

SCRUBBERS

A musical play by Cenarth Fox



Five women work as cleaners. Each has a problem. When one suggests they swap their dusters for ditties, a most unusual group of entertainers is created.

An awesome script that delighted every audience. The music was fantastic, complemented by the "backing tracks" that came with the show package. The further into rehearsals we got, the more we appreciated the depth of the show. It had just the right amount of drama combined with some excellent humour. The cast, crew and audiences all came away "buzzing" at the experience. **Heretaunga Players**

Scrubbers is gritty, then challenging, then heart-warming and finally triumphant. We had a very successful two-week season. **Riverlea Theatre, Hamilton NZ**

Scrubbers was a resounding success. This fabulous musical was thoroughly enjoyed by the audiences at all four venues and we have received many compliments for the show and the cast. *Scrubbers* was hilariously entertaining and brought many people to theatre who had never been before. **Maryborough Players Inc.**

A strong point for me in this show is multi-talented Cenarth Fox's terrific lyrics and music. The songs deserve to be enjoyed by audiences beyond this show. **Cheryl Threadgold, Melbourne Observer**

Scrubbers is a fabulous show, both heartwarming and funny, besides where else would you find a playwright/director who bakes cupcakes for the show. **Marie Ryan Inner FM**

It is a wonderfully warm and witty play and the characters are beautifully "drawn". We also loved the music especially "Happy Birthday"!! **Ken and Liz Launder**

This is another Cenarth Fox play full of surprises and laughs and sends you home after having another great night of entertainment. *Scrubbers* is wonderful entertainment performed by very talented people. **Brian Amos 98.1FM**

SCRUBBERS

A play with music by Cenarth Fox

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Orchestrations

Scrubbers is a play with songs and does not require an orchestra. A backing CD is available. The character Dee is a singer/songwriter who plays guitar. Her instrumental skills can be mimed and/or the backing CD used.

Production Package and Backing CD

Groups staging a FOX PLAYS show are given production-notes [set-design, costumes, lighting, etc.], publicity material and lyric sheets. Backing CDs are available for all musicals.

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Synopsis

Five women work as cleaners at night in a large office complex. The play takes place mainly in their small tea-room before and after their shifts. Their working lives are pretty dull - washing floors, cleaning toilets, dusting, vacuuming and emptying rubbish bins. And their home life is just as bad, perhaps worse.

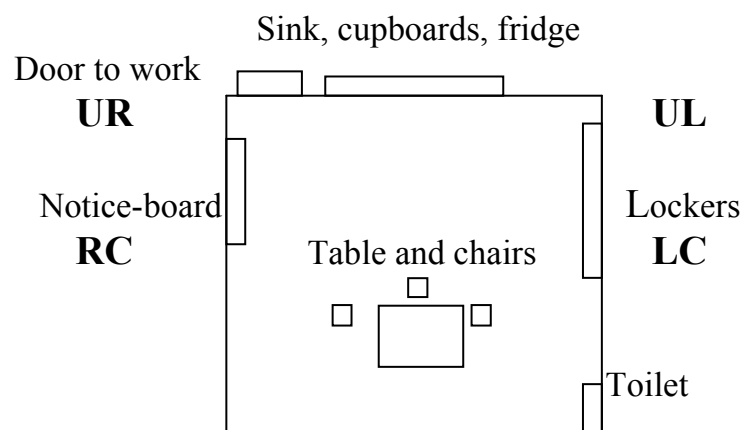
Each woman has a story to tell; a sad story. But one woman has hopes for a better life away from scrubbing floors. Her dreams affect the others to the extent that their lives are changed dramatically and forever.

Setting

The tea-room for the cleaners is basic. Upstage is a sink, bench, cupboard and urn for their refreshments. UL to DL is a row of lockers for their coats, overalls, caps, gloves etc. and cleaning equipment. DR is a table and chairs. Keep the performing area small.

They enter and exit the room UR. The walls may have a photo or two of men – pop stars, actors, footballers. There might be a sign extolling the virtues of being female. There is a door DL which leads to a lavatory/washroom.

The changes of scene later in the play are achieved by use of lighting, props and simple costume changes. Here's a floor plan of how your set might look.



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CHARACTERS

Christine

Chrissie, young, 20s, uneducated, victim, fantastic cook, loves dancing

Deirdre

Dee, 30s, artistic, independent, strong-willed, singer/songwriter, the unelected leader of the group

Helianthe

Helly, 25-40, foreigner in country of play, intelligent, quiet

Maureen

Mo, 50-80, rough diamond, heart of gold, joke-cracking, surrogate mother to the others, working class heroine

Liz

30-50, secretive, quiet, educated, intelligent

MUSICAL NUMBERS

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Overture | Instrumental |
| 2. | Scene-Change Music A | Instrumental |
| 3. | Unknown Songs | Dee |
| 4. | Scene-Change Music B | Instrumental |
| 5. | Scene-Change Music C | Instrumental |
| 6. | Happy Birthday | Dee, Helly, Chrissie & Liz |
| 7. | Working Woman | Quintet |
| 8. | I Like You | Quintet |
| 9. | Scene-Change Music D | Instrumental |
| 10. | Scene-Change Music E | Instrumental |
| 11. | Covers | Dee |
| 12. | Scene-Change Music F | Instrumental |
| 13. | Scene-Change Music G | Instrumental |
| 14. | Warm Up | Quintet |
| 15. | Scene-Change Music H/Entr'acte | Instrumental |
| 16. | Cake Distribution Music | Instrumental |
| 17. | Life Ain't No Rehearsal | Quintet |
| 18. | Point Your Memory Forward | Quintet |
| 19. | Curtain Calls | Quintet |
| 20. | Playout | Instrumental |

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Act 1 Scene 1 MUSIC No. 1 – Overture

[Just before curtain rises, play OVERTURE. If no curtain, dim house lights allowing cast to enter during music. Or, at end of music, curtain rises on tea-room for cleaners in large office-block. The room is always artificially lit. There are no windows. It's a basement or internal room. Perhaps harsh light with fluorescent tube type lighting. Different lighting patterns are used during the play.]

When curtain rises, room is lit and it's about time for the women to arrive. It's 7pm or thereabouts and the women have a hot drink before their night's work. MO is at the sink preparing cups of tea. LIZ is seated at table drinking tea and flicking through a magazine. DEE enters carrying a guitar in its case. MO and LIZ are wearing their smocks/overalls ready to start cleaning. DEE is in street clothes – jeans, sweatshirt, sneakers]

DEE *[Struggles at door with guitar case]* Evening all. *[MO moves to hold door]*

MO Hello darlin'. 'Ere, let me get that. *[DEE enters]* How are ya?

DEE *[Heading to locker]* I'm fine Mo. *[Door closed]* Thanks. How are you?

MO Fit as a butcher's dog and twice as dangerous.

DEE *[At locker]* I'd love a cuppa if you wouldn't mind.

MO Comin' right up. Got some of y' favourite bikkies *[cookies]* too.

DEE *[Stashing guitar and getting out her cleaning smock]* You're an angel, Mo. Salt of the earth. *[To LIZ]* Evening Liz.

[LIZ ignores them, continues drinking/reading]

MO *[Preparing tea]* You won't get much outa Liz. She's spoke her 'free words this week. *[DEE puts on her smock]*

DEE Not like you, hey Mo? - Queen of the Rabbiting Fraternity.

MO Yeah well old age has certain privileges like talkin' y' head off and not bein' told t'shut up. Now, 'ere's y' tea. *[Mug is placed on table]*

DEE *[DEE to table. She and MO sit either side of LIZ]* Lovely. Ta.

MO *[Sitting]* An' drink it while it's hot.

DEE Stop fussing.

MO I'm allowed to fuss. No law against it. *[To LIZ]* Is there Liz?

[LIZ ignores them. The OTHERS make snotty faces]

DEE So how's y' wonderful hubby? The one you should've shafted years ago.

MO I've told ya. That stuff's private.

DEE I know it's none of my business but you don't have to put up with it.

MO You live your life an' I'll live mine an' if I need advice, I'll ask. Orright?

DEE Okay. *[Pause]* But he's damn lucky to have any woman let alone a saint.

MO *[Chokes on tea]* A saint! I'm a lotta fings, darlin' but saint ain't one of 'em.

DEE You're a hard-working, hard-done-by woman. *[To LIZ]* You'd agree with that, wouldn't you, Liz?

LIZ *[Mutters, pays no attention]* Whatever.

DEE *[Makes face and mimics LIZ]* Whatever.

MO I see you brung that guitar again. Are you gunna serenade us tonight?

DEE Not tonight, Mo. *[Almost smug]* Tonight, I have a gig.

MO *[Takes a moment for the truth to dawn]* You what? You 'aven't?

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- DEE** *[Nodding]* I have. Tonight I'm booked to entertain my adoring public.
- MO** *[Excited]* Oh Dee, that's marvellous. Your very own jig!
- DEE** *[Mildly exasperated]* No, Mo. A jig's a dance. A booking is a gig.
- MO** Who cares? It's a job. Tonight, a gig, tomorra the world.
- DEE** I wish.
- MO** *[Instantly back to DEE]* So will you be on the telly? Can I 'ave y' autograph?
- DEE** *[Laughing]* I'm playing at a pretentious wine bar. I'll be lucky if there are five people there.
- MO** So? It's a start. And the money's important. Don't f' get the money.
- DEE** What money?
- MO** *[Serious]* You're not playin' for nothin'?' *[DEE nods]* But that's exploitation.
- DEE** I'm not playing for nothing. I'll get a free supper, two glasses of cheap plonk and several offers of free sex.
- MO** Really? *[Mock serious]* So where is this gig? *[They laugh]*
- LIZ** Believe me, the wine is the pits.
- MO** Stuff the wine. I want the free sex. *[Laughter]*
[MO slaps table as she delivers punch line. This causes LIZ's tea to spill. Well they pretend this has happened. They all stand. LIZ upset]
- LIZ** *[Standing/brushing her clothes and/or the table/magazine]* Oh do you mind?
- DEE** *[Sincere. Rises to help]* Sorry, Liz. My fault.
- MO** *[Insincere. Rises and produces cloth from smock. Wipes]* Oh yes, we're terribly sorry, Liz. Fancy 'avin' a laugh an' celebratin' someone's good fortune and then committin' a terrible crime like spillin' y'tea.
- DEE** Yes, all right, Mo.
- MO** It's not all right. Won't so much as give you the time of day and then screams blue murder when we accidentally interrupt her vow of silence.
- LIZ** *[Softly]* I got a fright.
- MO** A fright? A fright's when y'ceilin' collapses or when y'lazy 'usband 'elps around the 'ouse. Spillin' tea ain't a fright.
- LIZ** *[Crosses to her locker]* I'm sorry I spoke.
- DEE** Well we're not. It's a rare treat.
- MO** *[Finishes the cleaning]* Now is that satisfactory? We can't have madam upset. Naturally they'll be no charge.
- LIZ** *[Now annoyed]* Why don't you drop dead!
- DEE** Liz!
- MO** She speaks. *[Clutching DEE]* Oh Dee, she spoke. And to me. Oh this makes me so 'appy. *[Crosses to LIZ]* Madam *[she takes LIZ'S hand but it's snatched away]* you do me a great 'onour. I am just a simple cleanin' woman, a scrubber *[Kneels]* and you so important. 'Fank you for speakin' t'me.
- LIZ** I'm surprised you've even *heard* of sarcasm. And I'm certain you can't remember the last time you were sober.
- DEE** Right that's enough. Both of you.
- MO** *[Rising, attacks]* I might be a piss-pot but at least I'm human. At least I care about people. At least I'm not a cold, frigid bitch!

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[The two protagonists launch at one another but DEE gets in-between and thus there are three involved. Neither MO nor LIZ wants to swing a punch because of DEE. Ad lib huffing, puffing and bluffing]

LIZ Shut up, you old crone! *[ad libs continue]*

DEE No! Stop it! *[ad libs continues]*

MO You're a creep! A corpse! *[ad libs continue]*

[The fight or almost-fight hardly gets going before the toilet door DL opens and CHRISSIE enters. She is timid at the best of times but now is positively pale. She looks shaky, holds a small container and seems oblivious to the punch-up in front of her. She heads C and as she speaks the fisticuffs cease and the fighting trio go back to some sort of normality]

C'RISSIE I can't understand it. *[TRIO break up]*

DEE Chrissie! What's happened?

C'RISSIE I dunno how it works.

[LIZ goes upstage to the sink and washes her cup then heads to chair by notice-board. MO brings CHRISSIE to chair and she and DEE attend to the upset CHRISSIE]

MO What is it, love? You tell Auntie Mo all about it.

DEE I hope it's not what I think it is, Chrissie?

C'RISSIE The chemist said it would work.

MO You're not pregnant again?

C'RISSIE What does it mean if the colour changes like this?

DEE I don't believe it. You *promised* you'd be careful.

MO *[Patting the distressed CHRISSIE]* Never mind, love. We'll sort it out.

DEE He's not the one with the fetus. He's getting plastered while you're going through hell.

MO Leave it, Dee.

DEE Get rid of the bastard. He's just using you? *[CHRISSIE cries]*

MO Shhh, it's all right, love. It's all right.

DEE Mo, it's not all right. She's young and naive. She gets the "I love you" routine then gets the baby. Listen Chrissie. Dump Barrie.

C'RISSIE *[Softly between sobs]* It's not Barrie.

DEE And if you won't, I will. And with a kick in his nuts for good measure.

MO *[To DEE. Whispers, shaking head]* It's not Barrie.

DEE *[Stunned]* What? *[Exasperated]* Oh Chrissie!

C'RISSIE I love him. He wants to move in. *[Emotional again]* He said he loves me.

MO I'm sure 'e does love you ... in 'is own sort of way.

DEE Love is a euphemism, Chrissie with a million definitions. Last night you got number thirty-four.

MO *[At DEE]* Go easy, she's upset.

DEE Life ain't a chapter of Mills and Boon, Chrissie. Shit happens and the trick is to not let it happen to you.

