

SCRUBBERS

Five fabulous females in a heartwarming, toe-tapping play with songs!

Words and 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 performed live or mimed using the backing CD.

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 tapes/CDs are available for all musicals. The CDs contain rehearse and perform versions of the scores.

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Australia & North America

Fox Plays
P.O. Box 2078
Richmond South 3121
Victoria, Australia
☎ +61 3 9429 3004
Fax +61 3 9428 9064
sales@foxplays.com

New Zealand

Fox Plays NZ
PO Box 54234
Mana
Wellington 5247
New Zealand
☎ (04) 233 1842
foxplaysnz@xtra.co.nz

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Fox Plays UK
158 Blagdon Road
New Malden
England KT3 4AL
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SCRUBBERS

Reviews of the show staged in Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand

Aussie play *Scrubbers* scrubs up well for Canada. Can an Australian man relate to Canadian women? Apparently so according to Christopher Barron, artistic director of Downright Canadian Theatre Company. *Scrubbers* is a comedy with songs for five women. Barron said, "It's been a great experience."

Lisa Wilton

A touching play about the dreams of five cleaning women. Our audiences found it very entertaining.

Deniliquin Dramatic Club

We found *Scrubbers* to be a moving and challenging play. Many commented on the quality of the writing and the suitability of the script for women. It's nice to find material which is so suitable for female performers. The music really complimented the story.

NODA

Scrubbers is gritty, then challenging, then heart-warming and finally triumphant.

We had a great season.

Riverlea Theatre

SCRUBBERS 2

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.

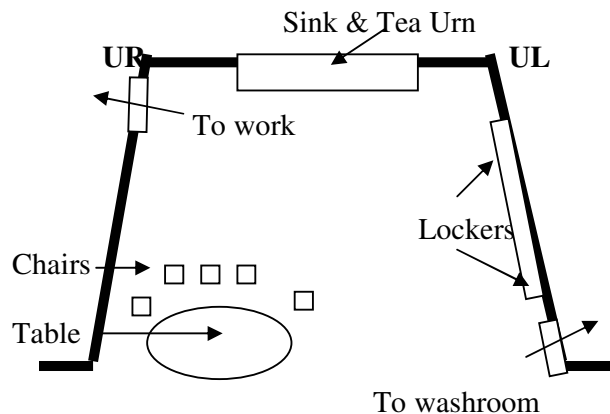
Each woman has a story to tell. A sad story. But one woman has hopes for a better life away from scrubbing floors. Her dreams affect the others to the extent that their lives are changed dramatically and forever.

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, about 20, uneducated, victim, fantastic cook, good mover/dancer

Deirdre

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

Helianthe

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

Maureen

Mo, 50-70, 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.	Pre-Curtain Music	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 or Entr'acte	Instrumental
16.	Scene-Change Music I or Cake Music	Instrumental
17.	Life Ain't No Rehearsal	Quintet
18.	Point Your Memory Forward	Quintet
19.	Curtain Calls	Quintet
20.	Payout	Instrumental



SCRUBBERS 4

No. 1 – Pre-Curtain Music

[Just before curtain rises, play first musical item. Dim lights towards 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 a 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 DR drinking her 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 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]* Geez, 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. DEE shakes her head]
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 handed over]*
DEE Lovely. Ta.
MO *[Moving DR]* Over 'ere. *[Sit one side of LIZ]* 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. I don't wanna mention 'im. 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 *[Almost chokes on her 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. Mimes/Mouths]* Ooooh, Whatever. Oooooh.
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?
DEE *[Nodding]* I have. Tonight I'm booked to entertain my adoring public.
MO *[Excited]* Oh Dee, that's bloody marvellous. Your very own jig!
DEE *[Mildly exasperated]* No, Mo. A jig's a dance. A gig is a booking.

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MO Who cares? It's a job. Tonight, a gig, tomorra the world.
DEE I wish.
MO I'm just so pleased for ya, love. *[To LIZ]* Isn't it fantastic, Liz?
LIZ *[Desultory]* Yeah, terrific.
MO *[Instantly back to DEE]* So tell me. Are you on TV? Do you make a million? Can I 'ave y'autograph?
DEE *[Laughing]* I'm playing at a poxy wine bar. I'll be lucky if there's 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]* What money? You're not playin' for nothin'? *[DEE nods]* But that's exploitation. You're bein' ripped off! Get the union onto it.
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 *[Mock serious]* Really? Where is this gig? *[They laugh]*
LIZ Believe me, the wine is the pits.
MO Stuff the wine. I want the free sex. *[Laughter]* At my age, I ain't choosy. *[Much laughter, teasing. They accidentally spill some tea. 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. That was disgraceful. 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. Who does she 'fink she is? Lady Muck? 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'poxy 'usband 'elps around the 'ouse. Spillin' tea ain't no fright.
LIZ 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. 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 char, 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 'uman. 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 want 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. As soon as she speaks the fisticuffs cease and the trio involved go back to some sort of normality]

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

DEE Chrissie! What's happened?

CHRISSIE I dunno how it works.

[LIZ goes upstage to the sink and washes her cup. 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?

CHRISSIE The chemist said it would work.

MO You're not pregnant again?

CHRISSIE What does it mean if the colour changes like this?

DEE I don't believe it. You *promised* you'd always use contraception.

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

DEE *He's* not the one with the foetus. 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 "Baby, I love you" routine then gets the baby. Listen Chrissie. Dump Barrie.

CHRISSIE *[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?

MO She said it's not Barrie.

DEE Oh Chrissie, not another one!

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

MO Yes love. 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, carries some shopping bags. She is nervous but determined]

HELLY Excuse me. I am looking for Maureen.

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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 So you're the new scrubber.

HELLY Scrubber? No. I have come to work as a cleaner.
[OTHERS amused in a quiet way. DEE takes letter]

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 Up there's our social cripple, Liz.

HELLY Hello, Liz. *[LIZ nods]*

MO *[Indicating CHRISSIE]* An' this 'ere's our baby, this is Chrissie.

HELLY Hello Chrissie.

CHRISSIE *[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.

CHRISSIE *[Angry at DEE]* He's all right. He loves me.

MO 'Course 'e does. So what's 'is name?

CHRISSIE Sean.

DEE Ah Sean. Father of the Year and Cretin of the Century.

CHRISSIE Well at least I've got a fella. What have you got? A crappy guitar and a cold, empty bed.

MO 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 She forgot her bin liners.

CHRISSIE *[Has forgotten misery]* Did j'you hear that? Dee's got a gig tonight.

MO Yeah. Singin' at some wine bar.

CHRISSIE *[Likes DEE despite arguments. Excited]* That's fantastic. We've gotta go.

MO It doesn't start till midnight and ...

DEE *[Enters]* Forget me bin liners. *[Crosses to her locker, grabs a bag. She stops and sees others staring at her]* What?

MO I told 'em about your gig.

DEE *[Angry]* Oh great. Thanks for nothing, Mo!

