

DOROTHY

DOROTHY. MARY and NIGEL at a trestle table on the stage of the Barn Theatre. DOROTHY NETTLE is an attractive, middle-class English woman in her late thirties who takes little care over her appearance. She is friendly, good natured but nobody's fool. DOROTHY is on her feet appearing to address a crucial public meeting.

DOROTHY Thank you all so much for coming. You are the most important people in any theatre. Without you there is no play. Without you there is no drama. Without you there is only silence. You may think you are sitting in an old barn with uncomfortable seats and inadequate heating. But you are not. You are sitting in the court at Elsinore, you are in the forest of Arden. You are on the steps of the senate in Rome. This humble theatre is a portal, a door to a world of imagination that can transport us from our humdrum existence and allow us to take part in the greatest stories ever told. And this door is about to be closed. The council has withdrawn its grant and unless we can raise fifty thousand pounds it is going to sell the building to be turned into executive homes. I know executives need homes but they also need dreams. Which is why I implore you, I beg you to take this last chance to save our theatre. If not, the community' will not just lose its theatre. It will lose its soul.

MARY and NIGEL applaud.

NIGEL Very eloquent Dorothy. I couldn't have put it better myself - well I could probably, the dilution was perhaps a touch overwrought at the end...

MARY Oh do shut up Nigel. I thought it was bloody marvellous - honest Dot I'm welling up here.

DOROTHY But will it work?

DENIS I'm afraid no ones come.

DOROTHY So that's it then. There is to be no last appeal.

MARY Maybe people felt the last "Last appeal" was one last appeal too many?

DOROTHY They've given up on us.

MARY Maybe we should give it ten minutes.

DOROTHY I have given it ten years, Mary. Not to mention a second mortgage.

NIGEL If you need a shoulder to cry on,

NIGEL places a consoling arm around DOROTHY'S shoulders which she deftly removes.

DOROTHY Thanks Nigel, but perhaps what I really need is to face the truth. Who am I kidding? Maybe no one wants to see us prancing about in fancy dress spouting words written hundreds of years ago.

MARY If we had a star people would come. A real star Someone who has been on telly or in films.

DOROTHY Mary might have a point.

MARY And if we got a star we could get publicity.

DOROTHY And if we got publicity we could get sponsorship.

DENIS That's sorted then.

DOROTHY

DOROTHY How could you?

JEFFERSON Listen Dorothy - this is all horseshit - you must know that!

JESSICA You screwed up again Dad!

DOROTHY's mobile pings.

DOROTHY Oh, its Colin Bell.

NIGEL Ah, a word from our sponsor!

DOROTHY listens intently to the call.

DOROTHY Yes...yes... I see... OK... I understand...right...

DENIS So what did he say?

DOROTHY Basically he said we were all effing efferes and we could forget our effing sponsorship and saving our effing theatre. In fact he suggested that the whole effing lot of us should go and effing eff ourselves.

NIGEL Not exactly eloquent, but heartfelt.

JEFFERSON It's not true.

JESSICA It never is, is it? You finally decided to do something worthwhile and you can't keep your pants on. I'm out of here.

JESSICA leaves upset.

JEFFERSON Nothing happened for God's sake!

DOROTHY So you deny it

JEFFERSON Believe me honey, where I come from the women are so desperate for a piece of Jefferson that I have to put a padlock on my boxer shorts. If you think I porked the skinny broad in the tracksuit then you must be even crazier

than the nutty bitch in the armpit motel. And in any case I'm not sure it's any of your business...

DOROTHY It is my business because thanks to you we have become a national laughing stock not to mention losing two of the cast and our sponsor.

JEFFERSON Big deal. At least you've still got your Lear.

DOROTHY Sadly not.

JEFFERSON What do you mean?

DOROTHY I'm afraid you're fired.

JEFFERSON You can't fire me! Nobody fires Jefferson Steel.

DOROTHY That's right I am a nobody in your world and I should have known that - but you are still fired.

JEFFERSON is in shock.

JEFFERSON This isn't happening! I am not being blown out of a job for which I'm not even being paid

DENIS puts his hand on his shoulder.

DENIS It's a cruel world, amateur dramatics.

NIGEL May I say that I am perfectly happy under the circumstances to take over the role of Lear.

To DOROTHY

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

DOROTHY (tearful) Oh shut up Nigel! It's over. The Stratford Players are finished!