

What day is it today?

- Ann How did you sleep?
- Terry Very well actually. A long time since I slept in until 9.
- Ann Dustmen have been, did you put the bin out?
- Terry Damn, I lose all track of days. I had quite a lot for them too, having cleared out the cupboards in the garage.
- Ann Never mind, can't be helped. Glad you slept well. So what day is it today?
- Terry Hold on, where's my pen, ah here it is. Right cross out 93, and we are on day 94 of lockdown. So, your starter for 10 - what else has taken 94 days?
- Ann Let me think.....I believe it took you 94 days to agree to holiday anywhere other than Blackpool.
- Terry What's wrong with Blackpool?
- Ann How long have you got?
- Terry Try again.
- Ann It took 94 days for you to master the use of Zoom. 94 days to learn how to put your dirty washing in the basket, 94 days to
- Terry OK OK I think I see a theme here. Stop guessing. The answer to my question is - Napoleon 1's second reign as Emperor of the French lasted 94 days from 20 March to 22 June 1815.
- Ann I can't believe the trivia you keep in your head, but you can't remember what it was you went to the shop to buy. You should be on a quiz team.
- Terry No, you need to know about pop music, soaps and football. You know I'd be hopeless.
- Ann Well let me ask you my question again. What day is it and I mean the date, not the period of lockdown.
- Terry OK. That's a tricky one – err – yes! on this day in 1797 Nelson was wounded in the arm and had to have it amputated.
- Ann Well done, but I was thinking of something a bit more recent and relevant to us.
- Terry Oh yeh, the first time we went away together and had a bit of privacy, nudge nudge, wink wink.
- Ann Well done again. That was quite a night wasn't it. Sophie and Steven's engagement party and the night that George was conceived. I don't know what came over me, agreeing to stay in a B&B overnight. We had to register as Mr & Mrs Smith didn't we. You made me carry the luggage in as you said that would prove we were married. I had to keep my right hand in my pocket.
- Terry I did offer you a polo mint, but it was too small and I didn't have a curtain ring.

Ann Ever the romantic.

Terry Then you blew it at breakfast by asking whether I drank tea or coffee.

Ann Well I wasn't used to all that subterfuge. The waiter winked at me and I blushed so much I don't think my face calmed down for hours.

Terry It certainly was a night to remember.

Ann And that was just the start of it – you couldn't get enough of me in those days.

Terry I also recall when we told your parents that you were pregnant, your mother went white as a sheet and your father was so red in the face that I thought he was going to have a heart attack. When he left the room, I was convinced he was off to fetch his shotgun.

Ann Yes, we seemed to skip the stage in our relationship when mum would normally ask me if we were sleeping together.

(They both laugh)

Ann They came round to the idea of the baby – eventually.

Terry 43 years marriage – and they said it wouldn't last *(they laugh)*. They were good years weren't they.

Ann I think you could be looking at our marriage through rose tinted glasses. We have had our ups and downs, normally related to money in some way. Putting a saver and a spender together is bound to be fraught with issues. Remember when I found this house? You said it was way over budget, was as good as uninhabitable and we were moving here over your dead body.

Terry Well, as usual, you proved me wrong. I think the psychedelic walls, the bean bags and the strong smell of cannabis prevented me seeing the potential of the place. It was the perfect house to bring up our family – thank you for not listening to me.

Ann You're welcome. We've done a lot to this over the years haven't we. The extension to create a rumpus room for the kids and an en-suite upstairs was one of your better ideas.

Terry Well I had to stop you spending more money and moving to a bigger house. I found some of the estate agent's brochures hidden in the drawer that we keep the tablecloths in. The prices made my eyes water.

Ann You never told me that.

Terry I thought I played it pretty cool. Coming home one day with plans drawn up on the back of an envelope. Admit it, it was the his and hers basins in the en-suite that sold it to you wasn't it.

Ann Well it certainly wasn't the bidet, especially as you called it a foot bath. Actually, it was the room for the kids to play in, I was sick to death of clearing up the lounge after them and the rumpus room gave them their own pig sty that I could just shut the door on.

Terry Makes a nice study now.

Ann And it is still as messy as when the kids used it. I don't know how you can work in that mess.

Terry I know exactly where everything is, which pile on the floor, which pending tray. Every office should have at least 3 pending trays and a couple of To Be Filed trays, preferably on the floor so as not to get in the way of the paperwork on the desk.