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- LIZ** *[She storms out. OTHERS watch this in silence]*
[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.
- MO** *[Takes her to lockers]* Now don't worry, love. Stick y'stuff in 'ere. *[Taking new smock from locker]* 'ere's y'smock. You tag along wiv' me t'night.
- HELLY** *[Takes overall, removing coat, scarf etc and placing bags in locker]* Thank you very much, Mo. You are very kind.
- MO** *[Grabbing cleaning items]* You'll get y'own trolley t'morra.
- HELLY** *[Not sure of some of the words]* Please. What is t'morra?
- MO** Blimey. Just meet me by them blue doors in free minutes. Okay? *[Exits]*
- HELLY** *[Calling]* I will be there. *[Returns to her preparation. 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.
- CHRISSIE** *[Rises looking pale]* I'm gunna be sick.
[CHRISSIE 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 cleaning item/s]* What for? *[Turns and exits]*
[HELIANTHE is unsure what she's getting into but tidies her locker and puts on her overall. We hear CHRISSIE throwing up. HELIANTHE thinks then moves to door DL and opens it. She's halfway inside when CHRISSIE yells]
- CHRISSIE** *[Distressed]* Go away! *[HELIANTHE retreats]* And shut the friggin' door!
[HELIANTHE is upset and confused but moves back to washroom door and closes it then crosses quickly to door UR and exits. Pause. Door to lavatory opens slowly and CHRISSIE emerges looking terrible. She walks slowly to locker, removes cleaning bag and exits. Lights fade. Blackout. You could start the music as CHRISSIE starts to exit.]

No. 2 Scene-Change Music A

Lights up slowly as UR door opens and DEE enters. The lighting is dim. DEE crosses quickly to DL to see if there is anyone in the lavatory. It's all clear. She goes to locker and removes guitar case then guitar. She drags out chair, sits and plays. If used, CD begins. She rehearses for gig that night]

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 sceme of, dream my dream of fame
Dream my dream of fame. Yeah!*

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[Song ends, lights fade to blackout. Start fade as song starts to end]

No. 4 Scene-Change Music B

[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? *[Puts her things on table]*
DEE Well what?
MO Aw don't keep me in bloody suspenders.
DEE What are talking about?
MO You know. Your flippin' 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.
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 wanna be stars. I'm one of them. I've got no track record, no agent and probably no talent. Musically speaking, I'm a nobody.
MO I think you're good.
DEE So if I even sniff a gig, I grab it and fall on me knees in gratitude. It's a crappy life. Artists are the misfits of society, the hopeful no-hopers. We're beggars and you know about beggars not being choosers.
MO I reckon it's a rip-off.
DEE Of course it is. Life's a rip-off. Look at us. We clean the crap the others leave behind and for all that 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.
[They laugh. MO fusses at the sink. DEE continues preparing for her shift]
MO Well let's get a cuppa goin'. Gotta 'ave me cuppa. You ready?
DEE Yes please. *[Pause]* So how was the new girl? Helly whatever?
MO Oh she's a great little worker. Won't have no trouble with 'er.
[HELIANTHE enters but is not seen by OTHERS. She waits at door]
DEE What sort of name is Helianthe? Sounds like some sexually-transmitted disease. *[Mimics Doctor]* I'm very sorry, Ms McIntosh but you've got a dose of helianthe. Take these tablets three times a day.
MO *[Sees HELIANTHE]* Oh, 'ello dear. Come in, come in.
[DEE turns but is not really embarrassed. She didn't mean any disrespect]
HELLY Good evening, Mo. Good evening, Dee.
DEE Hi. Look, Helianthe, is there a shorter version of your name? Maybe something your family call you?
HELLY You don't like my name?

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

MO *[Bringing tea to table]* 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. *[HELIANTHE doesn't move. She doesn't understand about motionless fish]* C'mon 'ave a cuppa.

HELLY *[Moving to lockers and starts changing]* Oh, yes, of course. I am sorry.

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

HELLY Oh, I'm sorry. *[MO rolls her eyes]*

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

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

DEE *[Sitting at table and taking tea]* I think Helly sounds nice and friendly. C'mon, Helly. Get y'skates on.

HELLY *[At locker]* Sorry? I need to wear skates?

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

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

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

DEE So, how do you like your new job?

HELLY Oh I am very happy.

DEE Good. That'll last about 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 and goes to her locker. 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 and potters at her locker]*

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

MO Ignore 'er, 'elianthie.

DEE Helly. We're calling her Helly.

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

DEE She means did you get home all right and were you tired or stiff and sore or otherwise incapacitated due to your manual exertions collecting and recycling 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 Good? You worked here and you were good?

HELLY Yes, my family waited up for me and they all said ...

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- DEE** *[Can't believe it]* Your family waited up for you!?
- MO** Stop interruptin'. Let 'er finish.
- HELLY** Yes, my family were anxious I would be all right.
- MO** *[Sincere. Moved]* Ohhhh. Dat's lovely. Dat's t'nicest fing I've 'eard in years. I wish my 'usband would wait up for me.
- DEE** And bacon might soar. 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 given up on gorgeous.
- MO** Ignore 'er. You don't 'ave to say nuffin'.
- 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 with more hot water. 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 with refreshed cup]* 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** Hey, none of that. *[To HELLY]* You're all right, darlin'. She's only jokin'. She can be real sarky at times.
- HELLY** Sarky? I do not know this word.
- 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 to show you 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.
- HELLY** Sorry. I do not understand.
- DEE** Helly, some of the charming white-collar workers we clean for are mint-condition gits who raise merry hell if there's so much as a speck of dust or if their precious papers have been moved one poofteenth of a millimetre. 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.
- DEE** Not that *we* have personal problems. We're perfectly adjusted, healthy females living blissful, stress-free lives. *[CHRISSIE enters looking terrible. OTHERS all turn and look at her]* With the odd exception of course.
- CHRISSIE** *[Moans/Screams. Distressed]* He's gone. Sean's left me. *[She cries]*

SCRUBBERS 12

[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 shakes her head and does nothing]*

HELLY *[Moving upstage]* I will help you, Liz.
[HELIANTHE makes the tea, LIZ just drinks her cuppa and watches]

CHRISSIE *[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.

CHRISSIE I nearly didn't come to work. I went to the doctor and came home to tell Sean and he just left. 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 it 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?

CHRISSIE 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 that you actually thought about topping yourself.

MO *[Shock]* She'd never said no such 'fing! How dare you even suggest dat! An' watch y'French. There is ladies present.

DEE And that's my point, Chrissie. These terrible relationships are driving you nuts. They're making you think crazy thoughts. It's not on. You've gotta make a stand. You can't allow yourself to be treated like this. Don't let Sean or Barrie or anyone hurt you like you're hurting now. Take control of your own life.

HELLY I do not wish to interfere but I would like to help if I can.

MO Thank you, 'elly. *[Nasty 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 lovely Sean is out of the picture.
[CHRISSIE breaks down again and is comforted by MO]

LIZ Nice one. *[DEE sneers at LIZ]*

MO *[At DEE]* Just give it a rest.

