

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 ...

Ruth But *actually* Chris ... (*choosing her words carefully*) In fairness actually there IS a little bit of that, isn't there? You and Celia? And your little ... "Bra-wars". Which is fine, I'm not saying —

Celia Don't be ashamed, Ruth.

Ruth ... but not all of us used to ride topless on a Harley Davidson.

Celia Can you not make it sound like I was in the circus? I did it once, to spite my mother.

Chris Ruth, show Eddie what he's missing. You're a beautiful wom —

Ruth (*snapping*) CHRIS, I'll buy one, OK? I'll buy a hundred. (*She heads out*) For John I'll buy a hundred. I'll be proud of you and buy a hundred.

Ruth exits

There is a pause. Annie looks to Chris. Cora tries to slope unnoticed out of the door

Celia (*realizing*) Cora-a ...

Cora stops and turns at the door

Cora Celia, I am a vicar's daughter, a single mother and the church organist.

Annie And?

This sudden summation of her life hits Cora out of left field

Cora And if I'm not gonna get them out now, when am I?

Celia That's my GIRL!

Chris and Annie hug Cora

Cora Lord forgive me. I know not what I bloody do.

Cora exits

Chris Are you all right with this, Ceel? The ladies of the Royal Yorkshire Golf Club are not going to like this.

Celia Believe me. That's why I'm doing it! (*She hugs Chris*) I'll tell David Bailey I'll do July and if things get tough I don't mind spilling over into the Autumn.

Celia exits