Ann If you say so. Is that what you call horizontal filing. I thought filing cabinets went upward – not outwards (*they both laugh*). Do you think the house is too big now? The children and their families have moved on and have their own lives to live. If only they didn't live so far away. They only visit for a day, their diaries being too full to stay any longer. Do you think down-sizing would be a good idea?

Terry Not yet. Maybe one day.

Ann So what do you have planned for today?

Terry A walk of course. I thought I might push myself and try a slightly longer walk. It is incredible how much fitter I have become during this period. The first time I walked up the hill behind the house I was puffing and panting. Now I hardly notice it. I don't know why I haven't walked around this area more, the scenery is fantastic. But I'm not going to walk by the coast again, there were so many people there that social distancing was a real issue and with dogs and kids running riot, I didn't feel safe.

Ann Why don't you walk over to the park by The Hare and Hounds? The borders have been maintained throughout this lockdown and they are always so beautiful at this time of year. And the roses are magnificent this year.

Terry That would mean I'd have to go past *those* traffic lights.

Ann You mean the ones where I had the accident don't you.

Terry Yes

Ann You must try and get over that. You can't let it keep haunting you. It was nobody's fault. There was black ice and the truck skidded out of control. I'm just so pleased that it happened after I had dropped young Fred off at school.

Terry I'd rather it hadn't happened at all. If you hadn't been held up at the level crossing just before that junction it would have been a different story. Or if Fred had been ready when you picked him up. And if.....

Ann What-ifs are not going to help. It happened, we can't change that. You've got to move on.

Terry Yeh, but it's not easy. I know what you're saying, that I must, that it makes sense, but I just can't do it yet. I'm just not ready.

Ann OK, I won't go on about it, but you shouldn't let it eat away at you. Meanwhile, back at your walking, I am really impressed with the way you have taken up the challenge and you're definitely looking better for it. Do you know I think you've lost some weight?

Terry So still fancy me?

Ann Always. Don't forget the Zoom call with the family this afternoon.

Terry Thanks for helping me with using that. Scared the life out of me the first time, but you always were an excellent teacher.

Ann Nonsense, all you had to do was take a deep breath and look at the various icons. You'd think you were afraid of receiving an electric shock if you pushed the wrong button the way you were panicking. You've really cracked it now.

Terry Well, we'll see this afternoon won't we. It is nice to see the family though. Susan seems so grown up now. I can't believe we are old enough to have a 21-year-old granddaughter. I loved hearing about her Zoom birthday party and all her friends entered into the spirit of it. Films released in the year she was born. What a great idea, kids love dressing up at that age. And who'd have thought her friends would have made such amazing costumes out of bits and pieces they found around the house. Did you see Tarzan? Where did he find that costume, do you think he tie dyed a sheet?

Ann Could have done. I liked R2-D2 even though I'm sure it was a very uncomfortable costume.

Terry There were rather a lot of Woodys from Toy Story. I guess that was a fairly easy option.

Ann I'll never forget that fancy dress party we went to. Was the theme The Oscars? Everyone looked lovely in their dinner suits and cocktail dresses – but YOU had to insist we went as batman and robin. I've never felt so stupid.....and embarrassed

Terry I think it's quite amusing looking back on it – and the kids always think it's so hilarious (*they laugh*).

Ann I think we can be proud of our children and grandchildren, all seem to be successful in their own fields and keep an eye on the oldies, even if it is remotely.

Terry Yes, I miss the hugs, but I'm sure it won't be long before we return to some sort of normality.

Ann Let's hope so.

Terry I was thinking in the shower this morning, I really ought to try and learn some Spanish for the next time I'm visiting Paul in Barcelona, so that I can converse in the shops and restaurants. I think he would be proud of his old Dad if I could do that.

Ann Great idea, I'm sure you will pick it up quickly. You seem to pick up reading the menus etc quite well last time we went, you just need the confidence to actually speak the language. There are plenty of apps that help.

Terry Apps? What happened to Linguaphone? You know what I'm like with technology.

Ann Don't put yourself down. Try it, you might like it.

(*pause, she starts to laugh*)

Terry What are you laughing about?

Ann Do you remember when you walked into the wrong toilet in that bar we went to?

Terry How was I supposed to know that Senoras was the Ladies? Senior is a man isn't it and I assumed Senoras was the plural. I don't know who was more embarrassed, me or the girl who was inspecting the ladder in the thigh of her tights. (*he laughs*)

Ann We have had some good holidays haven't we, once I persuaded you that there was life outside Blackpool.

Terry Yes, we have certainly seen some amazing places and met interesting people, that's interesting in a good and a bad way.

Ann Are you thinking of the couple we met in Latvia who were determined to convince us that the world was flat?