CHRISSIE *[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.

CHRISSIE But I'm upset because ... *[Almost crying]* I'm not pregnant.
[Stunned silence. No-one knows what to say]

SCRUBBERS 13

DEE *[Incredulous]* What?

CHRISSIE 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 willing studs.

MO 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 mobile disaster looking for a crash scene. 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 *[Going to locker]* I think I start early tonight.

DEE Suit y'self.

HELLY *[Has cleaning bag]* 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]* 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've gone all garrulous.

LIZ Perhaps I say nothing because I've got nothing to say.

DEE Oh and she's 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 rigeur?

DEE Ooooh, 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.

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 want to 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]*

SCRUBBERS 14

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.
CHRISSIE 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]*
CHRISSIE *[Going to locker]* I'll come with you.
DEE Ah, Chrissie. Just a minute.
CHRISSIE I've got to help Mo and Helly.
DEE *[Whisper]* Don't forget Mo's birthday.
CHRISSIE *[Stops. Upset]* Oh no. Oh no!
DEE *[Upset]* Chrissie! You said you'd make a cake.
CHRISSIE I have. I did. *[Guilty]* But I left it at home.
DEE *[Exasperated]* Oh, great. Well done.
CHRISSIE Well I was upset. First the doctor and then Sean. I wasn't thinking.
LIZ Can you go home and get it?
CHRISSIE Well yes but ... I have to do me cleanin'.
DEE I'll do yours. You nick off and get the cake.
CHRISSIE Dee, I can't. I'll make another one next week.
DEE The party's tonight.
CHRISSIE *[Upset - still]* Oh. I'm sorry.
DEE *[Taking her to door]* Just go and get the cake. Now!
CHRISSIE 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.

SCRUBBERS 15

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]

No. 5 - Scene-Change Music C

[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 Fanks, 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 appears at door UR and gives HELIANTHE a psst or wave. She sees DEE and moves to door. They mime brief conversation then HELIANTHE calls]
HELLY Won't be long, Mo. Your tea is almost ready.
MO I fink me feet 'ave finally died. Ouch.
[HELLY moves and opens door wide. Blackout. MO startled]
MO Hey! What's up? Turn them lights on!
[Suddenly CHRISSIE enters carrying cake with mass of candles. Use sparklers if naked flames are not allowed or deemed unsafe. DEE and LIZ follow. Lots of well-wishing. Cake placed on table. MO is speechless. DEE grabs/has guitar. MO is thrilled. DEE plays and all four sing Happy Birthday. If possible use candles only as lighting during song]

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.*
DEE *[Dialogue during song]* C'mon you lot, it's Mo's birthday. One more time!
[The singing is quite lively with some simple harmony on the repeat. Song over and lots of hugs and kisses from CHRISSIE and DEE. MO blows out candles. Good wishes all round. LIZ moves to switch near door and lights come up]
MO *[Gushing]* Oh this is wonderful! What can I say?
DEE *[Kisses MO]* Happy birthday darling.
CHRISSIE *[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]
LIZ *[Slight lull]* Many happy returns of the day, Mo.
[Touch of seriousness. LIZ is being decidedly human]

SCRUBBERS 16

MO Fank you, Liz. Fank 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]
CHRISSIE You *can* eat it, you know. 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 champagne]*
MO Champagne. I 'aven't 'ad champers for years.
DEE *[Bringing bottle to table]* Well tonight, Maureen, the drought has broken. *[Calling]* Glasses, ladies, if you please.
LIZ *[Calling back]* Glasses coming up.
MO *[Still in shock]* I can't believe dis. Nobody's made me a cake f' years.
CHRISSIE I'm not much good with fellas, Mo, but I sure know how to bake a cake. *[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?
CHRISSIE 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 Right, c'mon Chrissie. Cut the cake and where are those glasses?
LIZ *[Placing/adjusting jam jar glasses on table]* Our finest crystal decanters. *[Laughter. Champagne cork could pop via FX causing excitement. They spread out and sit with MO in the middle. CHRISSIE hands out plates with cake.]*
They grab a plastic spoon or knife perhaps already on table. DEE pours champagne, passes these around. Lots of ad lib chit chat. "This is wonderful" "We should do this more often" "Here you go, Helly" "Thank you" etc]
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 your cake and champers.
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?
CHRISSIE *[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.
CHRISSIE *[Embarrassed]* Oh don't tell her. Please don't.
MO *[Ticks off DEE]* Hey, it's my birthday an' I don't want no funny business.

SCRUBBERS 17

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?

CHRISSIE All the way, Mo. And back again.

MO What? Tonight?

CHRISSIE Yep. And it was worf it just to see the look on your face.

MO [*Doesn't believe them*] Hey, wotcha fink I am? Stupid or somefin'?

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?

CHRISSIE Dee done it.

MO What?

DEE Not exactly true.

CHRISSIE [*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. Silence. Pause. OTHERS look at LIZ*]

LIZ It wasn't much. I just gave Dee a hand.

CHRISSIE Gee, thanks Liz. I really appreciate that.

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

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 not only get to celebrate your birthday, Mo but ... [*Moving to cake, speaks faster as she works*] we also get a second piece of cake! [*OTHERS amused*] Now who's for more? C'mon Mo.

MO Just a small piece.

DEE [*Serves MO*] Don't be silly. Here, get that down ya. [*Laughter, amusement, it's a good time being had by all*]

CHRISSIE [*Takes over*] No, let me. Here, Liz, pass y'plate.

MO Please.

CHRISSIE Oh, you sound just like me Mum. [*Mom*]
[*More laughter/banter – "Hey, not that much" "Oooh, lovely, ta" etc - as LIZ and then HELLY get second servings. Pause as they eat and drink*]

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.

CHRISSIE I could have made a bigger cake, Mo, but the whole building would've caught fire! [*Laughter*]

MO You mind y'manners.

SCRUBBERS 18

DEE Never mind, Mo. You're only as young you feel.

MO Well I must be old cos I aint 'ad a feel for a very long time.
[Shrieks of laughter]

DEE This is the life. Who wants more champers? *[Glasses are topped up]*

CHRISSIE 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]*

CHRISSIE I'm serious.

DEE So is Mo. You know what they say. A good man is hard to find and ...

OTHERS *[Not HELLY]* A 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, nuffin' 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 'fing.

CHRISSIE Never mind, Mo. We all love you.

HELLY I'm sorry. Have I said the 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 'fink I 'ave what you call a marriage in name only. *[Pause. MO is sad and her sadness has taken over the party]*

CHRISSIE 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 nuffin' to say. You share the same bed. Cook 'n clean for 'im. You wash 'is clothes an' smell 'is sweat an' then wake up one mornin' and realise there's nuffin'. You do fings by habit. Buy chops, wash floor, pay bills. I talk more to the cat than to 'im. *[Sadness and silence]*

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 soppo. 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.

