenings then – or whenever you have your spare time?”

“Well, as today is Thursday, I’ve got my chamber orchestra practising tonight. I play the viola. At the moment we’re practising Schumann’s Piano Quartet in E flat major Op 47. This piece is for violin, viola, cello and piano.

A piano trio with violin, cello and piano is more usual, but Robert Schumann found room for a viola as well. The piece was written specifically with his wife Clara in mind. She was a pianist.”

“Yes, very nice I must say. I prefer pop music myself, though. I like this new singer Lady Gaga.”

Monday March 14

(In a pub) “I was thinking of going to a strip club – but you’ve saved me a bit of money.”

“Well, in that case I’ve probably saved you quite a lot of money – a friend of mine says he gets through £100 at least, every time he goes to a strip club – so I think you can stand me a drink, don’t you?”

“Be pleased to, young lady. What’s your poison? And what’s your name?”

“Oh, Bloody Mary (that’s my poison, not my name) – and my name is Violet.”

“Glad to meet you, Violet. I’m Harry. I think I’ll have a rum and coke.”

“Come on then.”

“There’s at least two reasons why I’d say you’re probably not working today – first, you’re drinking alcohol, and second, your knickerless state. But what is your work – when you do it?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yes, they are willing to pay these goofers £10,000 a week, but all they’ll pay unemployed people is under £70 a week. I was unemployed for two years, and it wasn’t very nice at all.

Do you have any free time during the evenings then, or does your studying take up that time as well?”

“No, I make sure I do a variety of things in the evening, besides work. Tonight, for instance, I will be playing my viola in a Chamber orchestra. At the moment one of the pieces we are practising is String Quartet No. 2 by Charles Edward Ives for 2 violins, viola and cello. He was an American composer. The piece was composed between 1907 and 1913.

Charles Ives was a very unusual composer. His father had been a bandmaster who liked, for instance, music where the melody was played in one key, and the harmony in another. (Most musicians hated this.) Charles Ives was “a chip

off the old block” and composed very unconventional music which no-one at the time liked. Fortunately he didn’t need to make money from his music because his “day job” in insurance was so successful that he became rich from that.”

“Well, that’s alright then. Lucky for him. And I suppose he became famous for his music after he died?”

“Yes, I think so.”

Wednesday March 16

“I spy with my little eye – I’ve just realised that’s not a children’s game, necessarily.”

“I wonder what you mean by that? You haven’t been looking up my dress, have you?”

“As it happens, yes I have – you are a naughty girl, aren’t you?”

“Me and a thousand other girls in Basingstoke. Haven’t you heard of the ‘no pants’ craze?”

“Well, I have. It’s been in the papers, like. But I thought it was in London, and anyway, exaggerated quite a bit.”

“Oh no. You should go to the nightclubs.”

“I might just do that.”

“Yes, you might see a few things there – as well as here. What’s your name? I’m Violet.”

“Oh, I’m Edward. And I’m a restaurateur. What do you do? You must have a day off, I should think, dressed like that.”

“Well, I’m a student actually” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“So what are you working on at the moment?”

“I’m looking into some of the underhanded things the management consultants get up to. One of the scams operated by Management Consultancies and I.T. Consultancies working in British public services (and apparently the NHS was particularly gullible), is the relocation scam.

Here, the Consultancy tells the authority that they don’t have the Personnel locally to do the project, and will have to “ship them in”, sometimes from another Continent.

So, on top of the £10,000 per week or so that the authority pays for each consultant, they are also charged for travelling costs for the consultants and their families (who sometimes use private jets); accommodation costs in expensive hotels, or flats often in a different place for the consultant and the family; travelling costs for the consultant to see his or her family at weekends, school fees for the children, expensive food

costs and entertainment; frequent taxi fares and numerous miscellaneous costs that can considerably increase the total amount the authority pays for each consultant.”

“Yeah, they’re still not happy with £10,000 a week – they want everything paid for as well. What do you do in the evenings then? I’ve heard most young people like you don’t seem to watch much television.”

“No, I don’t do that much, I admit. Tonight, it being Wednesday, I’m playing chess. That’s one of my hobbies.”

“Fraid I don’t do anything that intellectual. Nearest I come to that is Monopoly, I suppose.”

“Well, that’s a bit different, isn’t it?”

“It certainly is.”

Monday March 21

“I see you believe in dressing down for the occasion.”

“The polite thing is to pretend you haven’t noticed. The next time you make an obvious comment referring to my knickerless state, I’ll give you a good dressing down.”

“Oh, sorry dear, I really didn’t mean to offend you. Actually I really enjoyed the experience – seeing you, like, almost naked.”

“Glad to hear it – you’re not one of ‘them’, then?”

“One of who?”

“You know, gay.”

“Oh no, not at all, I’m not one of ‘them’.”

“Not that I have anything against gays. It’s just that, obviously, they wouldn’t be very interested in a girl without panties, as you are – I was just being a bit of a detective.”

“Yes, I see. And when you’re not being a detective, what do you do – for a living?”

“Oh, I’m a student.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“And what I’m looking at at the moment are some of the failures in government I.T. projects:

One big government I.T. failure was Customs & Excise’s e-VAT service – where customers (traders) could use an electronic VAT return if they wanted to. But the system developed (for £100 million) was so complicated that 4 years after its introduction less than 1% of traders were using it. And the government’s target had been that 50% of traders would be using it by then.”

“Yeah, that’s par for the course, I should think.”