[Knock at door. Everyone stops. They all turn upstage, even CHRISSIE. Door opens and HELIANTHE enters. She wears coat, scarf over head, and carries some shopping bags. She is nervous but determined]

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- HELLY** Excuse me. I am looking for Maureen.
- LIZ** *[Indicates]* Over there; the one impersonating Mother Teresa.
- MO** I'm Mo. Wotcha want?
- HELLY** *[Takes out letter]* I have to show to you this letter. *[sic]*
[MO takes letter and reads it. OTHERS watch]
- MO** Oh you're the new scrubber.
- HELLY** Scrubber? No. I have come to work as a cleaner.
[OTHERS amused in a quiet way. Letter returned to HELIANTHE]
- MO** So what's your name, then? What do we call ya?
- HELLY** My name is Helianthe. In the Greek language it means "bright flower".
- MO** I'm Maureen but everyone calls me Mo.
[Extends hand and they shake. HELIANTHE shakes hands with each woman except LIZ as she is introduced]
- HELLY** Hello Mo.
- MO** And this is our showbiz scrubber, Deirdre, better known as Dee.
- DEE** Hi. Welcome.
- HELLY** Hello Dee.
- MO** Over there's our social cripple, Liz.
- HELLY** Hello, Liz. *[LIZ turns her back to read the notices]*
- MO** Ignore 'er. *[Indicating CHRISSIE]* And this is our baby, this is Chrissie.
- HELLY** Hello Chrissie.
- C'RISSIE** *[Recovering]* I think I'm pregnant.
- HELLY** Oh, congratulations. I hope you and your husband will be very happy.
[CHRISSIE starts blubbing again] Did I say some wrong things?
- DEE** Not your fault, Helianthe. Chrissie hasn't got a husband and the current boyfriend'll probably last a week.
- C'RISSIE** *[Angry at DEE]* He's all right. He loves me.
- MO** 'Course 'e does. So what's 'is name?
- C'RISSIE** Sean.
- DEE** Ah Sean. Father of the Year and Cretin of the Century.
- C'RISSIE** Well at least I've got a fella. What have you got? A crappy guitar and a cold, empty bed.
- MO** *[Referring fight]* Hey, none of that. What will Helicopter *[sic]* think of us?
- DEE** She can think what she damn well likes. *[To locker]* I've gotta clean.
- MO** Y'can't start now. It ain't seven o'clock.
- DEE** *[Gathering cleaning materials]* I have to if I'm gunna make that gig. *[Starts to exit]* Good luck, Helianthe. Cop you later. *[Exits]*
- HELLY** *[A bit non-plussed by everything]* Yes. Goodbye. *[Fades]* Nice to meet you.
- LIZ** *[Not looking at anyone]* She forgot her bin liners.
- C'RISSIE** *[Has forgotten her misery]* Did j'ya hear that? Dee's got a gig.
- MO** Yeah. Singin' at some wine bar.
- C'RISSIE** *[Likes DEE despite arguments. Excited]* That's fantastic. We've gotta go.
- MO** It doesn't start till midnight and ...

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- DEE** *[Enters] Forgot me bin liners. [Crosses to her locker, grabs a bag. She turns and sees others staring at her] What?*
- MO** I told ‘em about your gig.
- DEE** *[Angry] Oh great. Thanks for nothing, Mo!
[She storms out. OTHERS watch this in silence]*
- LIZ** *[To no-one in particular] And she reckons I’m rude.*
- HELLY** Could somebody help me, please? *[OTHERS look at HELIANTHE] I do not know where to start my cleaning.
[LIZ moves to sink to wash her cup]*
- MO** *[Takes her to lockers] Now don’t worry, love. Stick y’stuff in ‘ere. [Taking new smock from locker] Give us y’coat. [MO takes coat] ‘ere’s y’smock. You tag along wiv’ me t’night. [MO takes HELIANTHE’s coat and hangs it by door]*
- HELLY** *[Puts bag in locker and puts on smock] Thank you very much, Mo. You are very kind.*
- MO** You’ll get y’own trolley t’morra.
- HELLY** *[Not sure of some of the words] Please. What is t’morra?*
- MO** Oh blimey. Just meet me by them blue doors in ‘free minutes. Okay? *[Exits]*
- HELLY** *[Calling] I will be there. [Unsure so crossed to LIZ] I think Mo is very kind. [LIZ ignores HELIANTHE who is confused by LIZ’S rudeness. LIZ continues at sink. HELIANTHE turns to CHRISSIE] I think Mo is very kind.*
- C’RISSIE** *[Looking pale] I’m gunna be sick.
[CHRISIE exits to loo DL. Pause. HELIANTHE is worried. She turns to LIZ]*
- HELLY** She is sick. We should help her.
- LIZ** *[Walks to locker and collects bin liners. Starts to exit] Stuff ‘em. [Exits]
[HELIANTHE is unsure what to do. We hear CHRISSIE throwing up. HELIANTHE moves to door DL and opens it. She’s halfway inside when CHRISSIE yells]*
- C’RISSIE** *[Distressed] Go away! [HELIANTHE retreats] And shut the friggin’ door!
[HELIANTHE is upset and closes toilet door. BLACKOUT]*

MUSIC Number 2 Scene Change A Act One Scene 2

Lights up slowly with DEE sitting at table with her guitar. She is singing in preparation for her gig that night. If used, CD begins]

MUSIC No. 3 Unknown Songs

- Dee** *I’m just like a million other people, I write unknown songs
And just like a million other people, I play my unknown songs
I scribble then quibble about every word
But no need to bother, the stuff’s never heard
I’m just like a million other people, I write unknown songs.
I’m just like a million other people, I dream my dream of fame
And just like those million other people, our fate is all the same
Rejection, dejection, again and again
Why do we do it? It causes us pain*

*I'm just like a million other people, I dream my dream of
Scheme my scheme of, dream my dream of fame
Dream my dream of fame. Yeah!*
[Song ends, lights fade to BLACKOUT. Start fade as song starts to end]

MUSIC Number 4 Scene Change B
Act One Scene 3

[Lights up. It's 24 hours later. DEE fiddles at her locker. She stows her guitar. She's first to arrive. MO enters dressed in street clothes. DEE turns]

DEE Mo, hi. How are you?
MO Well? *[Hanging clothes on peg]*
DEE Well what?
MO You know. Your jig thing; how'd it go?
DEE It's a gig, I keep telling you that. And it was okay.
MO Okay? What's okay? Look, it's me. Mo. Stop pissin' about.
DEE It was like I said. Small crowd, free supper and both barmen tried it on.
MO And the money?
DEE I told you there was no money.
MO I can't believe you'd work for nothin'. Even scrubbers get paid.
[MO to sink, DEE to her chair at table]
DEE Mo, in the real world, art and money are mutually exclusive.
MO What's that mean in English?
DEE It means life is tough for artistes. For every venue there's an endless line of wannabe stars. I'm one of them. I've got no track record, no agent and a modest talent. Musically speaking, I'm a nobody.
MO I reckon you're good.
DEE So if I even sniff a gig, I grab it and fall on me knees in gratitude. Artists are the misfits of society, the hopeful no-hopers.
MO Sounds like a rip-off.
DEE Of course it's a rip-off. Life's a rip-off. Look at us. We clean the crap and get paid peanuts.
MO Yeah but at least we *get* paid. You sing y'songs and get nothin'. And I'll bet them barmen were deadset tossers.
DEE True but *quality* deadset tossers.
MO *[MO brings mugs to table]* Well let's have a cuppa.
DEE Yes please. *[Pause]* So how was the new girl? Helly whatever?
MO Oh she's great. Won't have no trouble with her.
[HELIANTHE enters and hangs her coat. She is not seen by OTHERS. She has her smock with her and starts to put it on]
DEE What sort of name is Helianthe? Sounds like some sexually-transmitted disease.
[Mimics Doctor] I'm very sorry, Ms. McIntosh but you have a dose of helianthe. Take these tablets three times a day.
[HELIANTHE clears her throat]
MO *[Sees HELIANTHE]* Oh, 'ello dear. Come in, come in.

[DEE is not embarrassed. She didn't mean any disrespect]

HELLY Good evening, Mo. Good evening, Dee.

DEE Look, Helianthe, is there a shorter version of your name? Maybe something your family call you?

HELLY You don't like my name?

DEE No, it's fine. It's just we're into abbreviations. She's Mo. I'm Dee. Easy to say.

MO Don't let 'er bully you, love.

DEE I'm not bullying her.

MO You 'ave whatever name you like. Just don't stand round like a stunned mullet.
[MO moves to sink to make tea. HELIANTHE doesn't move. She doesn't understand about motionless fish] C'mon 'ave a cuppa.

HELLY *[Still frozen]* Oh, yes, of course. I am sorry.

MO An' that's anuvva rule round 'ere. No apologies. They is banned.

DEE What about Helly? That's not offensive is it?

MO No apologies, no lyin' and no bullshit. Excuse my French.

DEE I think Helly sounds nice and friendly. C'mon, Helly. Get y'skates on.

HELLY Sorry? I need to wear skates?

MO *[Amused]* No, darlin'. She means 'urry up.

HELLY *[Accelerating dressing]* I will be late for work?

MO *[Bringing HELIANTHE's tea to table]* Stuff the work. Y'tea's gettin' cold.

HELLY *[Moving to table and her tea]* Oh. Thank you.

MO *[Pushes plate of biscuits towards HELLY]* 'Ere. Have a bickie. 'Ave two.

HELLY Thank you. *[Takes biscuit]* It does not matter if we are late to be working?

DEE No, kick-off's irrelevant. Mind you the sooner we start the sooner we get home but as all of us have got such a lousy home life ...

MO Hey! Speak for y'self. *[DEE looks at MO then back to HELLY]*

DEE So, how do you like y'new job?

HELLY Oh I am very happy.

DEE Good. That'll last a week.

MO Don't take no notice of Dee. She's got a lotta frustration in 'er life.

DEE And Mo's happily married to a useless git with a pickled liver.

MO *[Indignant]* He enjoys a tipple. Wot's wrong wiv that?

[LIZ enters, hangs coat then goes to locker and puts on smock. OTHERS ignore her]

DEE Y'see Helly, as we've got bugger all to go home to, this here's a sort of home away from home.

MO *[Sees LIZ]* 'Evening Liz. *[LIZ ignores them]*

DEE *[Meaning LIZ]* I can't speak for Mysterious Minnie over there but the rest of us'd keep a trick cyclist pedallin' f'y years. *[HELIANTHE confused]*

MO Ignore her, 'elianthie.

DEE Helly. We're calling her Helly.

[When LIZ has her smock right, she goes to sink, makes tea then sits by notice-board]

MO Okay, 'elly. So 'ow'd youse pull up? *[HELIANTHE confused]*

- DEE** She means did you get home all right and were you stiff and sore due to your manual exertions collecting the crap in this God-awful establishment?
[Everyone, even DEE, is a little wary after this slightly over-the-top outburst]
- HELLY** *[Pause]* Oh, no, I was good; very good.
- DEE** *[Surprised]* Good? You worked here and you were good?
- HELLY** Yes, my family waited up for me and they all said ...
- DEE** *[Can't believe it]* Your family waited up for you!?
- MO** Stop interruptin'. Let 'er finish.
- HELLY** Yes, my family were, how you say, anxious I would be all right.
- MO** *[Sincere. Moved]* Ohhhh, that's lovely. That's t'nicest thing I've 'eard in years. I wish my 'usband'd wait up for me.
- DEE** And pigs might fly. So, Helly, who constitutes this all-caring family? Got any gorgeous, unattached brothers?
- MO** Don't be so damn nosy.
- DEE** Just unattached'll do. I've given up on gorgeous.
- MO** Ignore 'er. You don't have to say nothin'.
- DEE** Yes she does. Unwritten rule – no secrets. Besides, *[Rises to go upstage to sink – into MO]* you're just busting to know.
- MO** *[Indignant]* I am not. *[DEE goes to sink and tops up her tea. MO looks at HELIANTHE. MO is busting to know]* Gotta nice 'usband, 'ave ya?
- HELLY** I told my family I was very happy with my new job and very happy with my new friends, the scrubbers.
- MO** *[Touched]* Oh. Dat's lovely. *[Pushes biscuits to HELIANTHE]* 'Ave another bikkie. *[Upstage to DEE]* Did'ja 'ear that? 'Elly reckons we're all right.
- DEE** *[Returns, cup refreshed]* Yeah but the real question is, what do we think of her?
- HELLY** *[Worried]* I have not passed? You do not like my work?
- MO** *[To DEE]* Hey, hey, none of that. *[To HELLY]* You're all right, darlin'. She's only jokin'. She can be real sarky at times.
- HELLY** Sarky?
- DEE** Sarcastic. I was stirring, Helly. Winding you up, pulling your leg, taking the Mickey.
- HELLY** I have heard of Mickey Mouse. *[Amusement all round]*
- MO** You're okay, 'Elly. But jus' remember, you're on y'own t'night. No Auntie Mo t'show y'round.
- HELLY** And I am sure I will be okay because I have such a wonderful teacher.
[MO thrilled. DEE stirs]
- DEE** Oh do you mind? Listen Helly, it's not us you need to grease. It's those prats we clean for. Do a perfect job and they glare at you. Make the minutest mistake and they scream bloody murder.
- MO** Ignore Dee. You'll be fine, love. And remember, we're y'mates. Any problems wiv y'work or personal like, we'll look after ya.
- HELLY** You are very kind.

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- DEE** Not that *we* have personal problems. We're perfectly adjusted, healthy females living blissful, stress-free lives. [*CHRISSIE enters looking terrible and wails. OTHERS all turn and look at her*] With the odd exception of course.
- C'RISSIE** [*Wails, distressed*] He's gone. Sean's left me. [*She cries*]
[*MO and DEE go to CHRISSIE and bring her to the table. HELIANTHE rises and is concerned. LIZ watches but shakes her head at the scene*]
- MO** Now, now, now. None of that. Come an' sit down. Come on.
[*Ad lib soothing remarks and calming actions mix with CHRISSIE'S blubbing*]
- DEE** Get her a cuppa, Liz. [*LIZ does nothing*]
- HELLY** [*Moving to sink*] I will help you, Liz.
[*HELIANTHE makes tea, LIZ just drinks her cuppa and ignores the others*]
- C'RISSIE** [*Seated, upset*] I didn't tell 'im anyfing. I was going to tell 'im after lunch. But he just ... [*Breaks down*]
- DEE** I told you, Chrissie. I did warn you.
- MO** [*Angry*] Yes all right, Madam Know-all. You ain't 'elpin', are you?
- HELLY** [*Calling*] The tea is coming soon.
- C'RISSIE** I nearly didn't come to work. I went to the doctor and went home to tell Sean but was gone. And afterwards, I ... I nearly ...
[*Pause. What is she going to say?*]
- MO** Now dat's enough of the crazy talk. You f'get all about that sort o'fing.
- DEE** [*Knows answer - wants it out*] What thing? What are you talking about?
- MO** [*MO looks up at DEE and glares at her*] Shut it!
- HELLY** [*Comes down*] Here is the tea, Chrissie. It is nice and very hot.
- MO** [*Takes tea, puts is aside*] Fanks, 'Elly. [*To CHRISSIE*] Now come on, love, enough of them waterworks.
- DEE** You were saying something, Chrissie, before Mo interrupted.
- MO** [*Angry with DEE*] I told you to leave it.
- DEE** Why?
- MO** Because she doesn't want remindin' of 'er suff'rin'. All right?
- C'RISSIE** It's okay. I'm not gunna do anyfing stupid.
- DEE** Yeah but you thought about it. You got so fed up with being used by some shit of a man you actually thought about topping yourself.
- MO** [*Shock*] She'd never said no such 'fing! 'Ow dare you even suggest dat! An' watch y'French. [*Indicating HELIANTHE*] There is ladies present.
- DEE** And that's my point, Chrissie. These terrible relationships are making you think crazy thoughts. It's not on. Don't let yourself be treated like this. Don't let Sean or Barrie or anyone hurt you like you're hurting now. Take control of your life.
- HELLY** I do not wish to interfere but I would like to help if I can.
- MO** Thank you, 'Elly. [*At DEE*] Pity the rest of us ain't like you.
- HELLY** Maybe tomorrow will be a nicer day for you.
- DEE** But it's not all bad, Chrissie. At least the sleazy Sean is out of the picture.
[*CHRISSIE breaks down again and is comforted by MO*]
- LIZ** [*Under her breath*] Nice one. [*DEE ignores LIZ*]
- MO** [*At DEE*] Just give it a rest.