CHRISSIE I could tell youse all about me kind and lovin' boyfriends.
[Pause. CHRISSIE smiles. She is joking. The OTHERS twig and laugh warmly but more as a relief than anything else]

DEE Well, I reckons 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 I've lost everything except m'sense of humour.

HELLY I would like to hear you sing.

CHRISSIE 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]

SCRUBBERS 19

- DEE** You don't have to say anything, Liz.
- HELLY** I am not sure I like to 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 anuvva one. Ain't nobody 'ere normal?
- DEE** This *is* normal.
- LIZ** Before I came here, I did a few things. I changed my name, address, lifestyle, everything. I've lost contact with m'family and, apart from you lot, nobody knows I'm here. This is the first job I've had in months. I've lost my friends, family, home, career, the lot. [*OTHERS fascinated*]
- CHRISSIE** My God. What happened?
- LIZ** Two years ago I was happily married, had a lovely son, good job, beautiful home, real friends. [*Silence. Pause. OTHERS hooked*] I've always enjoyed a bit of a flutter. Loved going to the races. But when the casinos and on-line gambling took off, I went crazy. My weekly flutters became serious, heavy gambling. And I mean heavy.
- DEE** [*Stunned*] You lost everything through gambling?
- LIZ** For years I'd bet but always kept control. Then, gradually, I got in deeper and 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*] ... what can you do? 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 everything.
- CHRISSIE** 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 opens the door and asks my husband what he wants. 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 north to start again. I had a well-paid job in marketing which ended overnight. I ran out of friends. I changed cities, lived in bedsits and took whatever work I could get. Which brings me to the present and my latest career move to that of sanitary operative.
- MO** Bloody 'ell. That's unbelievable.
- HELLY** I am so sorry, Liz. That is very, very sad.
- CHRISSIE** 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.
- CHRISSIE** [*Stunned*] Flippin' heck!
- 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.

SCRUBBERS 20

- [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.
- CHRISSIE** 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]
- CHRISSIE** Hey! I've just realised. We're all miserable. We're all losers and ...
[Pause. CHRISSIE 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.
- CHRISSIE** Sorry Helly. I didn't mean nuffin'
- 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 a big shock. I learn my parents are not my parents. When I was a baby two lovely people adopt me for all my young life. My real mother was very young and not married and she left me at a church in my country.
- CHRISSIE** So who are your real parents?
- HELLY** I do not know. This is my problem. I believe my mother has moved to this country and this city. Maybe she has children of her own. I have people helping 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.
- CHRISSIE** So you could have brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces and you've never even met them?
- HELLY** Yes. And that is what makes me confused. I want to find them but if I upset them or if they do not want to see me, I will be very sad.
- DEE** Gee that's tough, Helly. Is there anything we can do to help?
- HELLY** You are very kind. But if you don't mind, I will 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 her locker]
- HELLY** I must be going to my house. My husband will worry if I am very late.

SCRUBBERS 21

DEE *[With guitar]* Well no-one's going home till Mo's had her entertainment.
CHRISSIE *[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]* I dedicate this song to a wonderful lady. *[MUSIC BEGINS]* Mo, this is for you.
OTHERS Ahhh. *[And other appreciative, supportive comments]*

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 *Ah ...
[At 2nd chorus OTHERS sing, even MO. Not with gusto because they've just heard the song. They sing "ah" 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.
CHRISSIE 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 on 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.
CHRISSIE Maybe we should quit our cleaning jobs, become famous rock stars and travel the world and have lots of money and gorgeous clothes and all that. *[This amuses OTHERS]*
DEE Look I'm curious. Where did you ladies learn to sing? *[Laughter, scoffing]*
HELLY In my country we are always singing. At weddings and parties everybody sings and dances.
CHRISSIE Yeah well I used to go out with a roadie and he taught me heaps. *[Amusement]*

SCRUBBERS 22

DEE I'll bet he did.
LIZ Well, 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 all the soldiers I knew 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? ... What are you on about? ...etc
DEE I reckon every week, once we knock off, we should stop here and sing a few songs. [*Mixed reaction – surprise, delight*]
LIZ That's a great idea.
MO You've gotta be joking.
DEE Our own little ensemble, Mo, our own bit of fun. What do you say?
HELLY I would like to do that very much.
LIZ We can forget our problems and sing our socks off.
CHRISSIE [*Mimics child*] Ready Mister Music. [*Laughter*]
DEE No time like the present. You'll all know this old favourite.
[*DEE starts playing and the others settle and listen. Maybe new lighting again*]

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*]

No. 9 – Scene-Change Music D

[*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 clean t'night.
LIZ Same here. I'm too old for late night champagne singalongs.
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. I never wanted to. But now I feel great.
MO [*Bringing two mugs of tea to table*] A trouble shared m'dear. An' we is all friends 'ere. I guess it's because we've all had it tough.
LIZ [*They sip their tea*] And I can't get over the music. It was like we'd been singing together for years.

SCRUBBERS 23

MO It sounded lovely.

LIZ I never thought I'd look forward to coming to work – here, I mean. Tonight I was actually early and the cleaning was almost a breeze. *[FX Toilet flushing. Women ignore it]* And it's all thanks to you and your birthday. *[Door opens and CHRISSIE appears. She heads up to sink]*

MO 'ello Chrissie? You all right, love?

CHRISSIE 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?

CHRISSIE 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?

CHRISSIE Men know nuffin' 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 I see. A bunch of satisfied scrubbers. *[UR door flings open and a stressed and upset HELLY enters. The OTHERS turn then realise she is not well]*

LIZ Helly! What's the matter?

DEE *[Helping her]* Come over here. Sit down. *[HELLY is helped to sit]*

MO What's happened, darling? You look like you've seen a ghost.

HELLY I went into the ... *[Coughs]*

CHRISSIE 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 ... *[More distress and CHRISSIE arrives with water]*

CHRISSIE Here you are. *[HELLY drinks a little]*

HELLY Thank you. I just ran from the fourth floor. I needed more detergent and went into the store room.

MO There ain't no ghosts in there, love.

HELLY There were people in the room.

LIZ Who? People from the office?

DEE Were they stealing things? Did you see a thief?

HELLY .I knocked first but maybe they didn't hear me. I just opened the door and there they were. I interrupted them.

CHRISSIE *[Getting frustrated]* Who was in there? Who did you see?

HELLY I didn't see their faces. I just got such a fright. I ran because ... *[Greater shock] they didn't have any clothes! [Big reaction]*

LIZ They were bonking. You interrupted some rumpy-pumpy.

DEE You're kidding!

CHRISSIE Who was bonking?

MO What's bonking?

HELLY They were making love. I was so shocked. *[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]*

SCRUBBERS 24

DEE Oh, Helly, you spoilsport!

CHRISSIE Was it that gorgeous bloke from accounts? He's got really nice eyes.

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 going.

CHRISSIE We should go and check it out.

DEE Waste of time. Two minutes is absolute max for blokes round here.

LIZ Oh yeah? Is that office gossip or 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 are we?

HELLY I could not see the lady but she made screams when I came into the room.

DEE You came, she came, he conquered.

