

AND CUT DOWN THE FOOLS WHO BID YOU DO
WHAT AGE EXPECTS OF YOU!

(She climaxes with an air of Wesleyan zeal, as though the lesson ended up being personal to the teacher. And it has helped her reach a decision.)

ANNIE

Sorry, Jessie. Just to clarify -?

JESSIE

No front bottoms.

(Beat.)

I'll do your calendar as long as there's no front bottoms. That's a sight I've reserved for only one man in my life.

ANNIE

Right. D'you think your husband will mind?

JESSIE

Good god, love, it wasn't my husband.

(The girls fall about, bumping into MARIE who is entering.)

CHRIS

Whoa my god!

Marie!

ANNIE

CHRIS

Sorry about th-

('Marie's here' .)

Girls?

ANNIE

You alright Marie? You in to do paperwork?

CHRIS

We did warn y'! Never volunteer to be chairman!

MARIE

(Watches them remove chairs.)

No no no! I'm just - passed Ruth outside the Co-op, asked where she'd been and she told me what you were all doing in here!

(CHRIS and ANNIE swap looks.)

Could almost see her thinking 'should I tell her, should I say?' But she can't lie, can she, Ruth? So accommodating. But then isn't everybody round here? This 'gang'. This poor little beaten-down group who've lived their entire life in the tornado path of your great ideas.

(By now everyone has stopped.)

CHRIS

(Beat.)
Sorry?

MARIE

Tell me Chris out of interest seriously.. is there part of you that actually believes people might want to spend January looking at you naked behind a malt loaf?

CHRIS

Ok look Marie, I know this calendar doesn't fit your image of the W.L/ but -

MARIE

But the truth is who cares?

CHRIS

- in many ways that's the point.

MARIE

Who cares what other people want as long as they get to see 'Chris Harper'!

CHRIS

What?

MARIE

'Former Miss Yorkshire'!

CHRIS

(Beat, this hurts.)
I am doing this for John / Clarke-

MARIE

Oh at least be honest for once...

CHRIS

I am doing this -

MARIE

...you are doing this for Chris Harper!

CHRIS

And you are doing this because you want a conventional Jerusalem-singing WI / with-

ANNIE

Ok / look-

MARIE

We are!

CHRIS

-jam-making and willow-weaving and calendars of wet churches -

ANNIE

(Pouring balm.)
Also John suggested it!

MARIE

Did he, Annie? Or is he just being used to justify it?

CORA

Y' know I could kill a drink!

MARIE

And look who am I to wade in here, why should I care if you try to attach the name of the Women's Institute"?! I mean I'll have to tell National Conference of course, that's my duty as chair -

(She turns to head out.)

CORA

('What does she mean'?)

What?

JESSIE

Marie why don't we all sit down -

MARIE

-but actually it's not the damage it'd do to the reputation of the WI. Or the reputation of-

(Gestures CORA, JESSIE...)

-a single mother, or a respected teacher or a -

(Reaches CELIA...)

..or any of that -

CELIA

(sv at not making the list.)

Cheers.

MARIE

It's your child.

CHRIS

I'm sorry?

MARIE

The damage to him -

CHRIS

Steady-y -

ANNIE

Is this 'my child' who's head boy?

MARIE

The damage / to his -

CHRIS

Of a school where your child's on detention for bringing in alcohol?