



**Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

Dear Customer,

I hope you are having a lovely Easter. Instead of putting a chocolate Easter egg in your bag I thought you might prefer to celebrate with a big cabbage:

**Easter Cabbage**

2 *tbsp* butter  
2 *garlic* cloves, *minced*  
1 *medium green cabbage*, *cored and thinly sliced*  
*salt and black pepper*, to taste

1 *medium onion*, *finely chopped*  
1 *heaped tbsp. grated fresh ginger*  
200ml *double cream*

*In a very large pan, heat the butter over a medium heat until it is melted and starting to bubble a little. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook for about 5 minute, until softened. Stir in the ginger and cook for about a minute. Then add the cabbage, stirring well to coat it with the butter and other flavours. Cook, stirring occasionally for about 15-20 minutes until the cabbage is soft and caramelised. Turn down the heat to low and stir in the cream, making sure to scrape any brown bits up from the pan bottom. Cover and continue to cook over a low heat for about 10 minutes. Uncover, add salt and pepper to taste. Then cook for a few more minutes, stirring once or twice, to let some of the liquid evaporate. Adjust the seasoning as desired and serve.*

Sometimes I pop into the office on my way back from the sheep, boots on, stinking of silage, or straight off the moor, sodden from wading through bogs. I horrify the neat office girls I pass in the corridors. I am perpetually filthy. So when I meet up with my friend Liz for afternoon tea in a nice hotel or tea room, I turn up in my habitual state and so does she - in her shredded jodhpurs, covered in mud....and more lately, and fetchingly, her hair full of straw....literally full of it...from bedding her horses down. 'Yeah, nice one!' I think looking at her. Two scarecrows do lunch. "How was Paris ? " (*couture*)

I'm slowly coming to terms with the loss of my Blackberry, it's like a bereavement. Still no emails but my texting has marginally improved with a new technique holding my forefinger between thumb and middle finger like a fat pencil. Better than it was, but still dire so best avoided.

With 17 million cars on the road, 40 mph winds and cold, torrential rain, we decided to pass on Nessie and stay home over the weekend.....rest up and have little day trips out. I can't seem to get far from Richmond anymore. We went to Middleham Castle, the childhood home of Richard III, the one purportedly dug up from the car park in Leicester and then reburied - as he would have wanted - in the place he was murdered.

We were meeting up with Liz yesterday. I suggested a visit to Kiplin Hall, a Jacobean mansion that she'd been banned from after writing about them last year - they'd written to her newspaper. 'Perfect'.

I had a hat and scarf in the car but she didn't bother, I suspect the prospect of being arrested by the volunteer room attendants was far more tantalising. Of course it was, that was the whole point. Stuff the paintings. While I think she was recognised here and there as we passed through the rooms, no-one made a move on her. That was a shame but never mind. Hello 'Last of the Summer Wine'.

As for my book, there has been further contact with the book publisher. Still unable to nail the synopsis I asked about timings and was I about to miss a boat. Apparently if I get a real move on I could have it out this time next year as she thinks a spring release would be appropriate for it. An advance was mentioned, a tasty carrot.....which would be very handy. All subject to getting a contract of course. This is all sounding really great and exciting - the only problem is that I have to write a book.

I really, really have to crack this. My friend Richard, a writer, is here and has been giving me a pep talk. He told me that I had to plan the book and that if I think that I am going to sit down and that it will write itself in a stream of consciousness, that I'm completely deluding myself and that in 12 months- time I will still be sitting, staring at my computer screen..... that's exactly what I thought I would do. I felt sure I could write it in one long stream of consciousness.

From reading about writers in the past, I know the routine, that they have a routine, they sit down with a cup of tea every morning and write...every day... a couple of thousand words ....and generally knock off and do normal life in the afternoon. I told Richard I write better at night - probably because that's when I'm not interrupted. "...Only the "Hitlers of the world work at night, no honest artist does" said WH Auden, Richard said. He went onto Amazon and ordered me a book called 'Daily Rituals' by Mason Curry giving the writing rituals of hundreds of the world's greatest writers through history from Simone de Beauvoir and Voltaire to Scott Fitzgerald, Woody Allen and Karl Marx. For me to read in order to, I guess 'get real'. Discipline, discipline, discipline.....

We're going to meet my brother for lunch in Harrogate tomorrow. It will be great - they can both gang up me.

I'm going to toast some hot cross buns,

**HAPPY EASTER**

Kind wishes,

Isobel

**PS** In utter shock I read in the paper today that farm animal welfare codes are to be scrapped. Conservative ministers are planning to repeal official guidance on animal welfare standards starting with chickens, then cows, followed by pigs and sheep. Instead of statutory codes, there will be vested interest, "industry-led guidance" as part of a deregulatory agenda. So all the decades of progress of the tens of thousands of people fighting to get them rights and improve the quality of their wretched lives could be destroyed in one fell swoop. It is potentially so grave that I don't really have words for it. How much more cruelty can industry inflict on them in the pursuit of ever cheaper food. If we're more 'competitive', live exports will increase. I often get email alerts from Farming publications – one came through celebrating that from the end of 2016, 150,000 cattle each year will be live exported from Ireland to Egypt for religious slaughter. This is a crime against humanity. The fields everywhere are full of this year's 'crop' of baby lambs. In a brief interlude from the miserable cold and wet, there was a little warm sunshine and they bombed around in gangs, full of the joy of life. Live export, religious slaughter - it's the luck of the draw.