LIZ Conquered or bonkered?

MO [*Shocked*] Oh this is disgustin'.

CHRISSIE Tell us what he looked like. What colour were his eyes?

HELLY I did not see his eyes. He was facing the other way.

DEE You mean you only saw his arse! [*OTHERS amused*]

CHRISSIE That'll do. Give us a cheek by cheek description!

MO I'm gunna report this.

LIZ What for? They haven't broken any law. It sounds like consenting adults in the privacy of their store-room.

MO I 'ave to vac in there. I want danger money! [*More laughter*]

CHRISSIE Gee, can't you just imagine if the company did investigate. They'd 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*] It'd be like some army parade.

DEE [*Imitating O-I-C*] Gentlemen, trousers ... down. [*More shrieks of laughter*]

MO Sounds like a real bummer to me! [*More groans/laughs*]

CHRISSIE When it comes to the identification bit, Helly, I could give you a hand.

LIZ Ah no, absolutely no touching! [*Amusement*]

HELLY I am glad you are all laughing. I think maybe it does have a funny side.

CHRISSIE A funny *back-side*! [*More laughter*] Now you're sure you never saw his front side?

MO Chrissie. Behave. [*To HELLY*] Not even a glimpse? [*Laughs*]

LIZ Now come on, Helly. It's time to make a witness statement. You entered the storeroom and came upon a gentleman's posterior.

MO That was no gentleman, m'lud. That was my 'usband.
[*Shrieks of laughter*]

LIZ So how would you describe the gentleman's appearance, in your own words, of course.

DEE Were there any distinguishing features?

CHRISSIE Yeah, did he have a spotty bum?

SCRUBBERS 25

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

MO What was that?

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

CHRISSIE *[Envious]* Wish I 'ad a mobile phone.

MO Who's ringin' at this time of night? Or shouldn't I 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]

CHRISSIE 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.

CHRISSIE 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 – holding it out in front 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 Yeah, look good, sound terrible.

CHRISSIE We can be your groupies.

HELLY *[Handing over hat]* 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, get serious. You are not coming.

CHRISSIE 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.
[CHRISSIE helps HELLY who makes a mimed phone call perhaps facing away from OTHERS. It's all a go now 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 case to DEE]* Here's your guitar. I'll find a taxi. *[She exits UR]*

DEE This 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 am I going to sing?
[Stuffs phone in her pocket]

MO We don't 'ave to pay do we? It ain't no clip joint is it?

SCRUBBERS 26

CHRISSIE 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. Lights cross-fade. Change from tea-room for the scrubbers to a warmer more sophisticated but dimly lit wine bar.]

No. 10 Scene-Change Music E

LIZ enters DR. She is dressed in street clothes, i.e. has removed her cleaning smock and grabbed a coat from the wings. She enters, looks around then crosses to LC which is the bar and dimly lit. She returns with bottle of wine and four glasses. CHRISSIE, HELLY and MO enter DR looking excited, nervous and embarrassed respectively. They wear/carry "extras" – hats, scarves, bags, etc]

LIZ *[Taking control]* Here we are. 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?

CHRISSIE Wow! 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 *[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]

CHRISSIE *[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. SCRUBBERS don't know how to behave]* 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]*

No. 11 – 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 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]

No. 12 – Scene-Change Music F

[Subtle scene change required. Previous scene change in reverse. 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. HELLY stays at her locker and prepares for work, adds smock, etc. MO takes wine and glasses upstage to sink. CHRISSIE exits DL and LIZ is flicking through a magazine. They've gathered before starting their cleaning shift. FX Toilet flushes and CHRISSIE enters from DL]

MO *[Calling]* Now who wants a cuppa?
CHRISSIE I 'faught Dee was triffic last night but how come she was so snooty when she finished singin'?
LIZ Because the only people who showed any interest were her rowdy mates from work.
HELLY I think Dee is a beautiful singer.
MO *[Comes down with the tea]* 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!
CHRISSIE 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.
CHRISSIE No she wasn't. Covers ...
[LIZ 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.
CHRISSIE Hi, Dee.

SCRUBBERS 28

MO 'ello, love.

HELLY *[Steps aside to give DEE room]* 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 bag 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. Tosses bag towards bench in front of locker 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.

CHRISSIE I quite like a butt. Wrapped in some jeans of course. *[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.

CHRISSIE What do you know about marketing, anyway?

LIZ Well once upon a time, in another life, I had a career in advertising.

DEE Liz, get real. I've got no money. I can't afford to advertise. 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.

CHRISSIE Yeah she could call herself some sexy name like Madonna or Cher or *[Insert name of current well-known pop culture female].*

HELLY If you are successful, people do not mind what you are called.

DEE Look, ladies, if the best you can come up with is a name change, I think 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.

CHRISSIE 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. It's a dog eat dog world, Dee. There are heaps of talented unknowns out there doing exactly what you do.

DEE Tell me about it. Okay, so what's m'new name?

CHRISSIE If I had a daughter I'd call her Lotus Blossom. *[Ignored]*

LIZ There's actually a lot to be said for some of the older names

MO My mother-in-law's got a terrible name. Well I reckon it's terrible. She was called Hortense. *[OTHERS react]*

DEE *[Sarcastic]* Oh that's great. *[Announcing herself]* Ladies and gentlemen, let's hear it for *[Mocking]* Hortense McIntosh.
[OTHERS laugh. It does sound funny]

LIZ I'm serious. You need to market yourself and you need a gimmick.

HELLY Why don't you join with other musicians and make a band?

CHRISSIE Yeah. Join a really cool group and be famous with them.

DEE *[Frustrated]* Ahhh. I hate doing covers. I want to sing my own songs.

LIZ Well we could join you and be your backing group. *[Laughter]*

MO Oh yes. I can just see us getting' up an' makin' fools of ourselves.

HELLY I am confused. I thought you were trying to be serious.

LIZ I *am* serious.

HELLY Well if you are serious, I could make us all some very nice uniforms.

CHRISSIE *[Excited]* Yeah and we could meet all sorts of spunky guys who'd come to our concerts. I'd 'ave me own groupies.

DEE Hey, hey, hey. Earth to Looneyville. *[They settle. DEE is serious]*

LIZ You're not scared of being successful are you Dee?

DEE Not scared. Just facing facts.

LIZ Sometimes the whackiest ideas work. And I know I'm sincere.

CHRISSIE So am I.

HELLY I am very sincere.

DEE *[Looks at them]* What?

MO An' I'll be in anyfing for a laugh. *[DEE shocked by their sincerity]*

DEE My God. A ratbag *[ragtag]* conspiracy.

LIZ Why can't we be your backing singers? You heard us the other night.

DEE You were ordinary. And I'm being polite.

CHRISSIE I thought we were pretty good.

LIZ No, we were rough and unrehearsed. Given time and your expert coaching we'll be better. Much better.

HELLY I agree. I think we could sound beautiful.

LIZ If we learn some of your songs, it'd be the most unusual group in town. It'd make a marvellous picture-story. You and your songs would get one hell of a boost.

