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## Every Day is Mother's Day

by Nick Barrett

Back in the good but poor old days when I had to rent stinky flats I shared a bedroom with a shrink called Steve, who worked with deranged people in hospitals by day but had a nice little sideline in devising those multiple choice questionnaires that teenage girls seem to love in magazines like Cosmopolitan. 'Do you truly love your boyfriend,' 'Are you and the tosser compatible', 'Should you shag the man next door', you know the sort of bollocks.

I sometimes felt like research for one of his cases, the bonkers questions he asked me. Do you ever feel violent towards total strangers was one. Of course I bleedin' did, this was London, ignorant bugger capital of the planet wasn't it, of course I felt like killing people, every day almost. I was too cute to admit that to Steve though, no telling what he might have made of it; bugger the 'integrity of his research' as he called it.

Every weekend I would take off to my girlfriend's flat, conveniently vacating the bedroom for Steve's fit looking girlfriend Janice – a trick-cyclist herself - to come down for the weekend from Birmingham, no doubt for some sexual aerobics but also to work with Steve on their next multiple choice quiz.

This worked well enough until one weekend my girlfriend was away on some training course or other and I had to stay at the flat, which wasn't a bad gaff really despite occasional niffy pongs from the drains and the smelly gas cooker with matching minging oven.

Being a total gent, I volunteered to take the sofa so that Janice could have her wicked way with Steve. Also I wanted to keep well in with Janice; I wouldn't have minded working up a sweat in one of her aerobic workouts, if you get my meaning.

Which is how I came to eavesdrop for the first time on how they collaborated on the multiple choices. The theme was "Do you truly love your mother?" Mothers Day must have been coming up, not that it ever bothers me. They had papers spread all over the floor with all the questions and multiple choice type answers and went into a private cocoon talking it up - yours truly was definitely not to be included - but they didn't mind the television being on, they said. I did though, I mean Saturday night television, have you ever tried to watch it? So I listened in with the volume turned down quite low on some karaoke for losers sort of drivel called Britain's got talent or something.

Anyway, seemed they knew what they were doing and eventually they asked me to be a guinea pig with some questions.

Question: If the house was on fire who would you help to safety first:

- A) Your crippled mum
- B) Your best mate who owed you money
- C) Your girlfriend who you are having the best sex of your life with.
  
- D) The budgie

That was one of the trick questions I thought; if you didn't admit B, or maybe C if the sex was all that good, then that might establish you as a liar for the whole rest of the test. Still, best say A though I figured, which scored me maximum marks! This was easy I thought. Moving on though.

Question:

It's one of your Mum's special birthdays, maybe her 40<sup>th</sup> or even 50<sup>th</sup>, do you buy her:

- A) The biggest box of chocolates in Claridges
- B) A single rose from that stall at the underground station
- C) A fish supper
- D) A ball of string

Obviously it's C; she hates chips and I love 'em so I could have a nice plateful. But I know Janice hates fish so I say A because I know Janice likes chocolates.

It went on like this for a while and Janice was fairly lapping up my answers. Steve though seems to have ESP about these things, him being sensitive to atmospheres and all that crap as he explained to me once, and was getting a bit shirty I thought about Janice cooing at all my answers.

After about a dozen questions, with me chalking up maximum marks and well established as a lovable mummy's boy type, Steve gathered all the papers up a bit hasty like and did a flounce into the bedroom. Janice followed.

They were too posh really for a proper shouty slanging match but I know what a door slam means when I hear one and I saw Steve flouncing off down the street from the living room window.

Janice was straight into the room, angry but apologising for Steve having run off back to his Mum's who stayed in the same borough. Tears soon flowed and I heard all about how fed up she was with the boring git and his stupid, cynical questionnaires. She knew now from my answers that I was a more sensitive person than she had thought.

Well, I was quickly in there just in case she had any more questions to trip me up or Steve grew a brain and came back. Later on in bed she said: "You really do love your mother Phil," she said, "I so respect that in a man."

"Every day is Mother's day as far as I've always been concerned," I told her, wondering how could I use Father's Day to get a repeat performance.