Terry Amongst others. I was tempted to agree just to stop him talking at us. The evidence they came up with was unbelievable. The horizon is flat, not curved. And, if the Earth was a sphere hurtling through space, then water would be wobbling all over the place, not staying flat.

Ann Yes lots of interesting debates, I quite enjoyed just sitting back and listening to the two of you as the conversation became an argument and very heated. His wife was nice, she and I had some nice chats while you two were doing your best to change each other's' point of view.

Terry Yes she was very nice

Ann Was she?

(pause)

Terry There's something I never told you. I always wanted to. It was the night you couldn't come down to dinner.

Ann The night I had food poisoning?

Terry Yes

Ann Go on. Are you going to tell me it was something you gave me to eat?

Terry It was a bit more than that.

Ann I know, you two had a fling didn't you.

Terry You mean you've known all along and never said anything?

Ann I know a lot more about you than you think I do.

Terry I've always wanted to tell you. I felt really bad keeping secrets from you.

Ann Well you can now, you can tell me anything. How did it happen?

Terry It didn't mean anything. Her husband had gone up after dinner to read and she just wanted to talk to someone. She was very lonely in her marriage. I felt relaxed after a nice bottle of wine, and I just listened to her. Then one thing led to another. It wasn't planned, it just happened.

Ann How long?

Terry A few months, that's all. Her office was near our London branch, we met up whenever I was up there. I'm so sorry. It was all a long time ago, but I tried to tell you on a number of occasions and then after the accident, I just couldn't.

Ann You've kept in touch - haven't you.

Terry Yes, but not lately. How did you know?

Ann Woman's intuition. Tell me the truth, do you want to pick up where you left off?

Terry Don't ask me that. I don't know.

Ann It's your life, I can't tell you how to lead it.

(sound of plates and cutlery being cleared up, no speaking)

Ann Other than Latvia's obvious attraction, which was your favourite holiday?

Terry I still think that India was my favourite trip. The people were so friendly, the time in the park watching those tiger cubs was unbelievable, something I will never forget.

Ann Yes it was a memorable holiday. You lapped up all the history of the cities. The Taj Mahal was the highlight for me, even the cliched photograph taken whilst we sat on Princess Diana's seat. The food was an eye opener. I was really worried that the curries would be too spicy for me, but the flavours were something else.

Terry You know what, I think that tonight I am going to try and cook a nice chicken curry.

Ann Don't tell me you are tired of beans of toast.

Terry Very funny. I think my culinary skills are coming along nicely. Will you help me? I have the recipe you use, but if you could just watch over me and point me in the right direction when I start to mess it up.

Ann Of course I will. It really is much easier than you think.

Terry You always make out that cooking is complicated and takes years of practice.

Ann Well you are about to find out that I was just making sure you appreciated what I cooked for you. In fact, I suppose I ought to tell you that the recipe you have is just for show. Have you read the ingredients? We haven't any of those, I don't even know where to buy them. In the larder, behind the Ryvita, is my secret stock of curry sauces. I knew you'd never find them if I put them behind diet food.

Terry No. All these years you have been using ready-made sauces?

Ann Afraid so.

Terry Even at the dinner parties we held?

Ann Especially at the dinner parties. I nearly confessed a couple of times, but you were singing my praises, telling everyone how I made the curry sauce from scratch. I hadn't the heart to contradict you.

Terry Do the children know that you cheat?

Ann I wouldn't call it cheating, just using my initiative. No they don't know and I want to keep it from them, it will be our little secret. Agreed?

Terry What's it worth?

Ann How about I don't tell them that you are not the great plumber you make out and that every time you decide that you will sort the simple job of replacing a tap washer, or sorting out the ballcock in the toilet you end up with a flood and having to call out a real plumber?

Terry Agreed.

(Short silence)

Terry I was thinking about that last zoom call. Tania playing the piano. I have to admit I struggled to keep the tears away.

Ann Playing our song.

Terry Yes. It was prominent at so many points in our life – playing on the juke box when we met in that pub.

Ann You said it was a soppy ‘girlie’ sentimental song and not your thing.

Terry I was just trying to look macho in front of the guys.

Ann Then you played it on your cassette recorder in the car the night you asked me to marry you.

Terry Did I actually ask you to marry me, or did we just agree that we ought to ‘do the right thing’?

Ann Well in my mind you proposed.

Terry Ever the romantic.

Ann The first dance at our wedding. Not that we could dance that closely with a big bump between us.

