

CHARACTER: Jessie (f) – late 60s/70s

DESCRIPTION: Get on the right side of Jessie as a teacher and she'll be the teacher you remember for life. Get on the wrong side and you will regret every waking hour. A lover of life, Jessie doesn't bother with cosmetics – her elixir of life is bravery. Jessie goes on roller coasters. Her husband has been with her a long time and is rarely surprised by her actions. Jessie bothers about grammar and will correct stallholders regarding their abuse of the apostrophe "s". Ideal car – strange-looking European thing which is no longer manufactured. Ideal holiday – walking in Switzerland or Angkor Wat.

JESSIE/ANNIE/CHRIS

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.

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 head teacher explaining his reason 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 my 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 out the door*)

CHRIS Jessie (*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.