

EXTRACTS:

ACT ONE

SET: ANTHEA AND ROGER'S SITTING ROOM. SEPTEMBER.

ANTHEA IS BUSILY GETTING THE LIVING ROOM READY FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S VOICES CHOIR – MOVING CHAIRS AND PUTTING OUT MUSIC.

ROGER ENTERS.

ROGER: Ah. What time are the Ovarian Sisters arriving? Just a joke.

ANTHEA: Not funny, Roger.

ROGER: No. Anyway -.

ANTHEA: Half past seven.

ROGER: Is this going to be a regular occurrence? Rehearsing here?

ANTHEA: There's nowhere else. We'll see. For goodness sake, it's only one evening a week – the occasional Sunday afternoon.

ROGER: Well, I hope you're not going to make too much noise.

ANTHEA: We don't make a noise. We sing. As you very well know

ROGER: Anything I can do? Anything I can do, Anthea, just call me.

ANTHEA: Thank you. It's best if you make yourself scarce. We've got a lot to get through.

ROGER: Right.

ANTHEA: And we're auditioning.

ROGER: How many?

ANTHEA: One. Now then.

THE FRONT DOOR BELL RINGS.

ROGER: I'll see to it.

ANTHEA: What? Yes, thank you.

ROGER EXITS.

ANTHEA CONTINUES TO PREPARE THE ROOM AND MUSIC
AND MINUTES FOR REHEARSAL.

JANICE ENTERS.

THEY ARE DELIGHTED TO SEE EACH OTHER.

ANTHEA: (TO JANICE): Oh. Hello! Janice! How nice.

JANICE: Hello!

THEY KISS CHEEKS

ANTHEA: Here we are again. How are you?

JANICE: (DURING THE FOLLOWING SHE TAKES OFF HER COAT): I'm up to my eyeballs in meetings, luv. Such time wasters. Men. This afternoon, a meeting on Educational Disadvantage in Working Class Communities, you think you're finished, the meetings over, but no, the old school patriarchal males get their dicks out and wave them about, repeat what we've all said all over again. They can't resist the sound of their own voices.

ANTHEA: Did you have a good summer break? How was the workshop?

JANICE: Beryl Carmichael was brilliant. 'Feminism: Extinction or Re-birth.' (JANICE FLOPS DOWN INTO AN ARMCHAIR) Beryl on the post-feminist age. You know what's she's like – you've heard her – 'Is Feminism dead? Hell, no. It's alive and kicking. The movement of the 60's was hijacked by the middle classes.' Wham.

ANTHEA: Ah, yes, that's Beryl.

ROGER HAS ENTERED.

ANTHEA: This is Roger. Janice.

ROGER: We've met – the last time was at your concert against the closure of the Women's Hospital.

JANICE: Yes.

ROGER: In fact, I've seen you all a few times now. The 2012 Women of The World Festival – the celebration of women's achievements – that was good wasn't it?

ROGER: Shall I take your coat?

THE FRONT DOOR BELL RINGS.

ROGER: Ah. I'll go.

ANTHEA: Thank you.

ROGER EXITS TO ANSWER THE FRONT DOOR.

ANTHEA: Sally Richards is coming along about 8.30 to audition.

JANICE: Do you know her?

ANTHEA: I spoke to her on the phone. She sounds very nice. She saw us at the Women's Educational Event in Surbiton and at the Conference for World Peace.

JANICE: We've got to find someone. We can't go on, not just with the five of us. It only takes one of us to go off key, and then half the group goes flat.

ANTHEA: It's so difficult finding singers. I asked Brenda if she'd like to come back.

JANICE: Brenda, she's in Liverpool.

ANTHEA: She's back, she's working for the TUC. I asked her if she'd like to come back, at least for a while, but she says she'd had enough of choirs - she's taken up badminton. We got a very nice letter about us singing at the Conference of World Peace.

GILLY ENTERS FOLLOWED BY ROGER.

GILLY (EXCITABLE AND VERY UPBEAT): Hello! Anthea!

GILLY GIVES ANTHEA A BIG HUG.

ANTHEA: Gilly, dear. There we are!

GILLY: Janice. Hello!

JANICE ALLOWS HER TO KISS HER CHEEKS.

JANICE: All right, are you?

GILLY: It's marvellous to be back. Wow, it seems like ages. God only knows what my voice will be like. How exciting.