MO Yeah but I've never sung in public.

LIZ And Mo could tell jokes in-between your songs.

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.

CHRISSIE 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.

SCRUBBERS 30

- LIZ** Yeah 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** I like it. When do we start?
- DEE** I can't believe I'm hearing this.
- CHRISSIE** 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 all miserable. You're miserable 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** *[Enthusiastic reaction]* Yeah! ... It'll work! ... Good on ya, Dee! ... *etc*
- LIZ** You teach us some songs, Dee 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.
- CHRISSIE** 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'.
- CHRISSIE** *[Going but protesting]* All right, all right, don't push. Gee I hate this job. *[CHRISSIE and MO exit grabbing a bag of materials en route]*
- HELLY** *[Going with them]* I will go with you. We can clean first and then maybe sing some songs. *[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're intelligent. You can see the idea's stupid. But not them. There's a naïve foreigner, an aging loser and a juvenile moron.
- LIZ** They speak very highly of you too.
- DEE** You know what I mean.
- LIZ** Sure. But I also know you're afraid of success.
- DEE** What!?
- LIZ** I think you don't know how to win.
- DEE** You bitch!
- LIZ** Perhaps you don't know a good idea when you see one.
- DEE** Let's cut to the chase here. I'm a would-be professional. Okay, I'm unknown but I take my music very seriously. And I've got talent. All I need's a break, a bit of luck - some TV exposure, a recording contract, anything. And now you get some loopy idea and I'm lumbered with a bunch of losers with no talent and no experience.
- LIZ** I think it's called resistance to a good idea.

SCRUBBERS 31

DEE Y'know, I think I liked you better when you said nothing.
LIZ It's that small pond theory.
DEE And when you do speak, it's all mumbo-jumbo. What's wrong with bloody English?
LIZ *[Directly at DEE]* Dee, listen. In this place, you're the natural leader. Mo is a self-deprecating, lovely old lady whose never had an idea in her life. Chrissie's a naive, ignorant even stupid young woman.
DEE *[Mock nod of head - bow]* Good evening Doctor Liz.
LIZ Helly's nice but subservient, a won't rock the boat lady. That makes you the boss. You've got an outside interest, you're talented, you've got the desire and a plan to rise above your lousy lifestyle.
DEE Do you charge for this garbage?
LIZ Along comes the moody Liz who not only breaks her vow of silence but actually says something sensible, something intelligent. Now this is new. Dee is suddenly under pressure. Dee thinks. I can patronise or bully my fellow workers but how can I handle a woman who might just be as smart as I am? Or worse. Smarter. And to top it off, what if this street-wise chick comes up with a damn good idea that'll cost nothing to try and which is guaranteed to work.
DEE *[Mocks]* Guaranteed! Ha! All your slick lingo brought undone by one ridiculous claim. Listen sweetheart, your idea's a lead balloon.
LIZ Depends on the goal though, surely? *[Prepares to leave]*
DEE *[Sarcastic]* Oh, another tack. Switch subjects mid-stream. Very clever. Ever thought of 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 the women it's worked already – which just leaves little old you *[Exits, stops at door]* Think about it. Bye. *[Exits. DEE alone. She is frustrated and confused. All this has happened without her being in control. The situation is out of hand. She moves to locker, removes her cleaning bag then slams or belts locker and storms out. Fade lights as soon as she starts to exit. Crossfade music. BLACKOUT]*

No. 13 Scene-Change Music G

[Lights up. It's three 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, can you come 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?
CHRISSIE 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.

SCRUBBERS 32

LIZ Just shush and 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 is now 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.

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

LIZ [*Shocked*] What?

MO We was jus' playin' along wiv ya.

LIZ [*Genuinely confused*] What are you saying?

HELLY I think we understood that 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.

CHRISSIE That's right.

LIZ No, hang on. I *was* serious. I really wanted the idea to work. And Dee likes the idea but doesn't think it's got much chance of success.

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

LIZ No, you're wrong.

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 fing'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*]

CHRISSIE 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.

CHRISSIE Well we're hopeless with most things in life, why not singin' as well?

LIZ Okay. Fine. We agree. So please, let's not argue with Dee.

MO You've changed y'tune.

LIZ I know but Dee's worked really hard at her singing career and doesn't want an idiot like me wrecking it. So, we agree. The idea's crazy and we won't push Dee into changing her mind?

OTHERS Okay ... Agreed. *etc*

MO Is that all only I 'aint finished the washin' up.

LIZ [*Upset now that everything seems to have gone pear-shaped*] Yes, that's all. I'm sorry I spoke.
[*MO goes back to sink, LIZ to her locker. UR door opens and DEE enters. She is enthusiastic and sparkling*]

DEE [*Almost 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?

SCRUBBERS 33

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 How long have you been on drugs?

DEE Aha! No pills or powders. I'm firing on dreams, hope, self-belief. *[Sees OTHERS stunned]* Well c'mon, c'mon. Let's have a bit of enthusiasm.

MO En'fusiasm? For what?

CHRISSIE *[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. Now it's cards on table time.

MO I don't wanna play cards.

LIZ It's okay, Dee. We've just had a bit of chat about my idea.

DEE Good. That's what I like to hear. Planning. Preparation. Now ...

HELLY We have agreed, Dee, not to upset you any more.

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 and find a new life. That's us. All of us can find happiness. It's brilliant.

LIZ *[Doesn't know what to say]* Oh.

DEE Oh? What is oh? Come on Ms Silver Tongue. You're the one with the grand plan. Now all you've got to say is 'oh'.

CHRISSIE We're not so sure it's a good idea.

DEE *[Shocked]* You're kidding? Three hours ago you were bustin' to break into showbiz and now someone's gone and pricked y'bloody balloon.

HELLY We are only thinking of you, Dee. We only want the best for your career.

DEE 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 Sure. Clear as crystal. It's just that

DEE You thought I thought the idea was stupid.

LIZ Yes. Exactly.

DEE Okay. I'll come clean. At first I did. I thought, what do I want with a bunch of musical losers? I mean I'm the pro. And then Liz told me a few home truths. Maybe the aim of the exercise is not to be the world's greatest singing ensemble. Maybe it's more to do with giving ourselves a lift.

And for a group of fabulous females, I thought that sounded like a damn good idea. So, if you're game, so am I. And if musically 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 a bit of happiness. Not a lot. Just a 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, enough already. So I'm a saint.
CHRISIE Does this mean I'm gunna to be a famous rock star and have lots of hunks as 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.
DEE You can, Mo. You're in this, up to y'pencilled eyebrows. Now let's try some simple stuff. Just sing to lah. Liz, here's your note. *[MUSIC BEGINS. DEE plays a note and LIZ sings it]* Good. That's the idea. But I want you to hold it. Big breath and hold the note.

No. 14 Warm-Up

[DEE plays same note and LIZ holds it] Helly, here's yours. *[DEE plays another note and HELLY sings and holds it]* Chrissie. *[DEE plays third note and CHRISIE sings]* Mo. *[MO sings fourth note. It sounds okay. MO claps and everyone stops. They all laugh and clap]*

Settle down. You're not superstars yet. Now I think I know where to place your voices. One more time for luck. Ready. And.