Tuesday March 22

“ I always liked a bit of wind when I went sailing – but there are other nice things about it too.”

[On a windy day.]

“Yes, I was a bit caught out by that gust, and I noticed you noticing – teach me to go knickerless in this weather.”

“Well, don’t apologise – I enjoyed it.”

“I expect you did – it’s only a few crotchety old devils who don’t – and the God squad, mainly.”

“I’ll bet.”

“When I was a young girl I had to go to church with my family. I dread to think what the people there would think about me now.”

“No, I can imagine most of them wouldn’t be too impressed. I am, though.”

“Oh well, so long as someone is.”

“You’re not going to work dressed like that, are you? What do you do, anyway?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“My, so you’ve got a brain as well. What are you working on this week?”

“Oh, something about the NHS.....

The NHS is guilty of the “Not Invented Here Syndrome” (NIHS) where they choose not to adapt what has already been done, perhaps in another country, but choose to start from scratch. This is what happened with the NHS’s “Connecting for Health” (CfH) system, which was enormously expensive [£30 billion].

It is 10 to 100 times more expensive to start from scratch rather than adapt an existing system. But of course the Management and IT consultancies love it because they earn massive amounts of extra money.”

“Well, you know what they say – ‘if you can’t beat them, join them’. So you should get a job with one of these management consultancies. You might need to put some knickers on, though.”

Thursday March 24

“Bagsy always sitting opposite you.”

“Yes, like you are at the moment. And I can see where your eyes are trained, you naughty boy.”

“Well, it’s not often you see a snatch at 2 o’clock in the afternoon in the middle of Basingstoke.”

“Maybe not. But it is at midnight on a Saturday night if you happen to be in a nightclub. With this ‘no pants’ craze hardly any of the women are wearing knickers. So I’m not the only one.”

“By golly. That could even include my daughter, then. I shall have to think about that. Give her a bloody curfew, or something.”

“Yes, maybe you should. I’m Violet. What’s your name?”

“I’m Nick. Nice to meet you.”

“What do you do for a living, Nick?”

“I’m an Exhibition Designer. I design exhibition stands for clients and oversee their construction. I work for a large hotel group which has some of its hotels used for exhibitions, quite frequently.”

“Well, I’m a student.” (I gave him my spiel about my work.)

(Violet carries on.) “But work isn’t everything. I do plenty of other things in the evenings. Tonight I’m playing viola in a chamber orchestra. We are practising the String Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131 by Beethoven. This was one of Beethoven’s last String Quartets, but was apparently one of his favourites. Unusually it has seven movements – most String Quartets have only four. It is for 2 violins, viola and cello.”
“Yeah, I can just imagine you playing your viola in a chamber orchestra – with no knickers on, of course.”

Wednesday March 30

“Does your father know you dress like that?”

“I don’t think so – when I go back to my parents, who live about 30 miles away, I make sure I put some knickers on.”

“Does your boss mind you dressing like that – you do go to work, I presume?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yeah, looks like Tony Blair cocked up a lot of things, besides the Iraq war.”

“And what do you do?”

“I’m a Life/ Business coach, but I specialise on the business side. I work with a few mainly medium sized businesses in the area, working with their employees. I used to be a manager. The sort of thing I get involved in is leadership development, skills development, and business decision making.

But I get more excited by my hobbies than my work, to be honest. My main hobby is fishing.

What are your interests, apart from your PhD? – or does that keep you busy all day and all night?”

“No, I have most evenings free. On Wednesdays I play chess. I’m quite pleased at the moment because I won the last 3 weeks. Last week I used the Torre Attack, an opening named after the Mexican Carlos Torre Repetto. He famously beat Emanuel Lasker (one of the world’s greatest ever players) in 1925, and the opening moves of that game became known as the Torre Attack.”

“Well I won’t challenge you at chess, then – I haven’t played that for decades.”

Thursday March 31

“Who do you think you are – Pussy Galore?”

“I suppose so. But you’re not James Bond, are you?”

“No, haven’t really got the biceps. Don’t go to the gym, see. You look quite toned, though – perhaps you do? And you look like you’ve got an all-over tan, if I may say so.”

“Thank you. No, I don’t go to the gym. I haven’t really got enough time. My evenings are largely taken up with clubs, like I go to a chess club and I play the viola in a chamber orchestra. And during the day I have work to do.”

“Oh, what is that?”

(I gave him my spiel about my work.)

“Yeah, I see. You’re not just a pretty face, are you? Tell me what you’re working on at the moment.”

“Well right now I’m looking at work done by Management Consultants for the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions).

In the recent past, in a 3 year period the DWP spent money with about 150 Management Consultancy firms (including individual consultants) – spending about £400 million during the most high spending year.

[If you take a typical project as 50 men or women costing on average £10,000 a week, for 6 months (so the project costs £13 million), that’s 31 projects.]”

“Yeah, I see you’ve got a point to make. There’s obviously a hell of a lot of wastage in government circles, isn’t there? Tell me about your chamber orchestra thing. That sounds interesting. I play the piano a bit myself.”

“Well, at the moment, we are practising Brahms’ String Quartet No 2 in G major, which is for 2

violins, 2 violas and a cello. This was composed in 1890. When Brahms started writing it, he had in mind that it was for his fifth Symphony – but it turned into a String Quartet.”

“I take it you don’t dress down quite as much when you’re playing your viola – it might put some of the lads off their notes?”

“No, you’re right. I wear a much longer dress.”

“I bet.”

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Thanks: G Burnell and Danielle Fernando