- C'RISSIE** *[Recovering]* I'm not really upset about Sean leaving. *[OTHERS all pay attention]*
He wasn't very nice and he didn't love me.
- DEE** Good girl. You stand up for yourself.
- C'RISSIE** I'm upset because ... *[Almost crying]* I'm not pregnant.
[Stunned silence. No-one knows what to say]
- DEE** *[Incredulous]* What?
- C'RISSIE** I wanna have a baby and this time I thought I would but *[Breaks down and cries again]* I'm not pregnant.
- DEE** *[Shakes her head]* Unbelievable.
- MO** *[Comforting her]* There, there, it's okay. There'll be lots of ovver times.
- DEE** *[Aside]* And lots of 'ovver' studs.
- MO** *[Taking CHRISSIE in hand]* C'mon, love. Let's get a bit of fresh air. *[CHRISSIE helped by MO and a little by HELIANTHE]* C'mon. *[They exit to door UR. To HELIANTHE]* We'll be right.
[CHRISSIE exits helped by MO. HELIANTHE holds door then closes it once they've gone. HELIANTHE collects cup not touched and returns same to sink]
- HELLY** She will be okay. I think Mo is a very good friend.
- DEE** She'll never be okay. She's a disaster waiting to happen. She'll meet a bloke, get pregnant then he'll take off. She'll grab another who'll repeat the screw-'n-shoot-through routine and on it goes.
- HELLY** This does not sound very nice.
- DEE** Chrissie's a loser-magnet.
- HELLY** So, maybe we can help Chrissie to improve her life.
- DEE** It'd be easier to wipe out world hunger.
- HELLY** I think I start early tonight.
- DEE** Suit y'self.
- HELLY** I will see you when we have finished. Goodbye. *[Exits]*
- DEE** *[Calling to nobody. Back to her tea]* Yeah. See ya. *[Turns to see LIZ but speaks out front. LIZ moves to sink to return cup]* Well, Elizabeth. What'll we discuss? Politics? Modern art? Or how about something serious like who's gunna win on Saturday?
- LIZ** *[Deadpan from upstage]* My name's not Elizabeth.
- DEE** Name the topic, sweetheart and we'll *[Her voice trails off. She turns]*
- LIZ** My God, she's actually stopped.
- DEE** It's the shock. You went all garrulous.
- LIZ** Perhaps I say nothing because I've got nothing to say.
- DEE** Oh and droll too.
- LIZ** Besides, you and Mo tend to hog the conversational limelight.
- DEE** Look, Liz, or whatever, if you've taken a vow of silence, fine. But don't expect us to show any interest while you play the wounded martyr.
- LIZ** You mean gossip's compulsory? Inane chat is de rigueur?
- DEE** I think snobbery and sarcasm suit you.
- LIZ** Just as prejudice and guesswork suit you.
- DEE** Touché. Okay, but think about it. You say nothing and treat us like dirt.

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- LIZ** And nobody bothered to find out why?
- DEE** True but if you're sitting on some big confession, it's not our fault you keep it all locked away.
- LIZ** Do you charge for these consultations?
- DEE** *[Prepares to leave]* Suit y'self. You'll win every argument, Liz, because nobody'll speak to you. *[Exiting]*
- LIZ** *[Genuine. Contrite. Speaks not looking at DEE]* Don't go. *[DEE stops]* I'd like to tell someone. *[DEE comes back into room]*
- DEE** So what's your real name?
- LIZ** It's not Liz but it's become Liz. *[Pause]* It's a new name for a new life. Today I'm Liz the scrubber and more than happy to remain anonymous.
- DEE** Fine. It's your life. But these women'll be your friend with no strings attached. You don't have to bare your soul. Just be human.
- LIZ** *[Nods]* Understood.
- DEE** And another thing. Tonight we're having a surprise party for Mo. It's her birthday. We'll have a drink and some cake.
- LIZ** Sounds nice.
- DEE** And despite your stuck-up manner, you're welcome to join us.
- LIZ** Thanks. I'll think about it.
- DEE** *[Moves in threatening]* But a word of warning. We like Mo. She cares about us and bends over backwards to help. So if you do rock up, leave the Ms. Frigid cossie at home. Comprendi?
- LIZ** *[Nods]* Si.
[Door opens UR and CHRISSIE and MO return. Both are much happier]
- MO** Here we are, large as life.
- DEE** Chrissie. You look terrific.
- C'RISSIE** Mo's fixed me up. We had a nice talk. She's just like me Mum.
- DEE** You're a saint, Mo. Liz and I were just saying. Weren't we Liz?
[OTHERS all stop and look at LIZ. Pause]
- LIZ** Yes. You're very kind, Mo.
- MO** *[Embarrassed but inwardly thrilled]* Oh Gawd, cut it out. *[Looks around]* Hey, where's Helly?
- DEE** She started. Keen as mustard.
- MO** *[Grabbing her bag of items]* Oh really. It's only 'er second night. *[Exiting]* You know I'll 'ave t'check on 'er. *[Exits UR]*
- C'RISSIE** *[Going to locker]* I'll come with you.
- DEE** Ah, Chrissie. Just a minute.
- C'RISSIE** I've got to help Mo and Helly.
- DEE** *[Whisper]* Don't forget Mo's birthday.
- C'RISSIE** *[Stops. Upset]* Oh no. Oh no!
- DEE** *[Upset]* Chrissie! You said you'd make a cake.
- C'RISSIE** I have. I did. *[Guilty]* But I left it at home.
- DEE** *[Exasperated]* Oh, great. You idiot!
- C'RISSIE** I was upset. First the doctor and then Sean. I wasn't thinking.

LIZ Can you go home and get it?
C'RISSIE I could but I have to do me cleanin'.
DEE I'll do yours. You nick off and get the cake.
C'RISSIE Dee, I can't. I'll make another one next week.
DEE The party's tonight.
C'RISSIE *[Upset – still]* Oh. *[Starting to cry]* I'm sorry.
DEE *[Taking her to door]* Just go and get the cake. Now!
C'RISSIE But what about me work?
DEE *[Pushing her out the door UR]* I said I'll do it. Now go. *[Calling]* And don't forget the candles.
LIZ How long will she take?
DEE *[Going to locker and getting her gear]* Not long. About an hour.
LIZ That party means a lot to you.
DEE Mo means a lot to me. She's got a lousy life and this is one way we can tell her she's loved and lovely. Now I'm off. Two shifts to do.
[DEE heads to door UR but stops when LIZ speaks]
LIZ Can I help? *[Pause. DEE turns]* Can I do some of Chrissie's work?
[Pause. DEE tosses a bag of soft materials to LIZ who catches it then moves to DEE and they exit together. Fade to BLACKOUT. Crossfade with music]

MUSIC Number 5 Scene Change C
Act One Scene 4

[Lights up slowly and MO enters followed by HELLY. It's three hours later. They have finished their shifts and are tired and frazzled. HELLY goes to locker and puts things away. MO tosses her bag towards her locker but heads downstage to tea table and sits. She is whacked]

MO Bloody heck, I am knackered. I must be gettin' old.
HELLY Let me make you a cup of tea, Mo. I know just how you like it.
MO Thanks, darlin'. That'd be lovely.
[HELIANTHE potters at sink making tea. MO is at the table removing a shoe, complaining and massaging her foot. DEE with guitar and LIZ enter surreptitiously at door UR and give HELIANTHE a wave. She sees them and moves to them. They mime brief conversation then HELIANTHE calls]
HELLY Won't be long, Mo. Your tea is almost ready.
MO I think me feet have finally died. Ouch.
[BLACKOUT. MO startled]
MO Hey! What's up? Turn them lights on!
[CHRISIE enters carrying cake with mass of candles. Use sparkler if naked flames are not allowed or deemed unsafe. Cake to table. MUSIC BEGINS. DEE, LIZ and HELLY surround MO. DEE plays and all four sing Happy Birthday. If possible use candles only as lighting during song]

Music No. 6 - Happy Birthday

Quartet *Oh Hap, happy birthday, happy birthday to you*

*Come blow out your candles, make your wish come true
We wish you a long life, good health and happiness too
So hap, happy birthday, happy birthday to you.*

[Singing is lively with simple harmony. Song ends; LIZ moves to switch near door and lights come up. MO blows out candles or sparkler dies. Good wishes all round. DEE stows guitar]

MO *[Gushing]* Oh this is wonderful! What can I say?

C'RISSIE *[Kisses MO]* Happy, happy birthday, Mo. And lots more too.

HELLY May you always be healthy and live till you are one hundred.

[MO shrieks and the OTHERS laugh. It's a happy time]

DEE *[Kisses MO]* Happy birthday darling.

LIZ *[Slight lull]* Many happy returns of the day, Mo.

[Touch of seriousness. LIZ is being decidedly human]

MO Thank you, Liz. Thank you everyone. And I bet Dee done all this.

DEE No, no. It was a real team effort. And Chrissie made the cake.

MO It's wonderful. Chrissie you'd make a great wife.

[Oops. Slight pause – awkward moment]

C'RISSIE You *can* eat it. It's not there to be looked at.

[This breaks the tension]

MO *[Getting up]* Yes I'll get some plates.

DEE *[Pushing her back into seat]* No you won't. You sit down and be waited on.

HELLY I will get the plates. *[Moves upstage]*

LIZ *[Joining her]* They're under the sink. *[HELLY and LIZ gather plates]*

DEE *[Going to her locker]* And look what I just happen to have found in my locker.

[Produces bottle of wine]

MO Not your usual cheap and nasty plonk?

DEE *[Bringing bottle to table]* The very same. *[Calling]* Glasses, ladies, if you please.

LIZ *[Calling back]* Glasses coming up.

MO *[Still in shock]* I can't believe this. Nobody's made me a cake f'years.

C'RISSIE I'm not much good with fellas, Mo, but I sure know how to cook.

[Plastic glasses and plates arrive and things are prepared, etc.]

HELLY You have to cut the cake, Mo. *[Hands her a knife]* And make a wish.

MO *[This is all a bit too much]* Oh blimey. What do I wanna make a wish for?

C'RISSIE For happiness, Mo. Make a wish for happiness.

[MO rises and places knife on cake]

DEE Make it a big wish, Mo. Make it stupendous and fabulous.

[MO looks at them then plunges knife into cake and OTHERS applaud]

DEE C'mon Chrissie, cut the cake. And where are those glasses?

LIZ *[Placing/adjusting plastic glasses on table]* Our finest crystal decanters.

[Laughter. They spread out, sit with MO in middle. CHRISSIE cuts cake and hands out paper plates with small piece of cake. DEE pours wine, passes it around. Much ad libbing. "This is wonderful" "We should do this more often" "Here you go, Helly" "Thank you"]

DEE *[Proposing toast]* Right, ladies, here's to the woman who works the hardest, thinks and cares about others and who deserves nothing but the best. She *is* the best. Happy birthday, Mo.

OTHERS *[Not MO]* Happy birthday, Mo. *[They drink]*

MO *[Overcome]* I dunno what to say.

DEE Say nothing, darl. Just enjoy.

MO *[Tucking in]* Damn good idea. Get stuck in! *[Laughter as they all tuck in]*

HELLY Chrissie, this cake is perfect. Have you really made it yourself?

C'RISSIE *[Touch offended]* Of course I did. D'ja fink I bought it at some shop?

HELLY *[Upset she's said wrong thing]* Oh Chrissie, I am sorry. I did not mean ...

MO *[Mouth full – well, partly]* It's a smashin' cake, Chrissie.

DEE True, but she's a right prat when it comes to remembering things.

C'RISSIE *[Embarrassed]* Oh don't tell her. Please.

MO *[Ticks off DEE]* Hey, it's my birthday an' I don't want no funny business.

DEE It's not a criticism, Mo. It's just a funny story. *[Indicating CHRISSIE with her spoon]* Little Miss Wonder Chef here only went and forgot the cake.

MO What? Well 'ow come it's 'ere?

DEE We made her go home and fetch it.

MO I don't believe you. All the way 'ome?

C'RISSIE All the way, Mo. And back again.

MO What? Tonight?

C'RISSIE Yep. And it was worth it just to see the look on your face.

MO *[Doesn't believe them]* Hey, do you think I'm stupid?

HELLY It's true, Mo. Chrissie had to go home and collect the cake.

MO *[To CHRISSIE]* Well 'ow did you get y'cleanin' done?

C'RISSIE Dee done it.

MO What?

DEE Not exactly.

C'RISSIE *[Suddenly upset. Gets to her feet]* You haven't done me work? You said you would. I'll get the sack now.

DEE Keep y'hair on, it's all been done.

MO You couldn't do all your work *and* Chrissie's. Not by now.

DEE Yes but I wasn't the only one doing Chrissie's work. At least half of it was done by Liz. *[Wow. They shut up]*

LIZ *[Silence. Pause. OTHERS look at LIZ]* It wasn't much. I just gave Dee a hand.

C'RISSIE Gee, thanks Liz. I really appreciate that.

MO That was very kind of you, Liz. Thanks.

HELLY *[Upset]* Why did you not ask me to help? I am not doing my share.

DEE Fair go, Helly. You've only just arrived.

MO I can't believe you went all the way home just for me.

DEE Well she did and that means we get to celebrate your birthday.

DEE Now I know it's rude to mention a lady's age but I have to tell you Mo, I guessed the number of candles.

MO Cheeky beggar.

HELLY From my country, Mo, the older a person becomes, the more they are respected and looked after.

MO Quite right too.