Terry Every anniversary party we held. *(pause, then with great sadness)* And then

Ann Don’t say it.

(Telephone rings)

Terry Bloody telephone – I’ll let the answerphone pick it up.

Ann It might be important

Terry Not as important as talking to you.

Ann Do you have any regrets?

Terry A bit of a pointed question.

Ann Just thought you might have things to get off your chest.

Terry OK. *(pause)* Well you know I didn’t mean to hurt you.

Ann How would I know? You never actually told me that. Apparently there was always someone, or something to blame. I had forgotten to buy your favourite yoghurt, or the shirt you wanted to wear was in the washing machine, or once you even blamed the fact that England were losing at the cricket. I’d like to hear you take responsibility for that temper of yours.

Terry It’s not easy.

Ann I didn’t say it would be.

Terry I really believe it was the drink.

Ann But you continued to drink when you knew how it affected you.

Terry I've thought a lot about that recently. I don't care what they say. I'm convinced that truck driver was still over the limit after having a skinful the night before. If he had been totally sober he would have been able to control his truck. It made me think about my drinking.

Ann And what have you decided.

Terry I've virtually cut it out.

Ann Really? If you believe that then you are seriously deluded.

Terry There have been times since the accident when I needed that prop. Surely you can understand that.

Ann Do you talk to your therapist about this?

Terry No. Do you think I should?

Ann What do you think?

Terry Maybe you're right. I guess I'm embarrassed to admit to the way I treated you. I don't believe I'm addicted, I could give it up any time, I just don't want to yet. I **should** talk to her about it. I've really opened up to her about all sorts of things, things I've never spoken to anyone about. I hadn't realised how much I needed someone to talk to, she has been a godsend.

Ann **We** need to talk

Terry That sounds ominous

Ann I think it is time we moved on.

Terry Please don't say you're leaving. I miss you so much.

Ann You don't need me anymore. You've come a long way and now is the time to stand on your own two feet. Look forward, not backwards.

Terry I can't do this without you.

Ann You can, believe in yourself. I'll still be an important part of your life and whenever you have a difficult decision to make, you'll think "what would Ann tell me to do" and you'll hear my voice, whether you like it or not. This lockdown has given us an extended time together, but as the restrictions start to ease, you will talk to neighbours, friends, maybe even next door's dog..

Terry Never, it hates me, or rather I hate it and it loves my ankles.

Ann It's a puppy, it just wants to play

Terry Well it can play with someone else, it has ruined 2 pairs of socks already, nipping at me.

Ann Maybe you should consider a rescue dog yourself. It would help you to keep up the walking and be someone to talk to. I'm sure it would love to hear about when Napoleon was shot in the arm..

Terry Nelson?

Ann There you go, a dog would be better than me. It would listen to you and show interest in everything you said. On second thoughts, not really practical having a dog when you go back to work.

Terry If I go back.

Ann What do you mean?

Terry This period of being furloughed has given me food for thought. I only have a couple of years until my normal retirement date anyway. Do I really want the hassle? Marketing is a young person's game. I see the way the kids in the office look at me and I'm sure I heard someone refer to me as 'Grandad' one day. Experience seems to count for nothing these days.

Ann At least you are meeting and socialising with people. And it's good to stimulate the brain rather than sitting here talking to me all day and watching re-runs of Midsomer Murders.

Terry Who knows if I'll even have a job after this is all over. Companies have been hit badly and the marketing budget is always the first thing to be cut. People will look at new ways of advertising, probably using technology that is just a mystery to me. I'm not sure I want to be part of it. I'm too old to be told by someone who should still be in school that I'm not meeting targets and that I need to adapt with the times. Life is too short.....

(pause)

Ann Maybe, but don't do anything rash. The furlough money is a great help, delay making a decision as long as you can. Discuss it with the children, see what they think. Would there be an option of part time, would that be better?

Terry I don't know. At the moment I just can't face commuting, meetings, long hours, the withering looks every time I lock myself out of my computer. Midsomer Murders isn't so bad. Sometimes I even remember who the murderer is. I could always move onto Murder She Wrote...

Ann The day you watch that is the day I know you have given up on life. *(she laughs)*

(pause)

Terry Stay with me today, help me rustle up a curry to be proud of.

Ann Of course. But you can't cling to me forever. You've got to move on. You know I didn't survive the accident. You know that and you must accept it.

Terry I can't, we didn't have a chance to say goodbye.

Ann Goodbye Terry. And remember, as in the words of our song – "When I need you, I just close my eyes and I'm with you"

(Leo Sayer's song fades in as the play ends)