ROGER: Would you like me to hang up your coat?

GILLY: (UNSURE OF HIM): Oh. Yes.

(SHE STARTS TO TAKE OFF HER COAT.)

ANTHEA: You've met my husband Roger, haven't you?

ROGER: I've been to see some of your concerts.

GILLY: Yes. Thanks. It's so nice of you to let us rehearse here, Anthea. What a lovely room.

ANTHEA: Thank you. Yes. Well, we'll see how it goes. We can't afford the rehearsal space any more, that's for certain – not with the rent they're now asking for.

GILLY: Wow, no.

ROGER: (TAKING GILLY'S COAT): Thank you. Don't mind me, I shan't be in your way. How many more?

ANTHEA: Two.

ROGER: Janice? Your coat?

JANICE HANDS HIM HER COAT.

ROGER: I'm the doorman - or should I say door person.

ANTHEA: (DISMISSING HIM): We can manage now.

ROGER: Right. Have a good sing.

GILLY: Thank you.

ROGER EXITS

GILLY: I say, it is wonderful to be back. Oh, did Anthea tell you? – her book *Women and Work* is being published!

JANICE: No. Congratulations. You must be pleased.

ANTHEA: Thank you.

GILLY: What about you, Janice, have you found a publisher for your book yet?

JANICE: No, not yet.

GILLY: Oh, I'm sure it will be.

JANICE: It could have a bit of difficulty there - it's on the same sort of subject as Anthea's.

GILLY: Yes. Oh, no, it's got to be published, hasn't it?

ANTHEA: I'm sure it will. I've just been lucky.

JANICE: We'll see.

A VERY BRIEF AWKWARD MOMENT.

GILLY: Oh dear, what are we going to do about only five of us?

ANTHEA: We've got someone coming to audition later.

GILLY: Oh, yes. That's good. What's she like?

ANTHEA: We spoke on the phone. It seems she has been having a difficult time, needed to get out of the house.

(Cont'd)

ACT TWO SCENE 1

THREE MONTHS LATER – DECEMBER.

AN AREA OFF THE STAGE OF A VENUE WHERE 'WOMEN'S VOICES' ARE PERFORMING.

PRESENT: JANICE, GILLY AND TAMMY.

ANOTHER CHOIR CAN BE HEARD SINGING.

SALLY ENTERS FROM THE STAGE. SHE IS VERY MUCH IN CHARGE.

SALLY: They're good – very neatly turned out. They're doing one more after this, then it's us again.

JANICE: What the hell were we doing singing 'The White Cliffs Of Dover' for?! We're not doing a World War Two show!

SALLY: The organizers specifically requested it. They'd only just told me. It's in honour of their chairman. His favourite.

JANICE: We're a feminist fucking choir – it has nothing to do with feminism. We shouldn't be doing this bloody awful gig anyway.

SALLY: I didn't arrange it? It was before my time. Speak to Anthea.

JANICE: You stick the bloody song into our hands out there – no bloody warning.

SALLY: We all know the tune.

JANICE: Who do you think you are? You've been buggering around, trying to push us around ever since you joined us. You join the choir and within months you're taking over.

SALLY: We've got another set after this lot finishes – I suggest we calm down and focus on the singing – singing well. I'd like to remind you that Bolton cancelled – the man from Bolton saw us at Jackson's Lane and he's cancelled – not quite what we were looking for, he said.

JANICE: Bollocks.

SALLY: He's engaged the Gateshead Women's Choir – so it must have been our singing.

JANICE: Jesus.

SALLY: For someone who despises Christianity you seem rather too ready to call upon God and Jesus all the time. And I don't know why you have to swear so much.

GILLY: I think you're being unfair, Janice.

JANICE: Oh, Jesus.

DURING DIALOGUE BELOW:

OFFSTAGE: WE HEAR APPLAUSE.

THEN A SHORT ANNOUNCEMENT REFERRING TO THE NEXT SONG.

THEN: SINGING

ANTHEA ENTERS.

SALLY: Anthea – where were you?

ANTHEA: Showing Harriet to the lavatory.

SALLY: Before we went on - we were late going on, Anthea.

ANTHEA: Sorry, sorry. I was talking to the organizer at Milton Keynes about doing their festival next year. We've been trying to get to her festival for years.

JANICE: She's good at talking to people - it's called networking, for God's sake.