- C'RISSIE** I could have made a bigger cake, Mo, but the whole building would've caught fire! *[Laughter]*
- MO** You mind y'manners.
- DEE** Never mind, Mo. You're only as young you feel.
- MO** Well I must be old cos it's a bloody long time since I've had a feel. *[Shrieks of laughter]*
- DEE** This is the life. Who wants a top up? *[Glasses are topped up]*
- C'RISSIE** We should do this more often. How about I bring a cake every week?
- MO** And a couple of fellas. I'd like some toy boys. *[More laughter]*
- C'RISSIE** I'm serious.
- DEE** So is Mo. You know what they say. A good man is hard to find and a ...
- OTHERS** *[Not HELLY]* ... hard man is good to find *[Laughter]*
- HELLY** So what will you get for your birthday, Mo?
[Silence. Suddenly sombre. MO sad. HELLY confused – what has she said?]
- MO** *[Covering]* Ah, nothin' much.
- HELLY** Will your husband bring you a cup of tea in your bed?
- DEE** *[Taking over]* Of course he will. And a bunch of flowers. And a box of chocolates. Nothing but the best for our Mo.
- MO** Chance'd be a fine thing.
- C'RISSIE** Never mind, Mo. We all love you.
- HELLY** I'm sorry. Have I said some wrong thing?
- MO** No, Helly. You was not to know. My old man's got a memory problem. I get a card from me sister but I think I have what you call a marriage in name only. *[Pause. MO is sad and her sadness has taken over the party]*
- C'RISSIE** You could take him a bit of your birthday cake.
- MO** *[Still reflective]* Funny bit is you don't know it's 'appened till it's 'appened. The years go by and suddenly you realise you've got nothin' to say. You share the same bed. Cook 'n clean for 'im. You wash his clothes an' smell his sweat and then wake up one mornin' and realise there's nothin'. You do things by habit. Buy chops, wash floor, pay bills. I talk more to the cat than to him. *[Sadness]*
- DEE** *[Hugs MO]* Never mind, darl. We'll talk to you. We'll love you.
[MO looks sad and then starts to cry silently. The OTHERS don't know what to say or do. It is sad. Suddenly MO snaps out of it]
- MO** Gawd, look me, getting' all sappy. An' on me birfday. Sorry, ladies. C'mon, let's talk about somefin' else.
- HELLY** Yes, this is a celebration. We should all be very happy.
- C'RISSIE** I could tell youse all about me kind and lovin' boyfriends.
[Pause. CHRISIE smiles. She is joking. The OTHERS twig and laugh warmly but more as a relief than anything else]
- DEE** Well, I reckon that proves we're all right. If we can laugh at our misery, we're definitely okay. I mean look at me. I've been singing m'own songs for years and lost everything except m'sense of humour.
- HELLY** I would like to hear you sing.
- C'RISSIE** Yeah, me too. I wanted to come and hear you the other night.

- DEE** Thanks girls but I'm starting to believe I've maybe peaked at mediocrity.
- MO** Well that's 'free of us who are full of 'appiness. At least Helly and Liz look remotely happy.
- LIZ** But looks can be deceiving, Mo. Smiles are only skin-deep.
[OTHERS look at LIZ]
- DEE** You don't have to say anything, Liz.
- HELLY** I am not sure I like talk like this.
- LIZ** I know I've been a stuck-up bitch and behaved like a real prat. A couple of times I've tried to tell all but I've just lost my nerve.
- MO** Oh Gawd, not another one. Ain't nobody 'ere normal?
- DEE** This *is* normal.
- LIZ** Before I came here, I did things; changed my name, address and lifestyle. I've lost contact with my family; no-one knows I'm here. I've lost my friends, family, home, career, the lot. *[OTHERS fascinated]*
- C'RISSIE** My God. What happened?
- LIZ** Once I was happily married, had a son, home, job, friends. *[Silence. Pause. OTHERS hooked]* I always enjoyed a flutter. And when the casinos and on-line gambling took off, so did I. My weekly flutters became serious, heavy gambling.
- DEE** *[Stunned]* You lost everything through gambling?
- LIZ** For years I'd kept control. Then, gradually, I got in deeper. I sold things; my grandmother's engagement ring. I withdrew money from our joint account and lied to my husband. The more I lost the more I gambled. I knew I was hooked but ... *[Shrugs]* I was sick. And like most losers I thought the big win was one bet away and if I had to stop I would. My mother-in-law lives in Paris. She had a stroke and my husband took our son to see her. I encouraged them to stay longer. By the time they came home, I'd lost the lot.
- C'RISSIE** What? *All* your money?
- LIZ** Our home, holiday home, forty grand in the bank, cars, shares, super. My husband came home and went to open the front door. His key didn't work. Some guy opened the door. How would you feel if a total stranger opened your front door and asked you what you were doing?
- DEE** *[Stunned]* Did you gamble away your own house?
- LIZ** It's easy. Borrow against it. Gamble. Lose money. Lose house. My husband's business was ruined. He got custody of our boy and they moved interstate. My well-paid job in marketing was gone. My shame was unbearable. I've moved around, lived in bedsits and took any work I could get which brings me here and to my latest career, that of sanitary operative.
- MO** Bloody hell. That's unbelievable.
- HELLY** I am so sorry, Liz. That is very, very sad.
- C'RISSIE** I don't get it. Who was the strange man in your house?
- DEE** He owned it, Chrissie. The house had to be sold to pay Liz's debts.
- C'RISSIE** *[Stunned]* Oh my god.

- LIZ** So whilst nothing can excuse my appalling manners, I hope you'll see why I'm reluctant to whip out the family snaps and chat about my son's first day at school. *[Pause]* Right, here endeth the monologue.
[Pause. Silence. Sombre mood]
- DEE** I'm sorry, Liz. That sounds like a really rough ride.
- LIZ** *[Shrugs]* Yep but life goes on. If you can call this living.
- C'RISSIE** Do you still gamble?
- LIZ** Ah, the silver lining. No, thank God. Not having money or assets helps but so does a counsellor from an under-funded welfare organisation.
[Pause. Everyone in shock. One, because LIZ has suddenly become garrulous and two, because of the dramatic nature of her life]
- MO** Well I've gotta say, this is the most unusual birthday party I've ever 'ad.
[Smiles all round]
- C'RISSIE** Hey! I've just realised. We're all miserable. We're all losers and ...
[Pause. CHRISIE looks at HELLY. They all look at HELLY]
- HELLY** But you have forgotten me. And now you want to know my secrets. You want to know if I am happy.
- MO** No we don't. You keep quiet, love.
- C'RISSIE** Sorry Helly. I didn't mean nothin'
- HELLY** It is okay. I am happy. Well, almost. I have a nice husband and two little girls. We are poor but there is much love in our family. But last year I have learned something sad.
- DEE** Be gentle, Helly. I think we're outa tissues.
- HELLY** *[Weak smile]* Last year I get big shock. I learn my parents are not my parents. When I was baby two lovely people adopt me for all my young life. My real mother, she very young, not married and put me at church in my country.
- C'RISSIE** So who are your real parents?
- HELLY** I do not know. This is my problem. I believe my mother move to this country and this city. Maybe she has children of her own. I have people help me look. But maybe we won't find her and if we do, maybe she will not want to see me.
- MO** Oh yes she will. Every mother wants to see 'er baby.
- C'RISSIE** So you could have brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces you've never even met.
- HELLY** Yes. And that makes me to confuse. I want to find them but if I upset them or if they not want to see me, I will be very sad.
- DEE** Is there anything we can do to help?
- HELLY** You are very kind. But if you don't mind, I keep looking myself.
- DEE** Sure but don't be afraid to ask.
- LIZ** Helly, I'm no expert but I've found that talking about things really helps. I've been seeing a counsellor for weeks. And even here, just now, having told you girls my woes, I feel better already. So if you stay, you'll find this bunch of crazy women are pretty good.
- MO** Pretty good and pretty crazy. It's a crazy party full of crazy women. *[Raises her glass]* To the Crazy Women.

- OTHERS** *[Laughter as they toast] The Crazy Women!*
[They drink, eat more cake, laugh, etc. "Cheers" "Hey, this is great" "More champers, anyone?" Normality returns. DEE goes to fetch her guitar]
- HELLY** I must be going to my house. My husband worry when I be late.
- DEE** *[With guitar] Well no-one's going home till Mo's had her entertainment.*
- C'RISSIE** *[Delighted] Oh great, Dee's gunna sing.*
- DEE** Now gather round 'cos it ain't every night you hear the world's most unheard of superstar. *[Atmosphere improves. Dim lights as DEE prepares guitar. OTHERS settle]*
[MUSIC BEGINS] I dedicate this song to a wonderful lady. Mo, this is for you.
- OTHERS** Ahhh. *[And other appreciative, supportive comments]*

Music No. 7 - Working Woman

- DEE** *She's been a part of history since families came along*
She's still the heart and soul of humankind.
She's held us all together when our lives were tough and hard
She's cross, the boss, she's gentle and she's kind.
She's very young, she's very old, she's somewhere in-between
She's always had a vital role to play
She's suffered much yet soldiered on with seldom a complaint
She's brave, a slave, she's true and she's okay.
God bless the working woman, salt of the earth is she
God bless the working woman, heart of the family.
A saint, a star, the best by far, with love she'll help us through.
So God bless the working woman and God bless you.
- TRIO** *God bless, God bless, God bless you.*
[At 2nd chorus OTHERS sing, even MO. Not with gusto because they've just heard the song. They sing "God bless you" with feeling. Harmony at end. Song ends, lights return to normal, all clap]
- MO** *[Moved by it all] That was beautiful, Dee. I dunno what to say.*
- LIZ** Dee, you've got to stop all this negative crap about failure. It was lovely.
- DEE** Thanks.
- C'RISSIE** Yeah, I thought it was great. I wanna come to your next concert.
- MO** It's not a concert. It's a gig. *[Ooooh. MO is stirred about knowing the jargon]*
- HELLY** You should be recording, Dee, and performing in concerts and TV.
[OTHERS agree]
- DEE** Yes, all right. We're a bit tipsy and into female bonding so let's not get carried away.
- MO** Well I know nothin' about music but I know what I like and your songs are beautiful.
- DEE** And let's not forget the fabulous backing group. You girls were great.
- LIZ** It was a thinking person's song.
- C'RISSIE** Maybe we should quit our cleaning jobs, become famous rock stars and see the world.
[This amuses OTHERS]

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- DEE** Look I'm curious. Where did you ladies learn to sing? *[Laughter, scoffing]*
- HELLY** In my country we always singing. At weddings and parties everybody sings and dances.
- C'RISSIE** Yeah well I used to go out with a roadie and he taught me heaps. *[Amusement]*
- LIZ** You're looking at a former boarding school gel who went to chapel twice on Sundays and who still knows the alto part to *Onward Christian Soldiers*. *[Amusement]*
- MO** Well I went to a state school and any soldiers I met sure weren't Christian. *[Much applause and laughter from OTHERS]*
- DEE** Okay, you've all passed the audition. Now let's get serious.
- OTHERS** What? ... Serious? ... What are you on about? ...*etc.*
- DEE** I reckon some nights after work we should sing a few songs. *[Mixed reaction – surprise, delight]*
- LIZ** That's a great idea.
- MO** You're joking.
- DEE** Our own little ensemble. What do y'reckon?
- HELLY** I would like this very much.
- LIZ** We can forget our problems and sing our socks off.
- C'RISSIE** *[Mimics child]* Ready Mister Music. *[Laughter]*
- DEE** No time like the present. You'll all know this old favourite. **[MUSIC BEGINS]**
[DEE starts playing and the others settle and listen. Maybe new lighting again]

Music No. 8 – I Like You

- Dee** *I like a friendly smile*
Quintet *And that's why I like you.*
- Dee** *I like a smattering of style*
Quintet *And that's why I like you*
I like some get up and go
Anyone disconnected from the status quo, oh
- Dee** *I like the old back row*
Quintet *And that's why I like you.*

[We assume this is an old, well-known song. The others pick it up easily. HELLY has even heard it in her homeland. The harmony is good but not too good. Song is much enjoyed by the women. BLACKOUT as laughter and applause ends song]

Music No. 9 – Scene-Change D Act One Scene 5

- [Lights up 24 hours later. MO is at the sink. LIZ is at her locker]*
- MO** Hey, that party last night. I'm pooped. I could 'ardly do me work.
- LIZ** Same here. I'm too old for late night sing-alongs.
- MO** The 'overs are a bit late. I'll make us a cuppa.
- LIZ** *[Takes her time but then goes to table and sits]* Thanks. *[Pause]* It was a wonderful party, Mo. I hope you enjoyed yourself.

- MO** It was the nicest surprise I've ever 'ad.
- LIZ** Last night was the first time I've gone public about my gambling. I never thought I would but now I feel great.
- MO** *[Bringing two mugs of tea]* A trouble shared m'dear. An' we've all had it tough.
- LIZ** *[They sip their tea]* I can't get over the music. It was like we'd been singing together for years.
- MO** It sounded lovely.
- LIZ** I never thought I'd look forward to coming to work. Tonight I was actually early and the cleaning was almost a breeze. And it's all thanks to you and your birthday. *[Door opens, CHRISSIE enters and heads to sink]*
- MO** Hello Chrissie? You all right, love?
- C'RISSIE** I've never been better. Who needs men when you've got great girlfriends?
[LIZ and MO look at one another]
- LIZ** *[To MO]* Should we be worried?
- C'RISSIE** I've now realised that sisterly love is best. I'm just so happy.
- DEE** *[Enters in a rush]* Phew, I'm stuffed. *[Goes to her locker]* That party last night. So how are we all?
- C'RISSIE** Men know nothin' about real love. *[OTHERS stop and stare]* I've discovered women's love.
- DEE** *[Stops putting things away]* Really? *[CHRISSIE nods]* Well good for you kiddo.
- LIZ** It seems we're all in love. Happiness is in the air.
- DEE** So, we're all a bunch of satisfied scrubbers.
[UR door flings open and a stressed and upset HELLY enters. She cries "Help"]
- LIZ** Helly! What's the matter?
- DEE** *[Helping her]* Come over here. Sit down. *[HELLY is helped to sit]*
- MO** What's happened, darlin'? You look like you've seen a ghost.
- HELLY** I was doing my cleaning. *[Coughs]*
- C'RISSIE** I'll get you some water. *[Goes upstage for a glass of water]*
- DEE** Just relax, breathe deeply. You're okay.
- LIZ** Are you hurt? Did you fall over? *[HELLY shakes her head]*
- HELLY** I went into the storeroom. *[Coughs again and CHRISSIE arrives with water]*
- C'RISSIE** Here you are. *[HELLY drinks a little]*
- HELLY** Thank you. I just ran from floor four. I need detergent and go to store room.
- MO** There ain't no ghosts in there, love.
- HELLY** I see people in room.
- LIZ** Who? What people?
- DEE** Were they stealing things? Did you see a thief?
- HELLY** I knock but maybe they no hear me. I open door and see them.
- C'RISSIE** *[Getting frustrated]* Who? Who did you see?
- HELLY** I see no faces. I get fright and run because ... *[Greater shock]* they have no clothes! *[Big reaction]*
- LIZ** *[Understands]* Oh no, you interrupted some horizontal dancing!
- DEE** They were bonking.
- C'RISSIE** Who was bonking?

