Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

Cam Gran

by Francesca Ryan

I hope this video camera works. Joanie set it up for me. I'm seventy-two, in good shape and about to try my hand as a camgirl. I've always been up for something new—you've got to keep up, haven't you? My name's Araminta, but that sounds a bit posh. Joanie says that it might work to my advantage, or I might want to change my name. It was Joan who suggested this whole cam lark thing. She said it's money for old rope, which is encouraging, now that I'm old and a bit ropey. I could certainly use the extra money. So I'm having a go at being a Cam Gran, as she put it.

I've decided to use the name Anne Robertson, as I thought that might appeal to a certain clientele: the sort that likes to be bossed around. Probably my best bet? I've popped on my best leopard-skin blouse and some bright red lipstick, and I'm having a practice now. I'm recording myself to see how I might do it. I've prepared in advance to get the whole thing going.

"You are the weakest link! You've been a very naughty boy. You know what we do with naughty boys, don't you? I have my Mason Pearson hairbrush to hand right here, you worm."

But that's about as far as I got. I suspect I'm not really cut out to be an elderly dominatrix. I was never much good at dirty talk either, as my late husband could have told you. Also, I don't think I could get the hang of all the admin involved with the payments. Joan says you have to have a tip jar and keep encouraging the viewer to contribute if they want things a little spicier. But what if your internet cuts out? Would they want their money back? It's hardly something I could ask my tech-savvy granddaughter about.

I think lounging around on a red velvet sofa would have been much more my style, back in the Belle Époque days.

I could have been a 'Grande Horizontale', as they called them, receiving gardenias and chocolates in my apartment and being taken to the opera and nice restaurants. All paid for by my protector, who would dress like something out of a Manet painting. Maybe he would have painted me too? Tastefully, of course.

Maybe I'm being defeatist? Joan says I would soon get the hang of it. She's even offered to do a double act with me. Lezza Grannies. Yes, apparently there's a market for that as well. Who knew? I don't think it's something I'd be up for, really. Joan is a good soul, but it would be pushing it to say that there's any kind of erotic spark between us. Although, as it's all play-acting, perhaps that's not necessary?

We made quite a splash playing the Ugly Sisters in our last village panto. We had a new director, Nigel. He's very innovative. He's a blow-in from London, and he's given us all a good shake-up. He decided that the Ugly Sisters should be non-binary. This didn't please Jeff and Morty, who've been playing them for the last four years.

I must say, Joan seems to be very preoccupied at the moment with the cam work. She has quite a few regular clients, including one who's started taking a shine to her: a youngish man from Lagos. She thinks he's a bit lonely, really, because he's getting quite romantic with her. He's not really interested in the sex side of things. He may be coming over to see her, but there's the question of the airfare. We don't have a Western Union in Chipping Chadbury, so it's hard to work out how to send it to him. He said that they would find a way.

And then there's her ex-colonel in Northumberland. Ever so much the gentleman, she says—and could she pass him on to me? He's given her some really good investment tips and doesn't even seem to need much actual dirty talk. A quick flash of her Doreen bra, and that was all he needed. Men, bless them. It goes to show they aren't all after one thing, even if they are paying for it.

On reflection, I think I may just pass on the whole thing. It would be hard to look our vicar in the eye at communion, knowing I'm a secret Jezebel. And how on earth do you explain it all to HMRC? Probably best to keep buggering on with the Premium Bonds and keep my fingers crossed!