

## **No Job for a Woman by Jamesine Cundell Walker**

### **Cast**

**Fanny Fletcher (nee Adamson) :** Old Fanny is aged eighty-two in 1979, she has limited mobility and uses a walking stick, but she still has a lively brain.

**Fanny Adamson:** Young Fanny is in her late teen and early twenties during the 1915-18 scenes.

**The Man:** playing John Fletcher in 1979 , Charlesworth Adamson (Dad) , Louis Adamson, George Fletcher, Arthur Cunliffe and four different ministers in 1915-19.

**The Woman:** playing Susan Fletcher in 1979 , Mam and Amy Collinson in 1915-19.

The scenes move between 1979 and the war years of 1915-19. The stage space has two sets: an area of Fanny Fletcher's 1979 sitting room (which contains a high seat arm chair and a side table) and a flexible space which becomes a variety of scenes during World War One.

A table and chairs of Edwardian style and a small bench are used in the 1915-19 space.

Please note all music is purely suggested. Copyright will need to be checked before performance.

**(All the cast enter. Young Fanny is dressed in her Edwardian costume and Old Fanny is dressed in appropriate costume for an old lady in 1979. The man and the woman are dressed in black. All sing 'There's a long, long trail awinding' or another appropriate World War One ballad.)**

**(All exit)**

**(Fanny re-enters carrying a cup of tea and a custard cream. She uses a walking stick. It is 1979. She sits. Fanny bites her biscuit, then tries her tea. The tea is too hot, she pours a drop in the saucer and drinks it from there. There is a shout from offstage.)**

**JOHN:** Hi Mum it's only me.

**(John enters.)**

**FANNY F:** Only you! I know your game, John Fletcher, you always know when that kettle's been on, that's your trouble. Well I'm not getting up again, you'll have to make your own

**JOHN:** That's OK Mum I won't bother if you don't mind. I can't stay so long today. Our Janice is home from Uni and I promised to run her into town. We'll both try to call later if we have time.

**FANNY F:** Well it's lovely to see you anyway, you know you're always welcome. You're as welcome here as you are at home, as they say!

**JOHN:** It is me home

**FANNY F:** I know, it was a joke. I might be old but I can still joke you know.

**JOHN:** Anyway, I'm here now.

**FANNY F:** I know and it's lovely to see you. So, how's tricks? Most important thing first- how's our Janice getting on with her studies?

**JOHN:** Great, you know, good. At least I hope she's still working hard. I think there's a boy in the offing.

**FANNY F:** I should think so too, how old is she now, twenty-two? In my day you were married with young 'uns by that age... if you got to that age. They don't know when they're lucky, these youngsters; everything done for them. And teenagers- I mean what's that all about? In my day you went to school and you were a child, then you went to work and you were a man. It was that simple, believe me. Our Louis just went from short trousers to long and he was a grown-up.

**JOHN:** Yeah well, things are different now, Mam. It's not still the nineteen tens now you know. It's better though, I think. They get a proper chance to be kids now. They don't need to grow up so fast any more. And she works hard. It's a long training to be a doctor.

**FANNY F:** Aye well, mebbe.

**(Pause)**

**JOHN:** So, how are you this week Mum?

**FANNY F:** Not so dusty well brushed.

**JOHN:** You what?

**FANNY F:** You heard.

**JOHN:** You and your old Yorkshire sayings.

**FANNY F:** Yes well, when I stop saying them they'll be gone forever won't they. Everyone's gone posh now, haven't they? They all want to talk like on the telly. I mean, look at you? Not so dusty we always used to say... always fine when anyone asks, aren't we, whatever words we use?

**JOHN:** And are you... fine?

**FANNY F:** 'Course I am. If I started telling you about all my aches and pains it would be time for you leave before I'd finished. So let's ignore them eh, cos we've better things to talk about.

**JOHN:** Course we have. So have you had a good week?

**FANNY F:** Well yes, actually, I was quite busy, last week, for once. On Monday that library lady came. They deliver to your house now if you can't get out. She brings them large print ones. I can't carry them that's the trouble, they're so heavy. And what with the walking stick and everything, I just can't manage. And she knows what I like, that library girl: a good love tale. She tells me off as well because I always write my initials just inside the back cover. "I could call that defacing, if I was being strict" she says. "Why do you need to do that?" So I tell her why. Basically, these love tales they're all the same story. Oh, some might be set on a cruise ship and some in a hospital, but basically it's all the same: Mills and Boon. If I don't write my name in them I can never tell if I've read them before.

**JOHN:** In that case, why don't you just read the same one over and over again.

**FANNY F:** Don't be so cheeky. Do you think I'm going senile or something? Anyway, that library girl, she just thinks it's funny really. I can tell she's only joking.