- MO** What's bonking?
- HELLY** I shocked. They were making love.
[OTHERS amused. It's a relief too because they thought HELLY had done or seen some terrible crime or some such. Next lines almost overlap]
- DEE** Oh, Helly, you spoilsport!
- C'RISSIE** Was it that gorgeous bloke from accounts?
- LIZ** How many? I mean was it just a couple?
- MO** That's bloody disgusting. There are plenty of offices on that floor.
- DEE** I'd love to know who it was.
- LIZ** Might be *is*. They could still be at it.
- C'RISSIE** Let's check it out.
- DEE** Waste of time. Two minutes is absolute max for blokes round here.
- LIZ** Is that from personal experience? *[DEE laughs]*
- HELLY** Will I lose my job because of this? *[OTHERS scoff]*
- MO** *They'll* get the sack, not you. Fancy tryin' that at work.
- DEE** It's called lying down on the job, Mo. *[OTHERS amused]*
- LIZ** They were of the *opposite* sex I presume? We're not talking Oscar and Bosie?
- HELLY** I could not see lady but she made scream when I came into room.
- DEE** You came, she came, he conquered.
- LIZ** Conquered or bonkered?
- MO** *[Shocked]* Oh this is disgustin'.
- C'RISSIE** What colour were his eyes?
- HELLY** I did not see eyes. He was facing other way.
- DEE** You mean you only saw his arse! *[OTHERS amused]*
- C'RISSIE** That'll do. Give us a cheek by cheek description!
- MO** I'm gunna report this.
- LIZ** What for? Consenting adults in the privacy of their store-room.
- MO** I have to vac in there. I want danger money! *[More laughter]*
- C'RISSIE** What if the company finds out?
- LIZ** They'll have an ID parade with blokes bending over and dropping their daks.
[Much laughter from OTHERS. HELLY is not so amused but even she can now see the lighter side of things]
- DEE** *[Imitating O-I-C]* Gentlemen, trousers ... down. *[More shrieks of laughter]*
- MO** Sounds like a real bummer to me! *[More groans/laughs]*
- C'RISSIE** When it comes to the identification bit, Helly, I could give you a hand.
- LIZ** A hands-on experience. *[Amusement]*
- HELLY** I am glad you are all laughing. I think maybe it does have a funny side.
- C'RISSIE** A funny *back-side*! *[Laughter]* Now you're sure you never saw his front side?
- MO** Chrissie. Behave. *[To HELLY]* Not even a glimpse? *[Laughs]*
- LIZ** *[Rises, imitates barrister]* Now, Helly, it's time for a witness statement. You entered the storeroom and came upon a gentleman's posterior.
- MO** *[Rises, imitates witness]* That was no gentleman, m'lud. That was my 'usband.
[Shrieks of laughter]
- LIZ** In your own words, kindly describe the gentleman's appearance.

DEE Were there any distinguishing features?

C'RISSIE Yeah, did he have a spotty bum?

LIZ Were they buns to die for? *[Laughter interrupted by sound. Everyone stops]*

FX **Music No. 10 Phone rings**

MO What was that?

DEE *[Going to her locker]* My phone.

C'RISSIE *[Envious]* Wish someone'd ring me.

MO Who's ringin' at this time of night? Or shouldn't we ask?

[OTHERS watch. DEE takes phone from locker, punches button which stops it ringing. She answers phone. OTHERS fascinated]

DEE Hello? ... Oh hi, Justin. *[OTHERS make faces at each other. Mouth "Justin"]*
What tonight? But I haven't got What sort of stuff? ... No, I want to. I can do it. ... Ah, say half an hour. Okay. Bye.

[She punches phone and looks worried]

C'RISSIE Who's Justin?

DEE Justin's the manager of a trying-to-be-trendy wine bar and his entertainer has just smashed his car. Can I dash over and fill the spot?

MO *[Excited]* You've got a gig!

DEE I sure have and I'm completely stuffed after cleaning, I haven't got anything to wear and *[Tugs hair]* look at my hair!

LIZ I've got a top you can have. *[Goes to her locker to produce classy top]*

HELLY I have a nice hat you could wear. *[Goes to her locker to obtain hat]*

DEE Gee, thanks ladies, that's fantastic.

C'RISSIE Can we come? Please Dee. I'd love to hear you sing.

MO Yeah, we'll all come.

[Much activity. DEE is trying new top and a hat and the OTHERS are just as excited. They help, talk, interrupt and organise themselves]

DEE Oh that's perfect.

HELLY *[Helping DEE]* You will look very beautiful for your gig.

DEE Look good, sound terrible.

C'RISSIE We can be your groupies.

HELLY *[Helping DEE]* You can tuck your hair under the hat. *[DEE does so]*

DEE This is brilliant. Thanks, girls.

LIZ But will they admit a quartet of strange-looking women?

DEE *[Suddenly realises]* What? Oh no, you are not coming.

C'RISSIE Oh yes we are. Front row seats.

DEE It's just a crummy wine bar.

HELLY I will need to telephone my husband.

LIZ *[Hands HELLY DEE'S phone]* Here. Tell him you're making a culture stop.

[CHRISIE helps HELLY who makes a mimed phone call perhaps facing away from OTHERS. It's busy as everyone gets into the act preparing for their brief night out]

MO Well I ain't ringin' my old man. 'E'd never take me to no night club.

- LIZ** *[Hands guitar to DEE]* Here's your guitar. I'll find a taxi. *[She grabs her coat and exits UR]*
- DEE** This is crazy. I dunno what I'm doing.
- HELLY** *[Handing phone to DEE]* My husband says to wish you good luck.
- DEE** *[In a tizz]* What! Oh! Thanks. Gawd, what'll I sing?
[Stuffs phone in her pocket]
- MO** We don't have to pay do we? It ain't no clip joint is it?
- C'RISSIE** Will there be any blokes?
- DEE** I don't know. Geez, I'm gunna be late. *[Exiting]* Come on. Let's go.
[They all exit UR talking at once ad lib – "After you" ... "This'll be fantastic" ... "This beats going home" etc. BLACKOUT. Scrubbers move chairs/table for night club. New lighting will be a warmer more sophisticated but dimly lit wine bar.]

Music No. 11 Scene-Change Music E
Act One Scene 6

It's dim lighting. LIZ enters dressed in street clothes, i.e. has coat over smock. She holds tray with four glasses. CHRISSIE, HELLY and MO enter excited, nervous and embarrassed respectively. They wear/carry "extras" – hats, scarves, bags, etc.]

- LIZ** *[Taking control]* Over there. Grab a chair.
[They do so and LIZ pours the drinks. Chairs are their "other" chairs]
- MO** Blimey, what is this place? Where's the lights?
- C'RISSIE** This is awesome. *[Takes glass]*
- HELLY** Where is Dee? Will she be singing soon?
- LIZ** No idea. Just relax and enjoy yourselves. *[Raises glass]* Cheers.
- OTHERS** *[OTHERS toast]* Cheers.
- FX #12** *[Voiceover]* And now ladies and gentlemen, Justin's Wine Bar takes pleasure in presenting our very own talented singer/songwriter, Deidre McIntosh.
[QUARTET applaud. Softish spotlight comes on DL and DEE enters. She sits on stool and prepares to perform. QUARTET face front as if DEE is out front]
- C'RISSIE** *[Whispering]* Shouldn't we get closer to the stage?
- MO** Wish they'd turn up the lights.
- HELLY** Dee is starting.
- LIZ** Shhhh.
- DEE** Hi. *[Silence]* It's great to be at Justin's again. I feel like part of the furniture.
[Still no response] Look, I've been singing songs made famous by other people for years now and ... well to tell the truth it kinda pisses me off.
[SCRUBBERS gasp, look worried] So, now you know how I feel, here's a musical explanation. *[MUSIC BEGINS]*

Music No. 13 – Covers

- Dee** *[Almost recitative]* You're jiggin' a gig in a pub or a club
You know there will always be pests
To prove it a drunk who is loud in a crowd
Says, "Excuse me, do you do requests?"

*I smile and then nod, here the punter is god
And to please you must grease for rewards.
When the title is spoken, response is just token
Please God I can remember the chords.
I've sung My Way, Day By Day, Yesterday, Tonight
The world revolves around covers
I've sung I Believe, The Way We Were
Bing's dreams of Christmas white.
The world revolves around covers.
I've sung Wooden Heart, Moon River, Play Misty For Me
And Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round that bloody old oak tree.
Just once or twice it might be nice to sing a song for me
You see the world revolves around covers.
I've copied Denver and Diamond, Allen, Manilow and John
The world revolves around covers
I've been Madonna, Streisand, Dolly, Cher
I've rung dry Celine Dion
The world revolves around covers.
I've climbed every mountain, begun the beguine
Done disco in 'Frisco by star and has-been.
And still I'm here in places queer, unknown and so unseen
You see the world revolves around, life involves the sound
Covers.*

[Song ends. QUARTET wildly applaud facing front. They cheer, go wild. Their sounds fade with lights. DEE exits in BLACKOUT. Crossfade lights with music]

**Music No. 14 – Scene-Change Music F
Act One Scene 7**

[Put chairs and table back as before. We move forward about 20 hours and four cleaners are back in their tea-room. Lighting returns back to harsher, basic lighting. Women have or are placing their "extras" in lockers. DEE is absent. HELLY at her locker preparing for work, adds smock, etc. MO at sink. CHRISSIE, LIZ and HELLY seated at table. They've gathered before starting their cleaning shift]

MO *[Calling]* Now who wants a cuppa?

C'RISSIE I thought Dee was terrific last night but how come she was so snooty at the end?

LIZ Because her fans were a bunch of rowdy ring-ins.

HELLY I think Dee is a beautiful singer.

MO *[Comes down to table]* Well I reckon she's better off out of it. That place last night was a dump. An' the prices they charge for a drink. My Godfather!

C'RISSIE I'll pay you back, Mo, I promise.

HELLY I am still not sure what Dee is meaning by covers.

MO Car seats, love.

- HELLY** Pardon?
- MO** She was singin' about car seat covers.
- C'RISSIE** No she wasn't. Covers ...
[LIZ hears DEE approaching and grabs CHRISSIE'S arm and mimes shhh]
- MO** What's up? *[Good timing as DEE enters and all conversation is killed]*
- DEE** *[Enters and goes to her locker]* Evening ladies. I'm late as usual.
- C'RISSIE** Hi, Dee.
- MO** 'ello, love.
- HELLY** Thank you for inviting us last night, Dee. We *all* thought you were very good.
[OTHERS agree]
- MO** You were triffic, love.
- DEE** *[Dressing]* Yes, well I think the less said about last night the better. But I do apologise for taking off like I did.
- HELLY** Can I get you some tea?
- DEE** No thanks, Helly. I think I'll get straight into it.
[Takes her bin liners or duster and starts to exit UR]
- LIZ** Not scared of your critics, I hope.
- DEE** *[Stops at door]* And what's that supposed to mean?
- LIZ** How about a little feedback from some of your loyal fans?
- MO** *[Trying to stop a possible war]* Don't take no notice of Liz. We all reckoned you was bloody marvellous.
[Pause. DEE not sure what LIZ means. OTHERS not sure. DEE decides to return and heads to table]
- DEE** Fair enough. And what does madam suggest? Complete makeover? Radical career change? Or maybe quit while I'm ahead?
- MO** Don't talk rubbish! We reckon you're triffic. Don't we?
- OTHERS** Yeah ... Wonderful ... Triffic! *etc.*
- LIZ** In fact I think you've got a real talent.
- DEE** But? There's always a 'but', Liz; a sting in the tail.
- C'RISSIE** *[Wistful]* I quite like a butt wrapped in jeans. *[Ignored. It's serious]*
- LIZ** I thought maybe your marketing could be improved.
- DEE** My marketing? Liz, I'm a cleaner who sings a bit.
- C'RISSIE** What do you know about marketing, anyway?
- LIZ** Well in another life, I had a career in advertising.
- DEE** Liz, I've got no money. This is seat-of-your-pants performing. Have guitar will travel.
- LIZ** It doesn't cost anything to change your name. *[Reaction]*
- MO** Why should she change 'er name? I like Dee. It suits 'er.
- C'RISSIE** Yeah she could call herself some sexy name like Madonna or Lady Gag-Ga.
[Insert name of current well-known pop culture female].
- HELLY** If you are successful, people do not mind what is your name.
- DEE** Look, ladies, if the best you can come up with is a name change, I'll get on with some real work.
[DEE goes to leave but stops when LIZ presses the point]

- LIZ** Helly's right. If you're a star, the name's irrelevant. But getting a break might hinge on your moniker.
- C'RISSIE** Oh I don't like Monica. *[Ignored]*
- LIZ** If your name's unusual or trendy or outrageous, that in itself could give you a leg up. There are heaps of talented unknowns out there doing exactly what you do.
- DEE** Tell me about it.
- LIZ** You need to market yourself and you need a gimmick.
- HELLY** Why don't you join with other musicians to make a band?
- C'RISSIE** Yeah. Join a really cool group and be famous.
- DEE** *[Frustrated]* Ahhh. I hate covers. I want to sing my own songs.
- LIZ** Well we could join you and be your backing group. *[Laughter]*
- MO** Oh yeah. I can just see us gettin' up an' makin' fools of ourselves.
- HELLY** I am confused. I thought you was trying to be serious.
- LIZ** I *am* serious.
- HELLY** Well if you be serious, I could make some very nice uniforms.
- C'RISSIE** *[Excited]* And we could meet spunky guys at our concerts.
- DEE** Hey, hey, hey. Earth to Looneyville. *[They settle. DEE is serious]*
- LIZ** Are you scared of being successful?
- DEE** Not scared. Just facing facts.
- LIZ** Sometimes the wackiest ideas work. And I know I'm sincere.
- C'RISSIE** So am I.
- HELLY** I am very sincere.
- MO** And I'll be in anything for a laugh. *[DEE shocked by their sincerity]*
- DEE** You're all insane.
- LIZ** Why can't we be your backing singers? You heard us the other night.
- DEE** You were ordinary. And I'm being polite.
- C'RISSIE** I thought we were pretty good.
- LIZ** No, we were rough and unrehearsed. But given time and your expert coaching we'll be better; much better.
- HELLY** I agree. I think we could sound beautiful.
- LIZ** If we perform your material, we'd be the most unusual group in town. What a picture story. And what a boost for you and your songs.
- MO** Yeah but I've never sung in public.
- LIZ** And in-between your songs, Mo could tell jokes.
- MO** *[Almost offended]* Tell jokes!
- LIZ** Huge marketing possibilities. "The scrubbers who sing." *[OTHERS react]* It'll cost nothing to rehearse and peanuts to promote. It's a chance Dee to really sell your songs.
- C'RISSIE** And we could get out of this dump.
- DEE** *[Annoyed]* Oh come on, let's not kid ourselves. *[Pause. DEE looks at them. They look back. They're serious]* Do you know how many actors are currently out of work? Half the world's cabbies and waiters are wannabee movie stars. Making money in the arts is more risky than gambling.