[All four sing their note to lah. DEE strums the chord. They hold the chord until DEE gives them a nod of her head as the cutoff. The cutoff is spot on and is followed or better still, accompanied by a sudden and instant BLACKOUT. End of first act. Note: you could change the order in which each note is sung if certain characters sound better on another note. Optional Interval]

ACT TWO

[The interval between acts is optional. Scrubbers is not a long show and the interval could be dispensed with. If so, simply play]

No. 15 Scene-Change Music H or 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 DR drinking tea and making notes. DEE arrives 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]

SCRUBBERS 35

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]* Geez, 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. What's it this time? *[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 I keep telling you, 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. *[Collects her tea and biscuits on a plate]*
DEE *[Heading to table]* Come and have your tea in peace. And no more talk about singing. Let's talk about something exciting like ... cleaning.
MO *[Joining DEE and LIZ]* 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]* "Five females can give their personal problems the flick and find a new life. That's us. All of us can find happiness. It's brilliant."
[LIZ looks at MO and smiles 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. I fink I'd like to 'ave me own gig.
DEE Just don't hold your breath. 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 did stop snorin' an' burped at just the right time. *[They chuckle]*
Or was it a fart? *[Amusement but underneath they are serious]*
DEE I was reading once about the number of failed marriages. Up to forty per cent in some places. But I've never read about marriages which keep going *without* love. You know where ...
MO Where people like me stay married an' never speak to one another.

SCRUBBERS 36

DEE *[Ashamed]* Sorry, Mo. Dee, remove your foot.

MO Don't apologise. 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 *[Friendly smack]* I was not. I've never even 'eard of Freud's biscuits.

DEE *[Laughing]* And he's probably never 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. Even you. 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 but LIZ removes/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 Oh?

DEE It's nothing. Not yet anyway.

LIZ *[Mimics MO]* There are no secrets 'ere, love. *[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]*

MO There's someone in there.

DEE What are they doing?

LIZ Must be Chrissie or Helly. *[More noise]*

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

DEE Sounds more like a tradesman. Or a burglar.

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

SCRUBBERS 37

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

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

DEE Liz! What are you doing? Liz!

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 bat and all three of us scream blue murder.

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

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

DEE This is ridiculous.

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

LIZ We scream first and ask questions later. Now stand by the door. Ready.
[LIZ raises bat. DEE moves hand to reach door handle. Pause. Just as they are about to strike, door opens and CHRISSIE emerges wearing tutu over her cleaning clothes and tap dances into room and around in front of the table. She finishes brief routine with hands extended. The OTHERS are speechless. CHRISSIE is thrilled with herself]

CHRISSIE Surprise!

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

DEE What the hell are you doing?

CHRISSIE *[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?

CHRISSIE *[Bubbling with enthusiasm]* I want to help the group. I've been lying awake trying to think how we could get better and get some gigs. And then I got this brilliant idea. We need some dancin'.

MO Dancin'?

DEE My godfather.

CHRISSIE When I was a kid I went to ballet school. We did tap and classical and all that stuff and I thought I could teach you guys some dancing and we could put it in the act.

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

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

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

CHRISSIE 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 centre and does shoulder/hip movements a la groovy singer. She looks ridiculous in her street clothes, tap shoes and tutu. OTHERS look in amazement. How should they react]

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

SCRUBBERS 38

CHRISSIE 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.

CHRISSIE *[Excited]* A contact! A gig! Oh that's 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.

CHRISSIE Cool! Excellent!

DEE It's not live music but it makes us, well, more punchy, more showbizzy.

CHRISSIE 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 bags 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 CHRISSIE]* Chrissie. What has happened to your clothes?

CHRISSIE 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?

CHRISSIE Nah. This is just me sister's old tutu and tap shoes. I wore 'em to prove that I really could dance.

DEE You certainly did that.

MO What's in y'bags, 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 around.

HELLY *[Confused]* I am sorry. You are sick? I do not understand.

DEE Just show us what's inside the bags. Please.

HELLY *[Excited]* Oh yes. I have been to some shops for very poor people.

CHRISSIE 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 ...

CHRISSIE 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]*

CHRISSIE Can I have that one? *[Takes boa and drapes it over herself]*

DEE 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.

SCRUBBERS 39

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 a little too carried away with these new ideas.

CHRISSIE 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]

CHRISSIE 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 not you too.
LIZ If we're going to entertain, we need a balanced routine.
DEE I knew this would happen. Let's give up on 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 Mo! *[Reaction]*

MO Me? Tell jokes?
DEE My god, you're right. Music *and* comedy.
LIZ And we can promote ourselves as the singing, comic cleaners.
MO I can't tell jokes.
LIZ And we can offer a complete entertainment package. We could feed them, entertain them and, best of all, clean up afterwards.
[This provokes a strong reaction. Following speeches could overlap]

CHRISSIE 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 Liz, you're planning the deck sports and fancy dress ball and we haven't even built the bloody boat.
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.

SCRUBBERS 40

CHRISSIE Even if she left the stupid thing at home.

LIZ Exactly. So the first part of our package is a delicious range of cakes.

CHRISSIE 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 shiela 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 paper used before]* Da-da! I just happen to have scribbled down a few. *[Hands pad/paper to MO]* Give us a gag, Mo.

MO *[Reading]* What!? I can't even see 'em. *[DEE fetches MO'S glasses]* 'ow can I tell 'em if I can't even read 'em.

LIZ You won't read them on the night. You'll know them, by heart.

DEE *[Handing glasses to MO]* Here you are, Mo.

MO *[Putting on glasses]* Oh, 'fanks. This is ridiculous.

LIZ Ridiculous is fine so long as you're funny.

MO What do I do?

CHRISSIE 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 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.

CHRISSIE With my cakes and your jokes, Mo, we'll be a hit.

LIZ Not forgetting Dee's songs of course.

CHRISSIE Oh, sorry Dee. No, 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.

SCRUBBERS 41

- CHRISSIE** 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 we leave the venue spotless.
- DEE** That's unbelievable! Some musos trash their venues and we actually clean the place!
[Happy reaction which fades. Pause. Laughter stops. Everyone falls silent. What have they let themselves in for?]
- DEE** Well 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. 'E neva listens mind but I tell 'im about the singin' and 'ow we're gunna be famous and everyfin'.
- 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]*
- CHRISSIE** What sort of cakes do I make and how many?
- LIZ** Well that depends on the venue, number of customers et cetera 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]
- CHRISSIE** *[Removing her ballet accessories]* Bloody cleaning. I hate this job.
- HELLY** *[Packing her boas]* I would rather we only did 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]*
- CHRISSIE** 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 our 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.
- CHRISSIE** Are you serious? We've really got a gig?
- LIZ** Yes and yes
- MO** What are you on about?

SCRUBBERS 42

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.

