

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Wash House Blues

by Liliane Grace

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Customers of the drycleaning/laundromat business (three, including **Mr Andrews**).

Mr Fizz, owner/manager of laundry, a plump, self-important comical character,.

Chorus I & II (at least 3-5 in each; ‘expandable’ to absorb greater numbers).

Miss Takes, new employee who has a tendency to make mistakes....

Mrs Able, chief employee, a competent, maternal type.

Laundrette, Mr Fizz’s daughter; a trendy and creative teenager.

Mrs Biddle, a bustling bossy woman.

Sophie Biddle, her shrinking, nervous daughter.

Mr Andrews’ **Secretary**.

Tattooed Man.

Mother and young children.

Three rush-hour customers.

SET: A Laundromat/Dry Cleaners and the street in front of the shop.

Set props:

Three Washing machines (can be made by the children out of large boxes).

Counter with stool, phone and message pad/tickets.

Rack behind counter with dry cleaned clothes hanging in plastic bags awaiting pick-up.

An automatic soap dispenser on the wall (can be made by children).

A magazine rack for the customers.

Front door (can be mimed).

A sign “Fizz’s Wash House”.

SCENE 1:

Mr Fizz is standing outside his laundry with thumbs hooked through his braces, beaming. Customers hurry in and out of his laundry with baskets of washing or outfits on hangers wrapped in plastic.

His opening speech may be reminiscent of Curly's opening song in Oklahoma – "Oh what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day"

Mr Fizz:

It's a lovely day today,
Lots of customers coming to pay,
With the money I earn,
I'll have money to *burn*,
And I'll be in a very good way.

Three customers enter and make their speeches in rapid succession:

Female Customer (holding up shirt with stain):

Oh Mr Fizz! Mr Fizz – can you possibly help me? I've got a terrible stain on my favourite shirt.

Female Customer (holding up a pink blouse):

Mr Fizz! Oh, Mr Fizz. My husband washed my pure white blouse with his red boxer shorts. Is there *anything* you can do?

Mr Andrews (holding up a suit):

I'm in a terrible hurry, Mr Fizz. I've a plane to catch at 4 pm and I need this suit ready to take with me. Can you do it?

Mr Fizz (beaming):

Right this way, of course we can, just leave it here with Mrs Able, my trusty helper. (*closes door behind them and faces audience again*) Besides, we've got

a new worker arriving today, a Miss ... (*looks at letter in pocket*) Takes. (*beams widely and goes off humming "It's a lovely day today..."*.)

SCENE 2:

Chorus I: Thank heavens for Mrs Able,
 Whose skills should be writ in a fable,
 If you need something done,
 In a spirit of fun,
 You can count on capable Able.

Miss Takes arrives on the scene, looking for the Laundromat. She carries a piece of paper and is counting street numbers. Forty-eight, fifty, fifty-two ... Now what was it again? Sixty-nine. Oh, that will be on the other side of the road. (crosses over, tripping on curb. Must calm herself down) Oh gosh. I'm so nervous. There it is. (Reads sign "Fizz's Wash House". Takes a big breath.) Well, here goes. (Knocks and enters.)

Chorus II: As for the lovely Miss Takes
 A muddle she constantly makes,
 Her intentions are good,
 There's no doubt that she would,
 Be a champ, if she made less mistakes.

SCENE 3

Mr Fizz emerges with his arm around Miss Takes' shoulders, beaming, and