**JOHN:** Well it's good they offer a service like that, isn't it?

**FANNY F:** Blooming marvelous, I say! She always stays a few minutes for a chat that girl, which is lovely. Nice girl, she never makes you feel like she's in a rush. "Back in four weeks, Mrs Fletcher" she says, always polite. I don't like it when these young things start calling me Fanny. "You're looking well today Fanny," the chemist girl says. Who do they think they're talking to? I'm Mrs Fletcher to her. ....but they don't listen.

**JOHN:** And what else happened in your eventful week?

**FANNY F:** Well Tuesday, unexpectedly, I had an invite to tea from Elsie next door. We've always passed the time of day as you know and sometimes I get an invitation for a sherry at Christmas, but this came right out of the blue. She bobbed in on Monday afternoon, Elsie next door, and said would I like to go to tea Tuesday.

**JOHN:** Great, so did you go?

**FANNY F:** I most certainly did! I never turn down an invitation. Always happy to get out of the house I am. I get fed up of these four walls. Anyway, it was very nice of her. But actually, I think she just wanted to show off, she's had her hallway redecorated and she wanted me to say how nice it was.

**JOHN:** And was it nice?

**FANNY F:** Well it was alright. She's had one of those new dildo rails fitted so she's got two different wallpapers on the wall.

**JOHN: (splutters)** A what fitted?

**FANNY F:** A dildo rail. It's all the fashion she tells me. Laura Ashley has them, whoever she is. Maybe it's the woman on the other side. They've only just moved in and I haven't met her yet.

**JOHN:** Well you certainly know how to live Mum. You get up to all sorts while my back is turned.

**FANNY F:** Yes well, Wednesday I was in all day so not so good. But sometimes you need a rest. Only problem is, when I'm in all day I don't sleep at nights really.

**JOHN:** Well, do you watch the telly?

**FANNY F:** There's not much on I like these days. There's a lot of swearing now and I don't like it. We wouldn't have done that when I was young. But I do like that new thing: 'Terry and June'. It's a bit daft sometimes, but it makes me laugh. It's on on a Thursday so I try to watch that.

**JOHN:** And Friday....

**FANNY F:** Oh well Friday the carer comes and does me cleaning and stuff. I just watch her. She doesn't have much time to talk, but she leaves me a bit of dinner to warm up.

**JOHN:** So you're sure you've been OK this week? Kept nice and busy?

**FANNY F:** 'Course I have luv. I'm just grateful to still be going strong, at my age. Three score years and ten, that's what it says in the bible, so I've been living on borrowed time for some years now. When you're 82 you've seen a lot of people go believe me. And people like you, well you're lucky you were ever born. Real shortage of husbands and fathers there was in my day. Lots of me mates never managed to get married, I mean look at me cousin Annie. All those young men who never came back you see.

**JOHN:** I know Mam they were sad times, but it's in the past. We've had another war since then, not to mention Vietnam and Korea and all that.

**FANNY F:** Aye the war to end all wars we called it then. That sounds stupid now doesn't it? All those lads lost in their prime; I still see their faces in my mind's eye, ever young. I think about it every day and more and more the older I get.

**(Music plays and she drifts off to sleep. During the next section John clears the tea cup when he sees that his mother is fast asleep and leaves the stage. Amy enters another stage space. She is young, and it is 1915. She is crying and wiping her eyes on her apron. Fanny Adamson enters on her way home from work, she sees Amy and comes across to her.)**

**FANNY A:** Amy, what's matter love?

**AMY:** Oh Fanny.

**FANNY A:** What is it me love?

**AMY:** It's Albert Hodgson. I called to see his mam and she's just had a telegram.

**FANNY A:** Oh no.

**AMY:** Yes, the lad came with it yesterday but she wouldn't open the door.

**FANNY A:** But she's opened it now?

**AMY:** Yes, she's opened it alright. It says missing **(her voice breaks)** but we all know what that means. They can't find his body. He's probably blown into a thousand little pieces **(she howls)**

**FANNY A:** Don't take on Amy, we can't grieve like this for them all. He's not the first lad we've lost in Armley and he won't be the last. All we can do is keep things going as best we can so there's something left for them all when they do come home.

**AMY:** Well that's no consolation.

**FANNY A:** Well I don't know what else I can say. It is all we can do, keep going for them until they all come back. Make sure there's something left here for them.

**AMY:** But what can I do Fanny, what can I possibly do to keep things going? I'm just a woman.

**FANNY A:** We'll keep the hope alive Amy, that's what we've all got to do.

**AMY:** But when's it going to end Fanny? They said it would all be over by last Christmas.

**FANNY A:** Yes, I know that's what they said, but there's a long way to go yet Amy, I'm pretty sure of that.

**(Pause)**

**FANNY A:** You're awfully upset about this.

**AMY:** Oh Albert **(she wails)**