

8 Labour of Love

know who's sticking what where anymore, except that the whole thing looks more fucked than a Bradford hen do.

① **David** So up is down, left is right, right is wrong, behold the new politics. Go on then, how long since this seat wasn't Labour? How historic is in fact my failure?

Jean I don't know.

David Yes you do, you're an encyclopedia.

Jean What, utterly redundant in the modern world?

No, I don't think it ever has *not* been, so there, feel better or was ignorance bliss?

Look, the Tories always get in eventually. Like a shitty fly; you waft it out a window, it buzzes back in through the door.

(Back at the board.) Oh, and our lovely 'Independent' candidate who joined the race –

David Traitor.

Jean – traitor, 'they' snaffled a couple thousand off you, so that could have made all the difference. Oh the irony, that it might be our old friend that put a Tory into this seat for the first time.

David . . . So you do think I'm going to lose, then. I am, aren't I.

Jean Yeah, I think you probably are, yes.

David Got one of your feelings? Might just be the wine, it's old, could be off.

Jean It's not the wine, it's the Tories, they're old, they're bloody 'off'.

Honestly, people round here, short memories or what? I blame the coalition; Lib Dems, I do, honestly, they helped, like, build the bridge, from us to the Tories, psychologically, made it less toxic to – it's – do you know what, my little gay nephew Matthew, he says there's some folk start off straight,

but then work out they might be gay, and as part of the transition, they go bisexual for a bit. 'Bye for now' they call it.

David Some people are actually just bisexual you know, Jean.

Jean I know that, oy, one of my best friends Tessa Cartwell, she licks and sucks, and she's the happiest person I know.

I feel like I've lowered the tone, I'm sorry.

David It's alright –

Jean No, if we're going down, I want to go down with dignity.

David Oh what's the point, if I did keep the seat anyway. Being in opposition, past seven years, austerity, cuts, having to watch, helplessly, from the . . .

(Looking around the office.) Twenty-seven years.

(. . . And then, unexpectedly, he starts to wobble.) Oh God . . .

He covers his face. Jean watches . . . before tossing some stationery at him.

Jean Oy, stop being mardy.

David Ow! I was having a moment!

Jean Just think of all the things you *hate* about being an MP you won't miss.

David . . . I – right now I can't think of any.

Jean The local party –

David Oh those arse wipes, no, I won't miss those. Always made me feel like an effing – outsider.

Jean Oh that's just cause you've never looked or sounded like them, still.

David Oh I know, my accent not 'ay up me duck, ecky thump' enough.

Jean Oy you, watch it.

David And . . . (*Looking around.*) . . . I don't know. Won't miss the 500 emails a day, about litter in the park, or the neighbours' trees. And then the other stuff, the serious, depressing stuff, going down the list, just thinking 'poor bastard, poor bastard, poor . . .' And the abuse, threats of violence, the worrying about you and the other staff, here, when I'm away –

Jean Well that's why we've got the new security, isn't it, cameras, buzzers –

David Even though they should, they bloody *should* be allowed to just walk in off the street, that's The Point, but it all . . . now it all feels like it's just got so . . . (*Sighs.*)

Jean (*beat, gesturing him*) Alright look, come on, let's get it over with, a brief moment of affection.

David *relents and goes closer to her as she hugs him.*

Jean I am sorry.

David . . . Yeah, me too.

Jean (*sighs*) Fuck me.

David I'll do no such thing, it's just a hug, calm down.

Jean (*pushing him away*) Oh you . . .

David Except in an hour or so, I won't be your boss anymore.

(*Realising . . .*) Or anyone, here, they'll all lose their jobs, won't they. Oh God, the guilt . . .

Jean Text from Sally at Regional Office – where are me readers? (*Holds the phone out.*) God, are my eyes getting worse or my arms getting shorter? Oh for – why do people use them cartoon face things. What's that one?

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She imitates the emoticon with her own face – a long ‘mouth open’.

Where it’s like open mouth, with massive sideburns; what’s that mean?

David (*looks*) That’s not sideburns, that’s hands, like he’s (*Demonstrates hands to his face.*), that’s like – shock.

Jean Reminds me of someone.

David Can’t remind you of someone, it’s a cartoon blob, Jean.

Jean Does. Never forget a face.

David It’s not a face, it – wait, why are Central Office sending you a shocked face. Jean?

Jean It’s nothing.

David Jean.

Jean What?

David *Jean?*

Jean Stop saying my name, I’m not fucking Beetlejuice!

David Don’t protect me; if it’s bad just say.

Jean Oy, have I ever protected you, ever? And no point in fretting over that which you cannot change.

David Is that another Bikram slogan?

Jean Actually I think that’s AA.

David (*raises his glass*) Awh well, cheers AA.

They clink glasses. Jean at her laptop.

Jean Do you want to go on *Today* tomorrow, (*At her watch.*) well I suppose it *is* today now, isn’t it. ~~Today, today?~~

David ~~No. Maybe. Who with –? No, fuck it. I should stay up here. Say bye.~~