- LIZ** Yes but gambling's only risky if you've got something to lose. If we try this and nothing happens, we've still got our cleaning jobs. Why don't we do a few weekend gigs in average pubs and see what happens?
- DEE** What gigs? You've gotta get an act first.
- HELLY** I would like us to try.
- MO** Sounds a good idea but count me out. I'm too old.
- LIZ** Mo, it means you won't have to go home to horrible hubby. You can go out with your mates and enjoy a few drinks.
- MO** *[Suddenly enthusiastic]* When do we start?
- DEE** I can't believe I'm hearing this.
- C'RISSIE** *[Almost begging]* C'mon Dee. Say yes. C'mon.
- HELLY** This may take our minds from the troubles we are all seeming to have.
- DEE** Mo. Tell me it's just a wind-up.
- MO** Helly's right. We're miserable. You cos you can't get nowhere wiv y'songs. An' as Liz says, what 'ave y' got t'lose?
- DEE** Give me strength. *[Pause]* It almost sounds silly enough to work.
- OTHERS** *[Enthusiasm builds]* Yeah! ... It'll work! ... Come on, Dee! ... *etc.*
- LIZ** You teach us some songs and we'll line up behind. You're the star, we're the backing group.
- DEE** Okay, but let's keep it in perspective. We start small and see what happens.
- HELLY** But we can't do anything now. If we don't start cleaning soon, it will be very late before we finish.
- C'RISSIE** Stuff the cleaning. I wanna be a rock star.
- MO** Well I wanna be employed next week. *[Pushing CHRISSIE]* C'mon Chrissie, let's get scrubbin'.
- C'RISSIE** *[Going but protesting]* All right, all right, don't push. Gee I hate this job. *[CHRISIE and MO exit perhaps grabbing a bag of materials en route]*
- HELLY** *[Going with them]* I will go with you. We can clean first and then maybe sing later. *[DEE and LIZ are alone. LIZ goes to her locker and prepares to clean]*
- DEE** *[Not happy]* Thanks for nothing. It's all right for you. You can see the idea's stupid. But not them. There's a naïve foreigner, an aging mother hen and a juvenile moron.
- LIZ** They speak very highly of you too.
- DEE** You know what I mean.
- LIZ** And you don't know a good idea when you see one.
- DEE** Look I'm serious but unknown. I've got talent and all I need's a break - some TV exposure, recording contract, anything. And your loopy idea leaves me with a bunch of talentless losers.
- LIZ** It's that small pond theory.
- DEE** And what's with all the advertising jargon. Speak English.
- LIZ** *[Directly at DEE]* Here you're the boss. Mo makes tea, Chrissie's ignorant and Helly subservient. You've got a desire to rise above your lousy lifestyle
- DEE** But?

LIZ In comes the moody Liz who breaks her vow of silence and says something sensible. Suddenly Dee's under pressure. She can manipulate the others but not the stuck-up bitch who turns out to be just as smart as she is; or smarter.

DEE Listen sweetheart, your idea's a lead balloon.

LIZ Depends on the goal, surely? *[Prepares to leave]*

DEE *[Sarcastic]* Another tack. You should try politics.

LIZ Y'see, you think the idea's about Dee being a successful performer.

DEE Exactly.

LIZ Whereas I think the idea's about giving some sad and lonely women a bit of fun. And if so, with four of them it's worked already – which just leaves little old you. *[Exiting, stops at door]* Think about it. Bye.
[Exits. DEE is frustrated and confused. Fade lights as DEE fumes. BLACKOUT]

Music No. 15 Scene-Change Music G
Act One Scene 8

[Lights up, 3 hours later. Cleaning shifts are over. HELLY and CHRISSIE are tired and seated at table. MO upstage at sink cleaning cups. LIZ enters looking frazzled]

LIZ Where's Dee? Is she back yet?

MO And good evening to you too, Liz.

LIZ *[Moves down]* Listen, I need to speak to all of you. Mo, over here, please.

MO I'm doin' the washin' up.

LIZ Please. *[MO stops her cleaning and comes down muttering]*

HELLY Is something wrong? Has there been some trouble?

C'RISSIE We're stuffed, Liz. Tonight I went back to the store-room where Helly saw the spotty bum and just my luck, not a cheek in sight.

LIZ Just listen. That idea we had about singing with Dee, ...

MO That was your idea, Missy. Nuffin' t'do wiv us.

LIZ Okay, sorry, *my* idea. I just think we should tread softly.

HELLY Do you mean the idea now is no good?

LIZ No, no. It's a good idea. It's just that Dee might think we're trying to take over. She's been performing for years and we're just beginners.

C'RISSIE You don't think we were serious, do you?

LIZ *[Shocked]* What?

MO We was jus' playin' along wiv ya.

HELLY I think we think you were trying to help Dee. That is correct?

LIZ Yes, of course. I was trying to encourage her.

HELLY Well we all wanted to help you to help Dee.

C'RISSIE That's right.

LIZ No, hang on. I *was* serious. I really wanted the idea to work but Dee doesn't think it's any good.

MO Of course she finks it's stupid. She was just bein' nice so as not to 'urt your feelin's.

LIZ Maybe.

- MO** Liz, your idea's a bummer. It's goin' nowhere. Singers we ain't.
- LIZ** Okay, fine. I understand. All I want you to do now – please – is accept whatever Dee says about the plan. If she reckons it won't work, we agree. Okay?
- MO** You mean you've now twigged the whole thing's a turkey and you're tryin' to get out before the brown stuff hits the fan?
- LIZ** Mo! That's not fair.
- HELLY** But what if Dee likes the idea and wants us to go ahead?
[MO and CHRISSIE scoff]
- C'RISSIE** She doesn't like it. In fact she hates it.
- MO** She finks it's crazy.
- LIZ** Trust me, Helly, Dee thinks it's dumb.
- C'RISSIE** We're hopeless with most things in life so why not singin' as well?
- LIZ** Okay, we agree. So please, let's not argue with Dee.
- MO** You've changed y'tune.
- LIZ** Dee's worked really hard at her singing career and doesn't want me wrecking it. So my idea's crazy and we won't push Dee into changing her mind. Okay?
- OTHERS** Okay ... Agreed. *etc.*
- MO** Is that all only I 'aint finished the washin' up.
- LIZ** *[Upset as everything seems pear-shaped]* Yes, that's all. Sorry I spoke.
- [MO goes back to sink, LIZ turns away. UR door opens and DEE enters. She is enthusiastic, sparkling and definitely OTT]*
- DEE** *[Over the top]* Good ev-er-ning, customers!
[OTHERS look at DEE and wonder what the hell is going on]
- MO** 'ello love. 'Ow was y'shift?
- DEE** *[Goes to locker and puts away materials]* Fantastic. Loved every minute of it.
[Faces OTHERS who are confused] And now I am hot to trot.
- LIZ** Are your drugs legal?
- DEE** No pills. I'm firing on dreams, hope and self-belief. *[Sees OTHERS stunned]*
 Well c'mon, let's have a bit of enthusiasm.
- MO** Enthusiasm?
- C'RISSIE** *[Looking at OTHERS. LIZ shrugs]* We've knackered, Dee. We've just finished a long shift.
- DEE** So have I. And I've been thinking. It's cards on table time.
- LIZ** It's okay, Dee. We've just had a chat about my idea.
- DEE** Good. That's what I like to hear. Planning and preparation. Now ...
- HELLY** We have agreed, Dee, not to upset you anymore.
- DEE** *[Worried]* Upset me? What are you talking about? *[Aghast]* Oh don't tell me you've gone soft on the idea.
- MO** We don't wanna spoil your career.
- DEE** I've haven't got a career. That's why Liz's idea is so fantastic.
- OTHERS** *[Stunned]* What? ... Oh! ... You're kidding.

- DEE** All through my shift I've been thinking. I'm a nice artiste but a nobody. All of a sudden, with your help, my songs will reach a whole new market and, and this is the best part, five females can give their personal problems the flick. We can find happiness. It's brilliant.
- LIZ** *[Doesn't know what to say]* What?
- DEE** "What?" Come on Ms. Silver Tongue. Now all you can say is 'What?'
- C'RISSIE** We're not so sure it's a good idea.
- DEE** *[Shocked]* But three hours ago you were bustin' to break into showbiz.
- HELLY** We only thinking of you, Dee. We only want best for your career.
- DEE** *[Sarcastic]* Oh I get it. Let's not upset poor old Dee. She's very sensitive is our Dee.
- MO** Don't be like that, love. We'll do anyfing t'help you and y'singin'.
- DEE** Excellent. That's what I wanna hear. Now listen. *[Big statement]* I want every one of you to join me in forming a singing group. *[OTHERS unsure]* I've even thought of a name.
- MO** Are you sure?
- DEE** Never been more sure of anything in my life. I want us to work our backsides off and then get out there and make marvellous music. Now, is that plain enough?
- LIZ** Clear as crystal. It's just that
- DEE** *You thought I thought the idea was stupid.*
- LIZ** Well ... yes.
- DEE** Okay. I'll come clean. At first I thought, what does a pro like me want with a bunch of musical losers? Then Liz told me some home truths. Maybe the aim is not to be the world's greatest singing ensemble but more about giving ourselves a lift. What a damn good idea. So, if you're game, so am I. And if we turn out better than average, well that's a bonus. I don't care madly about our music but I do care about you. I want us to have some happiness. There, I've said m'bit.
[Pause. OTHERS struck dumb not because their plan to reject the idea has been thwarted but because DEE is genuinely trying to help them]
- LIZ** I think that's very kind of you, Dee.
- HELLY** You are a very nice person, Dee.
- DEE** *[Mocking herself]* Yeah all right, I'm a saint.
- C'RISSIE** Does this mean I'm gunna have lots of groupies? *[Laughter]*
- DEE** It means for once in your life, Chrissie, you're going to get serious and work really hard. *[Going to get her guitar]* Now I thought we'd start tonight.
- OTHERS** *[Protest]* What! ... Tonight? ... It's late. *etc.*
- DEE** *[With guitar]* No time like the present. Now gather round, gather round.
[They move around DEE who has guitar]
- LIZ** Me and my big mouth.
- MO** I can't sing. You don't want me.

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DEE You can, Mo. You're in this, up to y'pencilled eyebrows. Now let's try some simple stuff. Just sing to lah. Here we go.

Music No. 16 Warm-Up

*[MUSIC BEGINS. DEE plays a note and everyone sings it. Then DEE plays three more notes and everyone sings each note] Good; now once more.
[DEE plays chord as everyone sings. As they cut off there is a BLACKOUT.
End of first act. Lights up once cast has departed the stage]*

Music No. 17 Short musical interlude

INTERVAL

ACT TWO Scene 1

Music No. 18 Music H [the Entr'acte]

Music ends and when curtain rises/lights come up, it's two weeks later at about 7pm before the women start work. MO is at sink preparing cups of tea. LIZ is seated at table making notes. DEE enters carrying guitar case. MO and LIZ are wearing their smocks/overalls ready to start cleaning. DEE is in street clothes – jeans, sweatshirt, sneakers. It's a repeat of the opening]

- DEE** *[Struggles at door with guitar case]* Evening all. *[MO moves to hold door]*
- MO** Hello darlin'. 'Ere. Let me get that. *[DEE enters]* How are ya?
- DEE** I'm fine Mo. *[Door let go/closed]* Thanks. How are you?
- MO** Fit as a butcher's dog and twice as dangerous.
- DEE** *[Heading to locker]* I'd love a cuppa if you wouldn't mind.
- MO** Comin' right up. Got some of y'favourite bikkies too.
- DEE** *[Stashing guitar and getting out her cleaning smock]* You're an angel, Mo. Salt of the earth. *[To LIZ]* Evening Liz.
[LIZ doesn't turn, just gives slight wave of a hand and keeps thinking and scribbling. MO and DEE exchange look]
- MO** *[Preparing tea]* You won't get much outa Liz. She's been scribblin' away ever since she got 'ere.
- DEE** *[Putting on her smock]* Oh yeah. *[Louder at LIZ]* Another ridiculous idea?
- MO** We've been rehearsing' for two weeks now. When are you gunna get our first jig? 'ere's y'tea. *[Mug is handed over]*
- DEE** Mo, it's a gig. But it might as well be anything the way we're going.
- MO** Well I think we're soundin' lovely. It's just a pity we can't find anywhere to perform.
- DEE** *[Heading to table]* Let's talk about something exciting like ... cleaning.
- MO** I can't believe the change what's come over us since you and Liz come up with the idea about us singin'.
- DEE** Yeah. But like a lot of good ideas, it's going nowhere.
- MO** Now I seem to remember a certain person sayin' somethin' like ... *[Mimics DEE. LIZ observes, gets an idea]* "Five females can give their personal problems the flick. We can find happiness. It's brilliant."
[LIZ looks at MO and smiles and then goes back to her writing]
- DEE** Yes, all right. No need to rub it in.
- MO** Did'ja like me impersonation of y'good self? I've been practisin'.
- DEE** *[Pause. Looks at MO]* I did. I'm impressed. You sly old fox.
- MO** And not so much of the *old* thank you.
- DEE** You're right though. About the real aim I mean. And maybe it's not so dumb after all. *[Indicating LIZ]* Even got some of us working overtime.
[LIZ ignores them. The others again make snotty faces]
- MO** I just 'ope it turns out okay.
- DEE** It will. So how's life at home? Or shouldn't I ask?
- MO** I told 'im about the singin' group and you'll never guess what 'appened.
- DEE** *[Shocked]* He didn't speak?

