



Monday 7th July 2014

Dear Customer,

When my brother had texted to see if I was coming to his TDF party he said he'd be back from France the next day. Well I never knew he was in France and I didn't know about his party as I hadn't opened my mail since I'd got back. A couple of days ago I actually spoke to him. I asked where in France he'd been. 'Just to the South' he said. He was being evasive, I asked him whereabouts. "Oh I can't remember what it's called, somewhere near St Tropez, I can't pronounce it". That was odd, he knew that's where I was, he knew I was in Ramatuelle. He didn't want to discuss it and changed the subject. Later that day I was on the phone with him again. "Where near St Tropez were you – spell it?" "I was just in Ramatuelle" he said. "Oh that's nice, it's lovely isn't it". He asked where in Ramatuelle I was and I told him I was in a beach house off Boulevard Patch, he knew that already too as he knew I was next to Club 55, and when I asked him where 'exactly' he was, he said - "near there". I told him it was great being so close to be able to lunch at the Club. 'How can you afford to eat in Club 55?' he was trying to divert my attention from the elephant in the room. Why was my brother on holiday within spitting distance of me, at the same time as me, and why didn't he tell me. Why are brothers so weird!

Well, where do I start with the Tour de France!! I needed to make my placard, what should it be '**WHERE'S BRADLEY ?**' or '**GO CHRIS GO !!**' No, the froggies were coming to town, it could only be one thing '**YOU'RE TOO SEXY**'. Then I did a placard for Liz '**BAN LIVE EXPORTS**'. I'd hacked up a massive cardboard box which garden furniture came in and scrawled the big black letters. Perfect! On Friday evening I headed out of Richmond, 'Gateway to the Dales', gateway to losing your phone reception, and up to Reeth to meet Liz. In 3 hours it would be lock-down. Wherever you were at 10pm you had to stay. There was a festival spirit in Reeth - hoards of people, music, Camden street food. We checked out Muker, there were bands playing, it was Glastonbury. We had a drink outside the pub and three hot, fit cycling guys with a husky thought they'd seen us both on TV and it was perplexing them. We chatted from afar. The midges had descended in clouds that evening and the guys were covered in bites from camping. I started freaking about being eaten alive as I was wearing denim cut-offs. One suggested I try some of his insect spray, instead of passing me the can, he came and knelt down in front of me, and started slowly spraying at my legs up and down. Now I'm sure that must have looked very weird to the onlookers but this was the new Yorkshire, the sexed up one that Gary Verity of 'Welcome to Yorkshire' promised us. Liz was worried about the curfew and my head was getting eaten by the midges so I told the guys it was nice to meet them and hoped they enjoyed the Tour. Hot pesticide man panicked, stepped forward and grabbed my hand, he wanted me to stay. He must have got more out of the spraying than me.....um! 'Am I really walking away!' We left.

A group of us were having our TDF party with barbecue directly over the river from Liz' house in a field appropriately called 'Paradise'. We had our own wide gateway on a really narrow stretch of road with no grass verge a few miles after the Buttertubs. The way the road swooped down hill and round a bend into us we'd get an amazing view of them and they of us....and our placards. But in any case, I'd be out in the middle of the road. I'd left my car in the field the previous night before shut-down to use as sound system. I got my arms and legs out, fluffed up my hair and put on some cool, 5" heel ankle boots. I had to back my placard up. We put the music on full blast and started testing the placards on any stray passers-by. Yeah!!!! They liked it. Then, everything went insane. My high spirits were at bursting point as the vehicles started arriving – the French gendarmes, the sponsors vehicles, the crews, the press. When the first vehicle arrived, it set the trend, full of hot, fit Frenchmen whose serious faces suddenly cracked into big smiles and laughs as they slowed down to get a better look at us and us at them. Then I heard a sexy French voice come through the loud speaker system '**YOU TOO**'. I looked up to see whose mouth it had come out of '**WOW !!!**' That was too much, I wasn't expecting that. I punched the air, 'Yeaaaaaaah' I shouted, then their horns went off. I became adept at using my placard like I really meant it, which I did. And so it went on for 3 hours. The group of spectators before us were out of our sight and we could hear the odd little toot as they passed them but when they got to us, we didn't get little toots, things went completely ballistic with roaring, hands flat down on the horns, '**YOU TOO**'s, and the gendarmes letting their sirens off. I bet the others must have thought 'what have they got that we haven't'. My placard! One gendarme whose face I was struggling to crack passed slowly, looking at me, "oooh le gendarme" I was shouting and I turned the placard to follow him. His head literally turned 360 degrees to look back at me, I was still there pointing the placard at him, then he finally cracked and set his emergency siren off at full volume. It was so funny. One gorgeous guy gave me a sexy '**YOU TOO**' and was gesturing for me to get into his empty passenger seat and go with him. I could have got a lift to Harrogate, the finish line, my brother's party. I could have run away with the Tour de France. And as for gifts – we almost needed a sack to carry them back, vehicles were stopping and bringing everything to a standstill so they could shower us with Tour baseball caps, posters, so many types of key rings, inflatable guitars and my favourite – bios with 'Gendarmerie Nationale, presente sur le Tour depuis 1903' printed on. One British cop pulled over, I thought we were going to be censored, then he said 'I'm not sure I agree with that' pointing to Liz' placard which now said '**Meat is Murder**', but I agree with that, he said pointing to mine and off he went. 'Nice one' I shouted.

Then my eyesight started going weird, I had black spots everywhere – probably from the sun bouncing off the windows and bonnets. I'd peaked too early. The riders hadn't even come by yet. I had to go and curl up in the back of the car with my black coat over my head, I was going blind and then I heard over a tannoy that the riders were about to arrive and heard Liz shouting "Issy quick, they're coming". After all that, I was going to miss the race. Thankfully I made it back to my position for them to whizz past. It was the other lot which made my day though, love at first sight over and over again for 3 hours. My only regret is that I didn't have '**JE T'AIME**' written on the other side of my sign to respond to the sexy '**YOU TOO**'s. Gary Verity would have been very proud of me sexing up Swaledale. You really should try it girls. After Saturday, Sunday felt very dreary indeed – nothing much could follow that.

I can't remember at all what's in the bags this week and I wouldn't have a clue what to do with it anyway,

Kind wishes,

Isobel - lovesick for the Tour, lovesick for my sexy Frenchmen