

Act One Scene Six - The Vicarage - The Following Morning

Door bell rings. Geraldine goes to door muttering ...) Lord, give me a break. In fact, give me a Kit-Kat.

(She opens door. It's Hugo. He is wearing a high jumper concealing shirt and horrid tie underneath.)

GERALDINE Hugo, lovely to see you. Come on in.

(They go to living room as Alice enters from the kitchen.)

HUGO Oh. Hello, Alice.

ALICE Hello, Hugo.

(They have a tongue tied moment. Geraldine looks on.)

You all right?

HUGO Yes thanks. Er, hello.

ALICE Hiya.

GERALDINE It's gripping stuff isn't it? I've often wondered what it would be like if you got Oscar Wilde and Janet Street-Porter together in the same room - and I think I'm getting a flavour of it here. Why don't you just stop yakking on, Miss Tinker. Now get back out there and finish making the tea.

ALICE (Still in the moment.) Right. Yeah.

GERALDINE Now Alice. (Alice leaves.) So, Hugo, what did you want to talk to me about?

HUGO Oh, it's this Lent thingy. At the meeting last night you all had something to give up, and the thing is ... nobody asked me. And I think perhaps because everyone thinks I am such a bore that I couldn't possibly have anything interesting to give up. As if I didn't have any personality at all.

GERALDINE You're not a bore at all, Hugo. You're a *riveting* human being. I'm sure you've got lots of vices you could give up. Like gambling for instance. I bet you like a little flutter every now and again.

(Hugo's blank expression says not.)

No. Smoking? (She looks at him.) I know, wearing a shirt without a tie.

(Hugo pulls down his jumper to reveal a shirt and tie.)

GERALDINE Ah.

HUGO Does drinking coffee count as a vice?

GERALDINE It does indeed. Coffee - the broth of Satan. It's a drug Hugo, give it up now.

HUGO No, no, I don't drink it, but I thought I could start, and then I'd have something to give up next year.

GERALDINE Right, brilliant. Yeah, good.

HUGO The only other thing is, I do think about 'It' quite a bit. You know, 'It'.

GERALDINE No, not with you.

HUGO You know 'It'. With people like Mariella Frostrup and Sharon Stone. Edwina Currie. Naked.

GERALDINE Aah. 'It'. Well, there you go then. Not that it's exactly an arrestable offence - although the Edwina Currie thing could land you in an institution. No, good, right, well you stop thinking about 'It', and every time you do, put a pound in that box.

HUGO Great. Old sinner me!

 (Alice enters with tray tea pot, cups, saucers, some doughnuts and biscuits on.)

GERALDINE Yeah! tea. Very good timing. Hugo and I were just finished weren't we Hugo?

 (She turns to see Hugo staring at Alice. He fishes in his pockets and puts a pound in the box.)

ALICE (Pouring the tea.) I know how you like it Hugo. Hot and strong.

 (Hugo gets another pound out and puts it in the box)

ALICE Nice and wet.

 (Another pound goes in.)

GERALDINE On the other hand, I think it's best if Hugo goes now before he drifts into insolvency.

 (She ushers him out but Alice stands in his way, not wanting him to go.)

ALICE But I've got a lovely doughnut for you, Hugo.

HUGO No thanks.

ALICE Some chocolate fingers?

HUGO Oh well, perhaps I ...

 (He reaches for a chocolate finger without looking at Alice.)

ALICE They're so much fun, aren't they? I love just sticking them in my mouth, and sucking till all the chocolate comes right off ...

 (She sticks a chocolate finger in her mouth and sucks on it. Very quickly Hugo cannot stand this lustful torture and has to leave.)

HUGO (To Geraldine.) I'm a bit strapped for cash - I'll pay you later.
(He exits rapidly hands in pockets!)

ALICE That's funny.

GERALDINE What is?

ALICE Hugo rushing off like that?

GERALDINE Well he's probably got a lot on his mind at the moment. So my little lustful lady what are you going to give up for Lent?

ALICE Butter!

GERALDINE Right, butter. Just butter?

ALICE Yes just butter. Except?

GERALDINE Yes?

ALICE Well, you know that stuff they're selling now at the local shop?

GERALDINE Which Stuff?

ALICE 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter'.

GERALDINE I see. So, you're going to give up butter but not give up 'I Can't Believe it's Not Butter'.

ALICE That's right, and do you know - I can't believe it's not butter

GERALDINE No, well, that's the idea, yeah.

ALICE Then yesterday I went to Crookenden and bought this other stuff, like a sort of home-brand, you know?

GERALDINE Ye-es.

ALICE And you know, I can't believe it's not 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter'.

GERALDINE Mmmm. I'm losing you now.

ALICE Well, you know 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter'?

GERALDINE Yeah, yeah,yeah. You think it is butter.

ALICE No, no - I mean, you know the stuff that I can't believe it's not butter is called 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter'.

GERALDINE Probably yeah.

ALICE Well, I can't believe the stuff that is not 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter' is not 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter' and I can't *believe* that both 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter' and the stuff I can't believe is not 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter' are both in fact, not butter. And I *believe* they both might be butter. In a cunning disguise. And in fact there's a lot more butter around than we all thought there was.

GERALDINE Yes. (Pause.) I don't know what you're talking about.