- MO** No but ‘e stopped snoring an’ burped at just the right time. *[They chuckle]*
- DEE** I was reading about the number of failed marriages; around forty per cent in some places. But I’ve never read about marriages which keep going without love.
- MO** Where people like me stay married and never speak to one another.
- DEE** *[Ashamed]* Sorry, Mo. I suffer from foot in mouth disease.
- MO** I ain’t ashamed. I’m bloody annoyed at me own stupidity but that’s life. Now, you were sayin’?
- DEE** Well if marriages like yours are say, ten per cent, and you add those to the forty per cent which end in divorce, then you’re looking at about half the promises of *I do* turning into *I don’t*. *[To LIZ. Mock serious]* What does that tell us about human nature, Liz?
- LIZ** *[Is not listening]* What? Sorry?
- DEE** Mo was just discussing Freud’s theory on biscuits and impotence.
- MO** *[Defends herself]* I was not. I’ve never even ‘eard of Freud’s biscuits.
- DEE** *[Laughing]* And he sure ain’t heard of us. *[Almost smug]* But he will as soon as we get our first gig and rock the world!
- MO** *[Takes a moment for the truth to dawn]* You’re kidding! You’ve got us a gig. *[Excited]* Why didn’t you say?
- DEE** *[Slight panic]* Mo! No! I haven’t! Hey! Settle down! *[MO settles]* I have a mate, a muso, who offered to help with backing tracks.
- MO** *[Excited]* Did you ‘ear that, Liz? Dee’s got us some tracking backs. *[sic]*
- LIZ** *[Keeps writing]* Great.
- DEE** Mo, it may come to nothing.
- MO** Yeah but you’ve changed this place. There are five women ‘ere who now feel important. We feel wanted. We wanna do something. *[Indicates]* Look at Liz. Two weeks ago she wouldn’t say boo. Now look at ‘er. *[They look at LIZ. Pause. Silence causes her to stop writing and look at them]*
- LIZ** What?
- DEE** Love letter? *[Leans over to look. LIZ covers page]* Oooh. What’s his name?
- LIZ** It’s a secret.
- MO** There are no secrets ‘ere, love.
- LIZ** I’ll show you in a minute, when the others are here.
- MO** Dee’s got a contact.
- LIZ** Great.
- DEE** It’s nothing. Not yet anyway.
- LIZ** *[Mimics MO]* There are no secrets ‘ere, love. *[CHRISSIE taps. All three women laugh but stop as they hear noises offstage]*
- DEE** What’s that? *[Silence]*
- MO** What’s what? I didn’t ‘ear nuffin’.
- LIZ** Came from the loo. *[More noise from CHRISSIE]*
- MO** There’s someone in there.
- LIZ** Must be Chrissie or Helly. *[More noise from CHRISSIE]*

MO Can't be Chrissie. I ain't 'eard the loo.

DEE Sounds more like a tradesman. Or a burglar.

LIZ *[Worried]* Could be a druggie. *[LIZ moves to her locker]*

DEE *[Worried]* Mo, call security.
[MO rises and heads UR but watches. More noise from CHRISSIE]

LIZ *[Produces furred umbrella and heads DL]* Let's give them a fright.

DEE *[Concerned]* Liz! What are you doing?

LIZ *[At door]* Shhh.
[MO upstage transfixed. DEE uncertain. LIZ determined. More strange noises]

DEE Liz, don't be stupid. You'll get hurt.

LIZ You grab the door, I'll swing the broolly and all three of us scream blue murder.

MO *[Indicating toilet]* I need to go in there.

LIZ *[Annoyed]* Just get the bloody door. *[Pause]* Dee!
[DEE reluctantly to door. LIZ moves upstage of door and raises broolly. MO moves closer]

DEE This is ridiculous.

MO It might be the plumber.
[More strange noises from CHRISSIE]

LIZ We scream first and ask questions later. Now stand by the door. Ready.
[LIZ raises broolly. DEE grasps door handle, pause, then opens door. CHRISSIE emerges wearing tutu over her cleaning clothes and tap dances into room and around finishing on other side of room. She finishes brief routine with hands extended. She could count aloud "Toe heel, toe heel", etc. The OTHERS are speechless. CHRISSIE is thrilled with herself]

C'RISSIE Surprise!

MO Chrissie!
[LIZ'S broolly goes limp. Tension in very uptight females is quickly released]

DEE What the hell are you doing?

C'RISSIE *[Oblivious to all their previous panic]* Practising. I wanted to do it in there before I did it out here. Wotcha reckon?

LIZ Was that you making the noise?

C'RISSIE *[Bubbling with enthusiasm]* I've been lying awake trying to think how we could get some gigs. And then I got this brilliant idea. We need some dancin'.

MO Dancin'?

DEE My godfather.

C'RISSIE When I was a kid I went to ballet school. We did tap and classical and all that stuff and I thought I could learn you guys some dancin' for our gigs.

LIZ *[Returning umbrella to locker]* I need a drink.

C'RISSIE This could make the difference. Our singing's okay but with some groovy dancing we'll be sensational. Well?

DEE *[Sitting]* I think it's very nice of you, Chrissie, to go to all that trouble.

C'RISSIE It's no trouble. I wanna do it. I can show you some sexy turns and sways and we can do 'em together. Look, I'll show you.
[Moves and does shoulder/hip movements a la groovy singer. She looks ridiculous in her work clothes, tap shoes and tutu. OTHERS look in amazement. How should they react?]

MO That's very good, love; very nice.

- C'RISSIE** It needs a bit of work but once we practise, it's gunna be great.
- DEE** Look, I don't want to be the wet blanket around here but you know that all these rehearsals may not get us any gigs.
- MO** You said you 'ad a contact.
- C'RISSIE** [*Excited*] A contact! A gig! Oh excellent!
- DEE** No! [*This comes out louder than she meant and everyone is silenced*] Sorry. I know a muso who can help with backing tracks.
- C'RISSIE** Cool!
- DEE** It's not live music but it makes us, well, more showbizzy.
- C'RISSIE** This is gunna work, guys. Dee's songs, my choreography and now our own backing band. We are off and running.
[*HELLY enters UR with bulging bag/s and even more enthusiasm*]
- HELLY** Ladies, hello. Wait till you see what has happened.
- MO** 'ello love. 'ow y' goin'?
- HELLY** [*Putting bags on tables*] I am completely tired out. I have got a very wonderful idea and look, this is ... [*Notices CHRISIE*] Chrissie. What has happened to your clothes?
- C'RISSIE** Oh Helly, wait'll you hear. Dee's got us a band and I'm gunna learn youse how to dance.
- HELLY** To dance! And that is your uniform?
- C'RISSIE** Nah. This is just me sister's old tutu and tap shoes. I wore 'em to show how good I am.
- MO** What's in y' bag, Helly?
- HELLY** Oh, that is *my* good news. I was lying awake trying to think how we could get some gigs and then
- OTHERS** I got this brilliant idea.
- HELLY** [*Surprised*] How did you know?
- LIZ** There's an ideas' bug going round.
- HELLY** [*Confused*] I am sorry. You are sick?
- DEE** So what's your brilliant idea?
- HELLY** [*Excited*] Oh yes. I have been to some shops for very poor people.
- C'RISSIE** You mean op shops.
- HELLY** Yes, op shops.
- MO** Watch it. I shop in them.
- LIZ** Don't we all.
- HELLY** I think our band needs to wear something special. We are very good at singing and soon at dancing but ...
- C'RISSIE** [*Excited*] You've got some sexy outfits?
- HELLY** We can become very beautiful with these.
[*Produces colourful boas. OTHERS react*]
- MO** Oh they're beautiful. [*Takes boa and tries it on*]
- C'RISSIE** Can I have that one? [*Takes boa and drapes it over herself*]
- DEE** [*Wants them to settle*] Look, can we just pull back a little?
- HELLY** [*Handing LIZ a boa*] For you, Liz. This is perfect for you.

- LIZ** *[Takes boa]* Thanks Helly. It's gorgeous.
- DEE** *[Almost calling]* Ladies. *[Louder]* Ladies. *[They stop and turn to DEE]*
- HELLY** You do not like the uniforms?
- DEE** They're very nice. But could we just stop a minute and listen. Please. *[They look at one another then take a seat. Boas flutter]* Thank you. I know I've been pretty keen on this whole idea and if our aim is to get us doing something interesting and worthwhile then it's been a runaway success. But ... maybe we're getting carried away.
- C'RISSIE** You had an idea. You've got us a backing band.
- DEE** Yeah but
- MO** If I didn't know better, Dee, I'd say you was gettin' cold feet.
- DEE** I'm not. The singing's great. It's just that dancing lessons and fancy costumes seem, well, maybe a bit ahead of their time.
[Pause. The excitement and enthusiasm has been punctured. Silence. Boas are put in HELLY's bag]
- C'RISSIE** Is that a roundabout way of saying let's give up?
- DEE** No! Of course not. It's just maybe we should take things a bit slower.
- MO** Well I'm no expert but I reckon youse girls 'ave done really well.
- LIZ** Before you go on, Mo. I've got something to say. *[OTHERS look at LIZ]*
- DEE** *[Frustrated]* Oh why not?
- LIZ** If we're going to entertain, we need a balanced routine.
- DEE** I knew this would happen. We dump Dee's originals and sing some good old covers.
- LIZ** No I mean variety in our act. Not just singing. We need comedy.
- OTHERS** Comedy!
- MO** The singing's gunna be funny anyway.
- LIZ** But our act will be complete with a comedienne and I reckon we've got a star in the making in *[Indicates MO]* Mo! *[Reaction]*
- MO** Me? Tell jokes?
- DEE** My god, you're right. Music *and* comedy.
- LIZ** We promote ourselves as the singing, comic cleaners.
- MO** I can't tell jokes.
- LIZ** And we offer a complete package. We feed them, entertain them and, best of all, clean up afterwards.
[This provokes a strong reaction. Following speeches could overlap]
- C'RISSIE** Clean up!
- HELLY** Feed them! What does this mean?
- MO** I tell ya, I can't tell jokes.
- DEE** Liz, have you been on the raspberry cordial?
- LIZ** Look, in for a penny, in for a pound. I proposed the singing bit in the first place and you bought that; eventually.
- DEE** Yeah but we haven't even got a booking.
- LIZ** Please. Let me finish. *[Big sighs from DEE. LIZ continues]* Mo's birthday the other night. Was that a nice surprise?

- MO** It was a lovely surprise.
- LIZ** And one of the highlights was the best tasting cake I've ever had.
- HELLY** It was delicious. Chrissie is a wonderful cook.
- C'RISSIE** Even if she left the stupid thing at home.
- LIZ** Exactly. So the first part of our package is a delicious range of cakes.
- C'RISSIE** I thought I was going to be a singer.
- LIZ** You are but we provide unique entertainment. We sing Dee's songs with fancy footwork and costumes, and in between ditties, [*Indicates MO*] this sparkling old sheila tells a few gags.
[*OTHERS impressed*]
- MO** Hey! I've warned you about this *old* business.
- DEE** [*Genuinely impressed*] I like it.
- HELLY** I think Mo can tell very funny jokes.
- MO** I don't *know* any very funny jokes.
- LIZ** [*Producing card from smock*] Da-da! I just happen to have scribbled down a few.
[*Hands card to MO*] Give us a gag, Mo.
- MO** [*Reading*] What!? I can't even see 'em.
- LIZ** [*Guiding MO to one side*] You won't read them on the night. You'll know them, by heart.
- MO** [*Fussing*] Oh, this is ridiculous.
- LIZ** Ridiculous is fine so long as you're funny.
- MO** What do I do?
- C'RISSIE** C'mon Mo. Tell us a joke.
- MO** Oh, orright. Ah. [*Reading in stilted fashion*] Good evenin'. Did you know my 'usband's like a parrot? No matter what you feed 'im, 'e's always repeatin' 'imself.
[*Pause. OTHERS silent. MO's cruel marriage is hardly funny especially for MO. MO looks confused. Then she gets the joke*]
- MO** Oh I get it. Always repeatin' 'imself.
[*MO laughs and the OTHERS join in. MO interrupts and tries another joke. This time she is getting the hang of things. She delivers the joke with more style. The OTHERS are an eager audience*]
- MO** Hang on, I'll do anuvver one. 'ow do y'know you're well and truly married? It's when you laugh at y'usband's jokes.
[*MO laughs sincerely. OTHERS don't think it's all that funny but seeing MO telling jokes and knowing about her unhappy marriage, this is genuinely jovial*]
- LIZ** Mo, you're brilliant.
- HELLY** Oh dear Mo, you are wonderful.
- MO** Well I 'fink I can get the 'ang of it. An' I can probably get some better jokes. No offence, Liz.
- LIZ** None taken, Mo, none taken.
- C'RISSIE** With my cakes and your jokes, Mo, we'll be a hit.
- LIZ** Not forgetting Dee's songs of course.
- C'RISSIE** Oh, sorry Dee, your songs are the best bit for sure.

- DEE** Well I dunno what we've started ladies, and I dunno where it'll finish but hey, the getting there's pretty good. *[Agreement]*
- LIZ** But I haven't finished. I did mention the ... *[Winces expecting to be attacked]* cleaning up afterwards.
- HELLY** That's okay, Liz. That is one thing we are very good at doing.
- C'RISSIE** We do get paid? I mean for the cleaning?
- LIZ** Of course. It's all part of the package. We offer the best deal in town. Superb cakes, songs, jokes and then we leave the venue spotless.
- DEE** That's unbelievable! Some musos trash their venues and we actually clean the place!
[Happy reaction]
- DEE** Who needs a gig? We're having a ball just thinking about it.
[OTHERS agree. There is a warm feeling about the place]
- HELLY** I am so happy to be working with you ladies. I am still trying to find my real parents but every night when I come here, I am so very happy.
[Touching. DEE gives HELLY a hug]
- MO** You're damn right, Helly. When I go home now, I've got somethin' really important to say to me old man. He never listens mind but I tell 'im about the singin' and how we're gunna be famous and everything.
- LIZ** So I take it the cakes, jokes and cleaning idea is a goer?
- DEE** Why not?
- MO** You just try an' stop me. *[Laughter]*
- C'RISSIE** What sort of cakes do I make and how many?
- LIZ** Well that depends on the venue and number of customers but ...
- DEE** But first we need what is called a booking.
- MO** *[Sparkling]* You mean a jig!
- DEE** *[Amused]* That right. A jig! *[Much laughter and teasing. DEE and MO hop up and dance a brief jig. OTHERS clap hands in time. The dancers finish with a flourish – Ole! - and everyone applauds, laughs and enjoys themselves]*
- LIZ** Ladies, I hate to break up the party. *[Protests from OTHERS]* I should remind you that before we go home, we do have to clean several floors of this particular building.
[Gloom descends]
- C'RISSIE** *[Removing her ballet accessories]* Bloody cleaning. I hate this job.
- HELLY** *[Packing her boas]* I would rather we only do singing and dancing.
- MO** *[Collecting cups]* 'ow can I practise bein' a comedienne if I 'ave to go cleanin' all night?
- DEE** The joys of being an artiste, ladies.
- LIZ** Look, I forgot. There's something else. *[She is almost ignored]*
- C'RISSIE** I think we should get time off to rehearse.
- LIZ** It's important.
- MO** *[LIZ is in her way]* Liz, come on, we've gotta go cleanin'.
- HELLY** We can talk about the uniforms another time.
- LIZ** Well let's not leave it too long because we've got our first booking.

