We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's actress Caroline Quentin's turn

The prized possession you value above all others... A Father's Day card I drew for my dad Freddy aged six. I was estranged from him after my parents divorced when I was 14. He died in 2011 after a car accident at 88 and his wife gave me the card and said that he'd kept it framed by his bedside. It was intensely moving.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not travelling to Australia to see my actor friend Gary Olsen after he phoned in 2000 to tell me he had cancer. He died two months later at just 42.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Getting into clean sheets fully clothed when I've changed the bed.

The film you can watch time and time again... Elf with Will Ferrell. My kids and I watch it every Christmas and still find it hilarious

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Go-Between by LP Hartley. I read it at 15 and it reminds me of long hot summers and the end of innocence.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... When men refer to any woman over the age of 60 as 'young lady'. It's so patronising. I'm 53 now and I dare say it's about to happen to me soon. Aargh!

The person who has influenced you **most...** Theatre director Mike Alfreds. He taught me how to act.

The unending quest that drives you **On...** For the taps in my house to work! I hope my husband is reading this...

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I love painting, mainly watercolours. I'm not very good but I get a lot of pleasure from it.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The playwright Anton Chekhov. I'd ask him how he created his characters.

> The poem that touches your soul... Hope Is The Thing With Feathers by Emily Dickinson. It tells you that even in the darkest times, hope will come to you like

> > The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Don't let the b****ds grind you down.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be ready to say yes, not no.

Left: Will Ferrell in Elf. Above, right: Watercolours. Right: The Serpentine in London's Hyde Park

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That people know me! I'm always being stopped because people think they've met me at a family function. I think it's because I've played homely, accessible characters on TV.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My parents divorcing. I was at boarding school when I got a call to say that Daddy wouldn't be there when I came back. Even now I hate saying goodbyes.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it ... I'd cut Boris Johnson's floppy hair off to see if we would perceive him differently.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd wake up before dawn on a summer's day at our bungalow in Cornwall and go rowing on the Helford River in my boat, Hot Flushing. I got it when I was having the menopause, hence the name! I'd watch the egrets and cormo-

rants as the sun rises. I'd have a breakfast of dosa (rice pancakes) with tomaner at a fish restaurant. We'd drink

white Rioja, and end the day back in Cornwall.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd swim naked in the Serpentine, then walk into the Caviar House on Piccadilly and eat all the Beluga caviar. I'd then smear it over my body and rinse it off back in the Serpentine. I'd love the decadence of it.

to chutney and a glass of cool lassi (voghurt drink) at the Tai Mahal Palace hotel in Mumbai, then be joined by my husband Sam [Farmer, a cosmetics designer] and our children Emily, 14, and William, ten. We'd go for a dip in the hotel's pool then we'd go to galleries in Paris before a spin on the carousel in the Tuileries Gardens. Lunch would be in a typical bistro - lamb cutlets and green beans for me, followed by tarte tatin with a bottle of Merlot. After that I'd nip home to Devon for a bit of gardening. In the evening, we'd all amble around Barcelona, but later Sam and I would have a romantic din-

The song that means most to you...

'I'd like to swim naked in the Serpentine, then smear Beluga caviar all over my body. How decadent!'

> Michael Jackson's Billie Jean because it gets the whole family dancing.

> The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A Victorian diamond ring I bought for £4,500 in the 90s. It was stolen two years later.

> The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When Sam got his new teenage cosmetics taken on by the Space NK chain earlier this year. People are sniffy about our relationship because he's 12 years younger than me and has stayed home looking after the kids. I'm so proud he's done all this on his own.

> The saddest time that shook your world... My mum Kathleen's death from a heart attack in July 2012. She was 89 and I miss her more than I can say.

> The unfulfilled ambition that contin**ues to haunt you...** To sing at the Royal Opera House. Three lines in a great opera would be enough.

The order of service at your funeral...

I'm not religious but my kids can do whatever is right for them. I'd prefer to be cremated and for my ashes to be scattered in my garden.

The way you want to be remembered...

As a good mother, a loving wife and a bit of a laugh.

The Plug... See Caroline in Noël Coward's Relative Values at the Harold Pinter Theatre, London, until 21 June. Visit www.atgtickets.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



Bridesmaids star Chris O'Dowd returns to the big screen in Calvary

- in cinemas Friday. Alan Ayckbourn's middle-class comedy

A Small Family Business opens at the National Theatre. And

Sophie Ellis-Bextor kicks off a UK tour in Birmingham on Monday

NEXT WEEK

 The stars of Mad Men on their final series
The dysfunctional family who changed the course of British history, by TV historian Lucy Worsley ● Easter treats

– with a Jamie Oliver twist ● PLUS Britain's best TV listings

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