

## SPREAD THE WORD - or - TALES YOU LOSE

( a telephone rings, Elsie answers it)

Oh hiya Sonia, how are you, love?

Oh, not too good, I'm sorry to hear that, what's the problem?.....oh a tummy bug, there's nothing worse!.....and....erm, is it just in the morning you're feeling sick?.....All day? And have you been to the doctor's with your...stomach? And what did he say?..... Did he?..... Did he?..... Well that just goes to show they don't train them properly these days. Probably just a virus, indeed, that's what they always say when they haven't got clue, you know! Anyway, I hope you're soon better, one way or another.

And how's your Norman?.....Oh, a bad back! Dear me, you'll have to exchange him for a newer model!

How about your Sharon, then?.....Well, the new boyfriend!.....You mean you didn't know?.....Well she's been sat next to Darren for three weeks now, at church, and that must be a record. For Sharon!.....No, of course I'm not saying she's a flirt, exactly, you're only young once, and after all, we don't have to go back too many years, do we Sonia?.....What? Who's Darren?.....Oh, you know, big chap, spots, six earrings in each ear, tattoos all round his neck, baggy jeans. For church I ask you!.....Oh well, I wouldn't worry, Sonia, it's not going to last long, knowing Sharon.

Oh, talking about Sunday morning's meeting, wasn't it AWFUL? I mean why SHE has to lead the worship, I really don't know! Might help if she had singing lessons, and as for that pianist, if he got one note right in seven , he was doing well!.....well I know it's the heart that counts, Sonia, but it has to be said that there are people in this congregation that can hold a tune, you know. (pats hair and simpers).....

Oh, did you see Angela's dress?...Wasn't it awful?You'd think anyone with her shape would choose something black and simple, not bright orange satin, with frills! She looked like a badly-made sausage!.....Oh that reminds me, they've got a special offer on tripe at Sainsbury's. I know how your Norman likes it. Personally, I think it's OFFAL!.....Get it?.....Oh, never mind, Sonia, I know you're not well!

Anyway, you'll never guess who I saw there the other day!.....No not church, Sainsbury's! Do keep up, Sonia!.....No go on, have a guess.....No, it was DOREEN! .....What do you mean, what's new about that?..... You'll never believe who she was with!..... It was NIGEL!.....Well, I know he lives next door to her, he probably did give her a lift. Anyway, it was altogether more...COSY than that. They were Buying Things Together. Barbecue stuff!.....I

saw them by the freezers and I called out 'Cooeee, hello you two' and they disappeared behind the Household Detergents! I'm going to keep my eyes and ears open!.....

Oh by the way, Derek and Christine are moving, you know.....Well, they were living above their means, didn't I always say they were living above their means? And now he's been made redundant, they can't afford that great big house they were rattling around in. And what's more, they'll lose their car, company car, you know.....They'll have to downsize and move to the other side of town, so I don't suppose they'll be coming to our church anymore, buses being what they are.....Oh, they'll have to go to that little mission in Waverley Street, you know, the one where our Margaret goes.....Oooh, there's been SUCH a lot of trouble there.....You know, criticism, backbiting, gossiping, you've never known anything like it! Our Margaret says there's been trouble there ever since she's been going!

Anyway, I'd better let you go now, or was there anything important you wanted to tell me?.....Something to share for prayer, perhaps?.....No?.....are you sure?.....Come on, Sonia, I can tell when there's something wrong, tell me.....A trouble shared is a trouble doubled they say.....Ooh, Sonia, I'm the soul of discretion, nothing you say will ever go any further.....It's your Norman, isn't it?.....You've had a big row.....He stormed out of the house.....Slammed the door.....Drove off like a bat out of he..... Oooh Sonia.....well I shouldn't worry, he'll be back, I mean when my George was alive, God rest him.....Look, is there anything I can do?.....There is!.....Oh, collect the twins from school.....(face falls).Oh, Sonia, I'm sorry, I really can't this afternoon, I've errr, got somebody coming round. Perhaps you could get a neighbour or another mother to do it.....If I were you, I'd make myself a nice cup of tea, and sit with your feet up.....And keep praising the Lord, OK?

(puts phone down and rings another number)

Hi Angela, it's me, Elsie.....Oh I did like your dress last Sunday, you lovely in orange.....Listen, I've just been on the phone to Sonia, poor little thing, she's having a rough time.....She's not well, and between you and me, I think her and Norman are splitting up.....Yes, and her expecting her fourth.....Well she didn't say in so many words, but I can tell, you know!.....So what I thought, If you could ring round a few of the girls, and come round this afternoon, we could have a good talk about it, and maybe say a little prayer for her.....So shall we say 3 o'clock, that will give me time to hang out my washing, and I could

peep next-door and see if they've had their new furniture delivered.....See you soon, God bless!