[Bombshell. OTHERS freeze. Jaws drop. The silence is deafening]

DEE That's not funny, Liz.

LIZ I didn't want to mention it till you okayed the cakes, jokes and cleaning.

C'RISSIE Are you serious? We've really got a gig?

LIZ Yes and yes

MO What are you on about?

LIZ I got talking to Mandy in reception, the nice one who works late. She's organising her parent's golden wedding anniversary and when I told her about the cakes and the cleaning up afterwards, she asked how much.

DEE But you hadn't even told *us* about the cakes and cleaning.

MO Shut up, Dee.

LIZ I know but it was an opening and I thought if she said yes, it might help me persuade you to agree.

C'RISSIE When is it? What do I have to do?

LIZ She's got a marquee in the garden. About 40 people. A mix of ages. And ... well if you agree, us!

[More silence]

HELLY *[Quietly excited]* This is our very first booking? We are going to be performing?

LIZ Yeah but there is a slight problem. *[Pause. OTHERS spellbound]*

DEE *[Hushed tones. Speaks for the OTHERS]* What?

LIZ *[Pause]* The gig is next Saturday. *[Reaction]*

DEE Next Saturday! We'll never be ready!

MO *[Is keen]* 'ow many jokes do I tell? Can I tell any dirty ones?

C'RISSIE *[Is keen]* I'll teach the dancin' tomorrow.

HELLY *[Is keen]* The uniforms will be cleaned as soon as I go home.

LIZ So do I take it you want me to go ahead and confirm the booking?

[Pause. Everyone looks at DEE. What will she say? Slowly grin appears]

DEE *[Excited. Thrilled]* Of course. *[Louder]* It's our first gig!

[They grab one another and jump about, back-slap, hug, laugh, cry, etc. Voiceover causes complete change. Slowly they move front and look out over the audience]

Music No. 19 Voiceover

FX *[Female voice on tape or female SM live]* Ladies and gentlemen. *[Most carry on]*

DEE Hang on, what was that?

[OTHERS stop, look around. Who is speaking? Where is voice coming from?]

C'RISSIE *[Ignores voice-over. Still on a high]* We're gonna be rock stars! Yeah!!!

LIZ *[Annoyed]* Chrissie! *[CHRISSIE shocked and stops]* Listen!

FX *[Tape continues]* First of all I want to thank you for coming tonight. I know Mum and Dad really appreciate you being here.

MO What's goin' on? Where are we?

HELLY Is this the wedding anniversary? Is this our first gig?

FX *[Tape continues]* And we have a special treat not just for Mum and Dad but for everyone. We're going to be looked after tonight by a lovely group of women. They've made Mum and Dad the most magnificent cake.

- C'RISSIE** *[Genuine panic]* What!? I haven't even started! *[Calling]* I haven't even started.
[OTHERS shush CHRISSE]
- DEE** Chrissie, control yourself. A professional always stays calm.
- FX** *[Tape]* And later on they're going to entertain us with some great music.
- MO** *[Calling]* And jokes.
- DEE** *[Panics]* What songs are we doing? What's our opening number?
- FX** *[Tape continues]* And when you've all gone home, this wonderful team of entertainers will stay behind and do the dishes. Isn't that great?
[FX Murmurs of approval and applause]
- MO** *[Sarcastic]* Oh bloody marvellous! *[Calling]* Pass the tea-towel!

Music No. 20 Cake Distribution Music

[Music starts a.s.a.p. after Voice Over finishes. Start speeches below. Women are stunned. They're at their first gig. The women who distribute cakes quickly remove their smocks and put on small waitress outfits - aprons/caps, helped by those not serving cakes. Have a tray with cupcakes ready for waitresses to collect and serve. Once waitresses appear in auditorium, bring up some soft house lights and crossfade the lights on stage. The scrubbers on stage continue the dialogue and once the lights on stage fade, they remove their smocks, move the table and chairs upstage and prepare the hats and boas for the 'show'. Waitresses return to stage, still in darkness, house lights fade, MO moves to MC position and when music ends, spot MO who announces song. Ad lib around following speeches. DEE collects caps, MO aprons]

- LIZ** *[As the director]* Now, don't forget your caps and aprons.
- C'RISSIE** Where? Somebody help me.
- MO** *[Handing out aprons]* Here they are; no need to panic.
- DEE** *[Handing out caps]* And your caps. You've gotta look the part.
- HELLY** I need to be helped too please. *[Is helped]* Oh thank you, thank you.
- LIZ** Just smile a lot. You know, lots of comedy and cake.
- MO** And be back sharpish for the first big number. *[Calling]* And smile.
[As soon as Helly and Chrissie are 'dressed' they exit]
- LIZ** Will they have enough time?
- DEE** Will they have enough cakes?
- MO** Will they have enough style? *[Taking control]* Look, we've gotta get the costumes, set and music.
- DEE** Oh gawd, the music; what number are we doing first?
- LIZ** *[Looking at set]* And look, have we got enough room?
- MO** *[At Liz]* Right, you fix the space. *[At Dee]* You fix the music. I'll fix the cossies.
Now go.
[Lights fade on stage as TRIO remove smocks and prepare concert. Lights up in auditorium as cakes distributed. Cake distribution should not rule the show. Perhaps maximum of six cupcakes. Once cakes distributed, all five back on stage. MO to one side and lit by a spot]
- MO** Ladies and gentlemen, presenting the triffic songs of Deirdre McIntosh and the fabulous singing group – *The Scrubbers!*
[Kill spot on MO, bring up fancy lights. MUSIC BEGINS]

Music No. 21 Life Ain't No Rehearsal

Quintet *Feeling sad and lonely? Life seem like a war?
Feeling low and lousy? Every day a chore?
Feeling flat and fed up? Everything a bore?
Time to drop that, stop that, play the winning score.
There are folk who won't take chances, there are folk afraid to buy
There are folk who shun romances, there are folk who seldom try.
But the folk who do take chances are the folk who love to fly
So take a chance, try romance, here's the reason why.
Life ain't no rehearsal, it's the real thing
Life ain't in reversal, grab yourself some zing
Truth is universal, hear us as we sing
Life ain't no rehearsal, it's the real thing.
There are folk who won't stop whining
There are folk who stay inside
There are folk born Philistineing, there are folk who run and hide
But the folk who love refining are the folk filled up with pride
So read the sign, learn to shine, hitch yourself a ride.
[Dialogue during song]*

LIZ It's true, folks, every darn word of it.
HELLY We started with nothing but our labour.
DEE Then one of us had an idea.
C'RISSIE You can do this. You can give life a go.
LIZ And win, lose or draw, the effort is worth a million.
HELLY Look at us. We're just working class peoples.
MO But don't *wait* for something to happen. It never does!
QUINTET Make it happen. Do something. Now!

[Song continues then ends, lights fade on singers. MO steps forward and is lit]

MO Weren't they jus' fantastic? And they'll be back, but first I wanna tell a bit about meself. As you can see, I wasn't born yesterday and if I'm lookin' a little worse for wear, well, the reason's simple – I'm married. Husbands, love 'em, they have that effect on you.

I knew a widow who decided to get married again so she put an ad in the paper saying "Husband Wanted". Then over a hundred women wrote saying, "You can have mine".

You know I once heard that eighty per cent of men cheat in Melbourne. *[Use name of large local city]* The other twenty per cent cheat in Ballarat. *[Use name of another near-by town]*

Us women are always fightin' to keep our looks. Not husbands. An' I reckon we girls'll never be equal with fellas until we can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut and still think we're beautiful.

Hey, I've got some riddles for ya. How many husbands does it take to change a toilet roll? *[Pause, cheeky]* When it 'appens, I'll let youse know. Oh, and what's a man's idea of doing housework? *[Pause, cheeky]* It's lifting his leg so you can vac.

You know there's always been an argument over who is the smarter – husbands or wives? Here's a little story to maybe answer the question.

A married couple went to a bloke to get some therapy after twenty years of marriage. The wife spoke first and complained about her husband never bein' romantic no more, never payin' her a compliment and ignorin' the good old TLC. When she finished complainin', the therapist goes over to the wife, puts his arms round her and gives her a beautiful, passionate kiss. Then the therapist turns to the husband and says, "Your wife needs this treatment three times a week. Can you manage that?" The husband says, "I can drop her off on Mondays and Wednesdays but I play golf on Fridays".

And here's me favourite dumb-blonde story only it's the hubby who's blonde. He comes home one night and hears his wife screaming in the bedroom. He rushes in and she's in her nightie. Hubby demands to know what's going on. "I'm having a heart attack," says the wife. So hubby races downstairs to phone an ambulance. Then his little son starts crying and says "Uncle John's in the wardrobe without any clothes on." So hubby races back upstairs, throws open the wardrobe door and there's his brother stark naked. "You rat," says hubby. "My wife's having a heart attack and you're running around naked scaring the kids!"

Well that's enough from me. Time to hear again from those lovely ladies and their toe-tappin' music. *The Scrubbers!*

[Cross fade lights, down on MO and up on singers. MUSIC BEGINS]

Music No. 22 Point Your Memory Forward

QUINTET

*Looking back, we love our history,
Nice to know how things were done
Looking back may solve a mystery
Nice to know how folk had fun.
Looking back may bring fond memories
Thoughts about some special day
But your happiness finds new life when you look the other way.
Point your memory forward, dream your dream today*

*Wake your future and take your future
And make your future your way.
Hope and wish and pray for the way for love to stay
Point your memory forward, dream your dream today.
In the past we've all had bad times,
Some may hang around today
Thinking back may cause depression
Memories that seem to stay.
So the need for change is vital, facing front's the way to start.
Less the past and more the future
Give yourself a brand new heart.*

ACT TWO Scene 2

[Song ends and QUINTET is ecstatic from the joy of performing, from the successful completion of a lot of hard work. They hug one another.]

Subtle change of lights demonstrates passing of time. It's now 10 minutes after the gig and MO grabs a chair and sits. OTHERS gather around. They are happy and unwinding. Concert was a hit and guests are going or have gone]

- DEE** That was brilliant, ladies, fantastic. *[OTHERS delighted]*
- LIZ** We are not only launched but launched in style.
- C'RISSIE** I nearly lost my boa.
- HELLY** I thought Mo was very good.
- OTHERS** *[Agree]* Oh yes ... You were terrific, Mo ... Fantastic Mo. *etc.*
- MO** Yes all right, no need to go overboard. *[Cheeky]* But I was pretty good.
- DEE** *[Over happiness]* Ladies, I think it's time for a big announcement.
- MO** Hey don't f'get we've still gotta clean this joint. *[Reaction]*
- DEE** Look, when it was first suggested you lot form a singing group, well, I thought it was really a joke.
- MO** I do the jokes.
[OTHERS smile. MO's remark was funny but this is a serious moment]
- DEE** And when the aim was just to give us something to do, I thought that's cool, let's go with that.
- MO** And it's worked.
- C'RISSIE** Has it ever. I am now in a position to tell any bloke that if he wants me, he can bloody well join the queue! *[Delight, smiles]*
- DEE** Good for you, Chrissie. But I still haven't got to my big statement. *[Pause]* You know I'd like to be a successful singer/songwriter. You know I'd love my songs to be recorded and popular and bring me fame and fortune. But, and this is the cross-me-heart, dead-set truth bit, all I want now is to write songs for you ladies. *[Pause. They look intently at DEE]* Working with you, even in a tent in someone's backyard, is just the greatest. I was over the moon tonight. You gave my songs a new life. I want to write for you.
[Pause. Emotional moment]

- C'RISSIE** Does that mean we're not gunna be famous?
[Pause. Then laughter erupts. Everyone sees the funny side. They hug and laugh and congratulate one another. The whole project has been a huge success]
- LIZ** *[Over happiness]* Of course we going to be famous. Tonight a tent, tomorrow ...
- OTHERS** The world! *[More laughter and congratulations]*
- MO** Well c'mon, c'mon. Part three of the contract. Remember?
[Groans as they start to pack up. They collect paper plates, put away boas, etc.]
- C'RISSIE** I don't mind cooking the cakes and I love the singing but can we give the cleaning the flick?
- HELLY** But you are so good at cleaning, Chrissie.
- DEE** *[Looks offstage]* Hang on. I think Mandy wants me.
[Exits DR. OTHERS continue to clean]
- MO** Bring them plates over 'ere. I'll wash up. You lot can dry.
- LIZ** She's taken over again. Yes, Mistress Mo.
- C'RISSIE** It was a brilliant idea, Liz. Who would've thought a bunch of scrubbers would come up with something like this.
- HELLY** I would like to know when we are getting our next gig.
- MO** *[Turns with a tray and glasses]* Well look what I just found.
- LIZ** Mo, you crafty old devil.
[OTHERS go for a cup of whatever that MO has prepared upstage]
- MO** And not so much ...
- OTHERS** ... of the *old* bit.
[Laughter all round as DEE enters]
- DEE** Hello. What's going on here?
- MO** Grab a cup darlin'. Time for a toast.
- DEE** *[DEE takes cup]* You beauty.
- MO** We done a grand job. An' I can't thank you lot enough. 'ere's to us, girls. *The Scrubbers.*
- OTHERS** *[Toasting] The Scrubbers. [They drink and bubble with happiness]*
- LIZ** What did Mandy want?
- DEE** Oh gawd, I nearly forgot. Mandy's brother turns fifty next month and they want some decent entertainment.
- LIZ** You're kidding?
- DEE** *[Smiles as she announces]* Second booking for *The Scrubbers.* *[Delight all round]* Oh, and I'm forgetting. *[Pause. Silence. DEE is preparing for a big statement. The OTHERS sense this and go quiet]* Helly, there's a woman outside who cleans for Mandy's parents. *[Pause. What does this mean?]*
- LIZ** Has she been complaining about our brilliant work?
- DEE** *[Serious]* No. But she came to this country to find her long lost family. *[Pause. Stunned silence]* Said she'd be happy to help you.
- HELLY** *[In shock and wonderment]* Help me find my mother!? Oh thank you, scrubbers. Thank you.
[OTHERS embrace HELLY with great joy as lights fade. Pause then lights up as MUSIC BEGINS]

Music No. 23 Curtain Calls

Music No. 24 Playout



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