

START

~~JUDY: It's household tips mum, it's not~~

SYLVIA: It's inflammatory material. I thought it was your choice, didn't need to drag anyone else along?

JUDY: I don't. Fran was asking.

SYLVIA: What d'you do, Fran?

FRAN: I'm a stylist. Films and commercials. Commercials, mainly.

SYLVIA: Wonderful.

FRAN: I like it. I'm good at it.

SYLVIA: Good. Don't let my daughter lure you away from it.

FRAN: No, well we can't afford it now, not if there's going to be legal costs and

JUDY: You think it could

FRAN: He thinks she's out to destroy him, bring the company down with her.

He's so upset. I've never seen him so

He didn't want to tell me, only this girl has a lot of friends on Instagram.

He said he just tries to be friendly with everyone, he puts his arm around the shoulders of his male colleagues all the time.

I believe him, but you can't help, you can't help wondering, can you? Thinking maybe he's different with other people than he is with me, maybe there's a side to him I don't know, or

JUDY: What's happened to us if you can't put your arm around someone's shoulders without them crying assault?

FRAN: And he's hurt that she didn't speak to him about it – they worked together for years.

SYLVIA: Well it's not that easy, is it? When it's your boss.

Who's got the power in that situation? She might have felt that if she said anything he'd have her removed, she might have been in fear for her job. We don't have any idea what she might have gone through.

JUDY: Mum. This is Fran's husband

SYLVIA: Yes I'm sorry, I don't mean to say

But we don't know her, do we?

JUDY: You don't know Marcus either. She might be lying for all we know.

SYLVIA: Why would she? At great personal risk

JUDY: I don't know, because she's a fantasist, maybe?

SYLVIA: You'd know, I suppose.

JUDY: What?

SYLVIA: Fantasist. You'd know.

JUDY: You mean I'm

SYLVIA: This gingham paradise you've made for yourself – you know it's not real, don't you? The fifties didn't even look like this in the fifties. You're living in a cartoon.

You want to know what the fifties were like, from someone who was actually there? The fifties were terrible. The idea that anyone would want to would choose to go back there, it's ridiculous.

The pair of you in your frocks, look at you.

Do you know how cold it was? November right through to March. Everyone huddled round their own fireplace, cause everywhere else was freezing. The whole house except about a yard around the sitting room fire where it was *boiling*, the rest of it bone-cold. It bit your nose off in the morning. I'd offer to help mum with the dinner, not to spend time with her, just so I could stand next to the oven.

Rationing! Still rationing. Bread you could build houses with. And god it was bland: grey meat, grey people, everything grey. My dad came home once with this amazing new food a friend had been talking about – Mum wouldn't let us eat it cause she'd heard it was made out of mould. It was yoghurt.

That's being a woman in the fifties. Fear. Bomb-shaped holes everywhere, men like my dad back from the war with their body intact but their head different. Everyone making do and mending, things that were already wrecked. And the intolerance: try being anything other than a straight white man and see if you still think it's utopia.

And don't expect not to be groped at work, that's the least of your worries. Your husband is legally allowed to fuck you whenever he wants to, it doesn't matter how much your head aches or your back aches or you can't stand the sight of him anymore, the weight of him on you. And no abortion, no birth control. No help anywhere. Divorce him? Good luck, love. Whatever he got up to, you turned a blind eye to it.

My poor mother. Frightened of a yoghurt.

She said to me as she was dying – in the hospice – she said 'what have I done, really?' I said don't say that, you brought up three children, what's more important than that? But she knew. Her life was wasted. All her potential boiled down to such a bitter little existence.

You know what she'd do if she saw you now? She'd laugh.

Because it's ridiculous. Being nostalgic when you weren't even there.

They used to think nostalgia was an affliction, did you know that? A neurological disease. Not a branding strategy for tea towels.

'Nostalgia ain't what it used to be', that's the joke, isn't it?

Except it isn't a joke, because you're wasting yourself when you could choose not to. That's what we did for you on those marches, so you could be brave and strong and *better* and this is not what I fought for this is not what we fought for and it isn't funny anymore.

END

*A long moment while this lands.*

~~JUDY smoothes down her skirt. She stands, walks to the kitchen.~~

~~JUDY: God's sake, mum.~~

~~She pours and drinks a glass of water. Comes back to the living room with something to say.~~

~~I've told you before, I'm not like this as a rebellion against you, this is authentically~~

~~SYLVIA: We all rebel against our mothers, don't we? Mine told me not to marry your father, should have listened really but~~

~~JUDY: Dad again.~~

~~SYLVIA: What's 'Dad again'? As if I bad-mouth him to you all the time.~~

~~What Judy doesn't know, Fran, is that her father started sleeping with other women while she was still in nappies.~~

~~JUDY: Dad?~~

~~SYLVIA: Yes.~~

~~JUDY: My Dad?~~

~~SYLVIA: Where do you think he was when he wasn't at home? I could name you four or five women.~~

~~JUDY: He's not here to defend himself, this isn't~~

~~SYLVIA: Why would I make it up? It's a desperate feeling, I wouldn't wish it on anyone. I felt embarrassed to exist.~~