CHRISSIE 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?

CHRISSIE I'll teach you the new moves tomorrow.

HELLY The uniforms will be cleaned as soon as I get 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 we go ahead. *[Louder]* It's our first gig!
[They grab one another and jump about, back-slap, hug, laugh, cry, wave boas, etc. Voiceover causes complete change]

FX *[Female voice on tape or 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?]

CHRISSIE *[Ignores voice-over. Still on a high]* We're gunna 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.

CHRISSIE *[Genuine panic]* What!? I haven't even started! *[Calling]* I haven't even started. *[OTHERS shush CHRISSIE]*

DEE Chrissie, get control of yourself. A professional always stays calm.

FX *[Tape continues]* 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]

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MO *[Sarcastic]* Oh bloody marvellous! *[Calling]* Pass the tea-towel!
FX *[Tape continues]* So make yourselves at home and before we get Mum and Dad to say a few words, let's give a big welcome to our super shielas *[broads/dames], The Scrubbers! [FX More applause]*

[Women are stunned, shocked. Now begins a choreographed panic scene. We're at the first gig. The women place small waitress hats on their heads. They are wearing cleaning smocks. They all talk at once as they go about this business. Speeches below. They help one another, bump into each other and ad lib their hurried preparations. They move upstage and collect plates of small cakes. Ad lib around the following speeches]

LIZ Get your waitress caps.

CHRISSIE Where? Somebody help me.

MO Everyone take a plate of cakes.

LIZ Which one do I take?

DEE When you finish serving come straight back to get ready.

MO When do I do me jokes?

HELLY What do we say to the people?

CHRISSIE Careful of them creamy ones.

[They head off into the audience – the guests at the wedding anniversary – and serve the cakes. This will vary according to the venue and number of patrons. If you're having a dinner-theatre event, the cakes could be the sweets. If it's a more conventional theatre presentation, this event is a small highlight of the show. NOTE. Cake distribution should not take over the show. Obviously it will depend on audience response and whether or not it's a sit-down meal show. But once the cakes have been distributed, get the five stars back on stage. Lighting needs to be dim so as not to steal the thunder of the performing group. DEE is the first to return to the stage. She gets out her guitar and sets up the amp and PA gear. This could already be there and not even be working equipment – the real equipment being offstage and controlled from there. HELLY is next. She gets out the boas and removes her waitress cap. The "uniform" each woman wears is their cleaning outfit, i.e. smock/apron over working clothes plus boa. As cake servers they wear waitress caps, as singers they wear boas and as cleaners they dispense with anything fancy. The OTHERS return to the stage and get ready. Caps off, boas on.

When they are all ready – MO is to one side and becomes MC – there is a sudden and dramatic lighting change. All lights killed and a spot picks up MO]

MO Ladies and the rest of you lot, presenting the triffic songs of Deirdre McIntosh and the fabulous singing group – *The Scrubbers!*

[Kill spot on MO, bring up fancy lights on the quintet. MO joins OTHERS. MUSIC BEGINS. It includes the extra instruments as recorded on CD by DEE. You could add smoke and back lighting to make the floorshow more theatrical but the second song should be bigger/better than the first. Don't peak too soon]

No. 17 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 from the bottom. We had nothing but our labour.
DEE Then one of us had an idea and this is the result.
CHRISSIE You can do this. You can give life a go.
LIZ And win, lose or draw, the effort is worth a million.
HELLY Anyone can try. Look at us. We're just working class peoples.
MO But don't wait for somefin' to 'appen. 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? Well they'll be back, ladies and you other lot, but first I wanna tell you somethin'. Y'know a funny thing 'appened to me on the way to a weddin' anniversary tonight. I was dreamin' I was in bed with this total stranger. Weird lookin' bloke 'e was. All flab, warts an' nasal 'airs. Sound familiar? Well I didn't know who 'e was till 'e burped and then I twigged. It was me 'usband.

Funny fing, 'usbands. They was only invented to make up the numbers. Last minute inclusion. Ah, let's see. Universe, sun, earf', animals, people and ... oh yes, 'usbands. Look, 'ere's a tip for all you girls. If you wanna know what sort of bloke your boyfriend's gunna look like in middle age, check out your future farver-in-law. If 'e's got a pot belly, itchy crotch and the world's worst haircut, then that's what you'll 'ave the day after t'morra'.

An' talkin' of the world's worst 'aircuts, you should my old man's. 'e's got what you'd call a nude nut. Y'know. Chrome dome. Bald as a baby's backside. Come to think of it, it smells like a baby's backside an' all. But does 'e show his baldness to the world? Does 'e polish 'is nut an' bask in its reflected glory? Ah no, not 'im. Just the opposite.

Dopey Drawers says to 'is barber – short over 'ere Fred an' as long as buggery over 'ere. Then of course Muggins gets 'ome an' lacquers it up wiv a jar or two of drippin' before swingin' the greasy long bit up, over an' across 'is nut. What a sight. Then 'e staples it to the side of 'is 'ead. Doesn't feel a fing mind. You've 'eard of mutton dressed up as lamb. Well my 'usband's more like mutton dressed up as Spam! Of course in a stiff wind, the whole flamin' lot sticks up like a piece of toast. [*Mimics hair with hand on head*] Doing! It's about the only stiff fing 'e's got.

An' what about house-trainin'? I mean 'ow many blokes 'ave got the faintest idea of 'ow to do even the simplest fings 'round the 'ouse? Y'know it never ceases to amaze me. 'usbands can learn all sorts of technological fings. They can fly 'round the world in a balloon. They can invent computers and stuff an' build the most amazing fings. They can cure 'orrible diseases and clone animals and even us 'umans. But 'ow come these super-smart, genius-type 'usbands always leave the toilet seat in the wrong bloody position!? Hey! Tell me that.

Well that's enough from me. Time to 'ear again from those lovely ladies and their toe-tappin' music. Let's 'ear it for ... *The Scrubbers!*
[*Cross fade lights, down on MO and up on singers. MUSIC BEGINS*]

No. 18 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.*

[*Song ends and QUINTET are ecstatic. Not so much from the huge ovation – assuming there is one – but from the joy of performing, from the successful completion of a lot of hard work. They bow and hug one another.*]

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Subtle change of lights demonstrates passing of time. It's now 10 minutes after the gig and women grab a chair or sit on a music amplifier. They are happy and unwinding. Concert a hit and guests are going or have gone]

- DEE** That was brilliant, ladies. Absolutely fantastic. *[OTHERS delighted]*
- LIZ** We are not only launched but launched in style.
- CHRISSIE** I nearly lost my boa and then thought I'd forgotten the words.
- HELLY** I thought we were all very good but *especially* Mo.
- OTHERS** *[Agree]* Oh yes ... You were terrific, Mo ... Fantastic Mo. *etc.*
- MO** Yes orright, 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]*
- HELLY** Before we clean though, Dee is going to tell us something.
- DEE** Thanks Helly. 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.
- CHRISSIE** 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! *[Applause, 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.

PREVIEW ENDS