SALLY: I'm sorry, but we're not going to get any gigs if we can't be more professional. For goodness sake. Surely you can talk with her at the end of the evening.

JANICE: Who does she think she is?

SALLY: I'm just trying to do my best for Women's Voices, Janice. (TO ANTHEA): You said you wanted me to get the choir, Women's Voices, back to what it once was.

TAMMY IS TEXTING.

ANTHEA: Tammy, do stop texting – just for a moment.

SALLY: Tammy, The White Cliffs of Dover, you're slouching, you need to keep an open throat and breathe – there – (SHE HOLDS TAMMY'S RIBS EITHER SIDE OF HER DIAPHRAGM) – here. You're getting there, isn't she? We should have a quick warm up before we go on again.

JANICE: We've already warmed up – we've just been singing, for God's sake.

ANTHEA: Harriet's not here.

GILLY: She's in the loo.

ANTHEA: (IRRITATED): I know, Gilly, I've just taken her there. Sally dear, let's not rehearse now. We'll do the rest of the gig and then we can discuss what needs to be done.

HARRIET ENTERS.

ANTHEA: Ah, there you are. All right?

HARRIET: My bag.

ANTHEA: What about it?

HARRIET: I've left it on stage.

ANTHEA: Oh no.

HARRIET: By the side of the stage.

GILLY: I'll get it.

SALLY: I'll get it.

HARRIET: I'll get it.

SALLY: No, you won't. I'll go.

HARRIET: Thank you, sister.

SALLY EXITS.

JANICE: (TO ANTHEA): I'm not putting up with this. You don't say a bloody thing. Why do you let her have her way all the time. 'The White Cliffs Of Dover'. I'm not putting up with this. Fuck it, Anthea. She's getting worse. Every gig we do. Ever since she joined us – Manchester, Bradford, East Sheen, Tower Hamlets - months of this. I can't stand anymore. We should never have taken her on. She thinks she bloody owns us. And she sings too loudly – I couldn't hear Tammy.

TAMMY: What?

TAMMY'S MOBILE RINGS.

TAMMY: (INTO PHONE): What? What? Wait a minute. Rubbish reception in here. (TO THE OTHERS): I'm going outside.

TAMMY EXITS.

JANICE: Just what have you been saying to her? What's all this about getting back to what we were? You put her in charge?

HARRIET: No one is in charge. We're a democracy.

ANTHEA: Yes. All - I said to her after Lincoln – we weren't singing well, you have to admit, Janice –.

GILLY: We had colds. Tammy, me and Harriet had colds.

ANTHEA: I said to her, I merely said, with her experience, if she'd try and help get us back to how we used to be.

JANICE: You mean when Brenda and the rest of them. (AFTER A MOMENT:) Right, well, fuck it, you can do without me.

GILLY: No, Janice.

ANTHEA: We're singing better now.

JANICE: You think so? I'm going out of my mind with it all.

GILLY: We had colds in Lincoln.

HARRIET: I had a cold in my urinary tract.

GILLY: She's on antibiotics.

JANICE: We're not laughing anymore. (TO GILLY): Are we? Where's your girlish laugh, Gilly?

TAMMY ENTERS (HAVING MADE HER MOBILE CALL).

TAMMY: Ok. How's it going? I don't like that fucking White Cliffs Of Dover Sally made us do.

JANICE: Right.

TAMMY'S PHONE RINGS.

TAMMY: Oh. Back in a minute.

TAMMY EXITS.

ANTHEA: I don't think we should say anything. We should just see how things go – quieten down – I'm sure they will.

OFFSTAGE THE SINGING FINISHES.

SALLY ENTERS WITH HARRIET'S BAG

OFFSTAGE – WE HEAR APPLAUSE.

SALLY: Got it. We're on. Where's Tammy?

GILLY: On her mobile.

TAMMY ENTERS.

SALLY: You shouldn't have your mobile on while we're doing the gigs.

OFFSTAGE: V/O: THANKS TO THE CHOIR JUST FINISHED.

SALLY: Come on, we're on. Come on.

TAMMY'S MOBILE RINGS.

ANTHEA: Tammy.

TAMMY TURNS HER MOBILE OFF.

THEY BEGIN TO EXIT.

SALLY: Ribs up, Tammy. Keep an open throat.

END OF ACT TWO SCENE 1

END OF EXTRACTS