

Liam escorts Annie out

The others look a bit leaderless

X **Cora** We'll manage! I'll give us a bit of a build-up. Bit of — (*à la Blueberry Hill*)

And did those feet — do do dooby do ...

Ruth Don't mess round with religious songs!

Jessie ("excuse me") Ap-ap. Remember what John said. (*Gesturing at "being part of the same thing"*) "Religion, blues, they're all ..."

Cora Eh it's sodding dangerous though, if you end up a church organist, Jess. Seriously, no word of a lie, one time, someone's funeral, Dad's in the pulpit, I'm playing on grief autopilot — (*She starts plonking out "Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind" on the piano like a steamhammer. Singing*) "Dear Lord and Father Of Mankind — " (*Speaking*) Suddenly I look down at Ruby in her carry-cot and honest to God, next thing I know I'm playing — (*She starts playing "Stormy Weather" and sings the first two lines; then, speaking*) Turned round, the whole congregation are looking at me like "What the HELL — ?" (*She continues singing the next line of "Stormy Weather"*) **X**

This causes a slight pause

Celia Why did you lose touch?

Cora sings the next line of "Stormy Weather"

Ruby's dad. It always sounds like you loved him.

Beat. She did

Cora I lost touch in return for board and lodging. Which is what happens. If you're young and pregnant. And scared. (*Beat*) And your father's a vicar who professes to love all men but when it comes down to it not actually black Americans that much.

Ruth Have you not just *told* Ruby this?

Cora ("yes") Oh God, Ruth. But end of the day she wants to find her dad. An' I don't blame her. An' believe me it's not for want of trying.

Liam enters, talking into a walkie talkie

Liam OK, ANDY! LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Very bright lights come on. There are clearly some technical guys out back making this happen

Now we're getting somewhere. Oh and look who I found!

Chris enters and strikes a pose in the doorway, looking like something out of the Folies Bergère

Liam exits

Chris Well, girls. Do we look something else or WHAT?!

Cora Ha HEY!

Celia } (*together*) CHRIS-S!
Ruth }

Jessie Oh now here she IS!

Ruth (*calling*) ANNIE? CHRIS MADE IT!

Chris Isn't this — just — fantastic!

Ruth Chris, Annie's just —

Chris OK now. Important. (*She claps, slightly Marie-like*) Can you remember the pose? That kind of "leaning-back" thing, left foot forward, right arm back and smile —

Annie enters in her dress. She stops dead

Annie Chris?

Chris Oh, Annie, can you come over here?

Annie (*doing no such thing*) Why aren't you at the bridal fair?

Chris I'm not there because —

Annie Where's Rod?

Chris (*slightly irritated*) He's — just ... (*to the girls*) Girls, have a little practice.

Chris scoops Annie off to privacy

I'm not there because of John, Annie. To be honest. Because I woke up this morning and asked myself, what's more important? That we raise enough for that settee or that some drippy girl from Hull gets a lily-of-the-valley bridal posy? Wasn't much of a competition. John comes first.

Annie Does he?

Chris (*stopping, turning*) What's that supposed to mean?

Liam returns with a handful of dayglo sunflowers. They are garish and unpleasantly false — bright, shiny plastic, almost comic in intent,