

Annie (*collecting the drawings*) Look he's done all these, all this thinking about it. At some point we're going to have to commit to giving it a go or not.

*The girls all look at each other*

Jessie Well. I think I can fairly quickly state MY position.

Chris Jessie, look I appreciate for a woman of your — (*searching for "le mot juste"*)

Jessie You know, the last time I heard the phrase "a woman of your age" it was my new, young headteacher explaining his reasons why I should retire. The following week I had to take over the school trip halfway up Plover Hill after he collapsed with exhaustion. (*She pulls her coat on*) I have never had a problem with age, my dear. It has only ever had a problem with me. (*She puts her scarf on*) Any teacher who has seen the years pass with lengthening legs and shortening skirts has felt old since she was thirty. And the danger, girls, of age, is what you think age expects of you. Witness my mother, who at the age of sixty considered a day when the postman and the gas man called to be one where she was, quote, "run off her feet". Why? Because the small incidents of life will expand to fill the hours you allot them, and the saddest thing on God's earth is those with the fewest hours left allowing less and less to fill more and more.

*She heads for the door*

Chris (*stopping her*) S—sorry, Jessie. Just to clarify — ?

Jessie No front bottoms. (*Beat*) I'm in, 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.

*Jessie exits, shutting the door*

Celia (*standing up and applauding*) WAY TO GO, JESS!

*Ruth starts to head out*

Annie Ruth?

Ruth The thing is ... not all of us are Chris-es. (*Beat*) Some of us are Ruths.

Chris (*gathering her up*) No no no but see that's the *point*, hun. Having the Ruths. It's not like we're doing it because we want to show off fantastic bodies ...