

Rod *(suddenly hard as nails)* Chris, we're going to the bridal fair. We don't have the luxury not to.

Chris knows they don't. But she wants that TV so badly

Chris looks at Rod and his flowers but has no words. So she just leaves. And leaves behind a rather messy silence

Annie looks at Rod, who is clearly slightly wounded by this

Annie We'll be fine, Rod. She doesn't have to be here.

Rod But I want her to be here, Annie. That's the thing. I want her to have all this. *(He just about finds a smile for Annie)* Never make a business out of something you love. I go for a walk now up Grizedale, see all the flowers and I think, "It's you little bastards who are screwing us over." *(He looks to the sunflowers)* Then again, John managed it, didn't he? *(Beat)* Worked that park for thirty years, never *stopped* banging on about how beautiful it was. Couldn't bloody shut him up.

Annie lets this settle. It's true

Annie Rod, how bad ARE things with the shop?

Pause

Rod Try and keep 'em cool.

Rod leaves. That's answer enough

Annie watches where he went for a beat, then takes the sunflowers out

SCENE 6

The church hall. The next day

New day. New girl. Elaine enters, a younger beautician, stunningly white in a pharmaceutical dress

Elaine No no no no, this is fine, ladies, there's enough light in here. We'll do it in here.

Ruth and Jessie enter from the kitchen. They have paper collar-protectors round their necks

(Steering Jessie to a chair) This is where they're going to be filming you so if you look all right in here, we're winning aren't we, hey?! Just wait one second. I'll get the magic make-up.

Elaine exits

Ruth and Jessie watch her go

Jessie D'you think people like her get a kick out of treating people like they're Special Needs? D'you reckon it's some kind of psychological inversion that makes her feel younger if she treats everyone else like they're senile?

Ruth Well I suppose in fairness she/ just —

Jessie Ruth, I have never met anyone who uses the phrase "in fairness" as much as you do.

Ruth Well, I'm sorry./ I —

Jessie No no, don't apologize. It's not wrong. It's the better way. *(She fiddles with her collar)* Don't get drawn into agreeing with my bitter ruminations. That's just me, grown venomous by years of exposure to schoolchildren. *(She rubs Ruth's arm and smiles)* Much softer is our Ruth.

Elaine returns with her magic box

Elaine Right. HERE we are, ladies-s! How are we *doing*?

Jessie *(in a gummy senile way)* Who's moved me television?

Elaine *(stopping and frowning)* What was that?

Jessie Never mind. *(She nods at Ruth)* Do her first. I'm going round the back to score some crack.

Jessie leaves

*** Elaine** *(a little confused)* Right-t. SO. Let's just pop yourself down on that-t, my love, make you comfy. *(On autopilot she produces a pink business card)* I'm Elaine from the Craven Health Spa-a ... *(She offers Ruth the card)* There's my card.

Ruth I've already got one.

Elaine Lovely. What I'm going to be doing for the television is a little basic T-Zone and A-Zone. Have you ever had that done before?

Ruth No.

Elaine Oh, you'll love it. 'Cause you're the lady — wasn't it the organizer, Chris, wasn't she telling me they were all going to do it and you WEREN'T and then you suddenly changed your mind at the last minute? Is that right?

Ruth doesn't reply

Suddenly got the confidence up! It's funny how that happens, isn't it? You know, a lot of ladies find that when they've had our "Dead Sea Salt treatment", they get this (*gesturing loosely*) inner kind of — "wha"? To do things! *X*

Ruth Possibly.

Elaine Absolutely.

Ruth Although I think with me it was likely more finding your underwear in the map pocket of Eddie's Peugeot.

Pause. Elaine stops the beauty treatment

You know? The little red ones? I mean I'm not surprised you didn't notice you hadn't got them on afterwards, they couldn't've provided much insulation. But there was one of these? Little business card. Must've fallen out of your bag in the whole ... (*she "smiles"*) ... mêlée, you know? And that's when I thought, "Well maybe he'd see me in a different light if I went and did this calendar!" Pointlessly, as it turns out. 'Cause what I hadn't realized is that a woman who takes her clothes off on a calendar is a "tart" whereas one who does it in a lay-by is a really good sport. But hey. (*She stands*) What I DID get to realize is that Eddie Reynoldson is one of those guys who wouldn't understand beauty if it was staring him in the face. And you know how I worked that out, love? (*Beat*) Because it was. Now in fairness fuck off back to him.

Elaine exits in record time

(To herself, in total disbelief) I did it!

Celia bursts in, wearing her new black dress, ahead of Cora, in a swirl of excitement and cross-talk

Celia No, but they say that, don't they?

Cora That's rubbish.

Celia Honestly, they say that about television. The camera puts about ten pounds on you.

Cora Let's hope there's only one bloody camera.

Jessie bobs round the door with some urgency

Jessie Girls!

Cora } (*together; standing to attention*) Yes, Miss Raistrick!
Celia }

Jessie (*delivering urgent headlines to the girls about what to expect:*)
Annie. DON'T say anything. Looks a little unkempt. (*Calmly calling back to Annie*) Everyone's in here, my dear. In you come!

Jessie ushers Annie in — looking a total wreck; dress crumpled, hair awry

Cora God al-mighty —

Jessie coughs sharply

— You look great! Doesn't she look great?

Jessie I found her asleep on a pew.

Ruth You what?

Celia In church?

Annie Look, don't — (*"get worried"*) It was just — I went to put some sunflowers in, to keep them cool. And then I thought I'd start replying to some of the letters, you know? That we were sent?

Jessie Whatever. I think you'd better have first go with the make-up girl.

Ruth I think tragically she might've just left.

Celia } (*together*) { You're JOKING!

Cora } { WHAT?

Annie Oh my GOD ...

Liam the shoot director enters, a young man wearied by his current mission and the general lack of achievement of any of his dreams

Liam Ladies, good-afternoon. My name's Liam, I'm from KPL. You're my six stars for the commercial, yeah?

Annie Liam I'm sorry — my make-up! I haven't had a chance/ to —

Liam No worries. Calm, calm ... Wardrobe's back here.

He checks the ceiling lights which clearly aren't to his satisfaction

Annie And it's only five of us. Chris can't make it.

This is the first the others have heard of that

Celia } (*together*) { What?

Ruth } { Seriously?

Cora Chris isn't COMING?

Liam No worries. Five's enough. I'm just — (*Looking round the ceiling*) It's not GREAT for lighting, this place, is it?