

# **BIG HAIR DAY**

**by Fiona Baddeley**

The play is set in a hairdressing salon. The year is 1976. The set can be kept very simple: chairs, a desk, a phone and posters or images that reflect the seventies. A big central flat or fly with the name of the salon on could be effective.

## **Cast:**

**Carmel** - bubbly, naive

**Jenny** - bored, intelligent

**Roz** - caring

**Jo** - a little 'tarty' and over chatty

**Tracey** - the receptionist

**Barry** - the salon manager

**Vicar**

+ **Four girl actors** who play the following parts:

4 unspeaking clients

Jean

Instructor + 3 unspeaking class members

Mrs Willis

4 Old Ladies: Mrs Smith, Mrs Jones, Mrs Arscot and Mrs Carter

Teacher + 3 girls, Tracey 1, Tracey 2 and Tracey 3. The real Tracey becomes

Tracey 4.

Alternatively, the Boy playing the Vicar, a very small part, could play the Teacher with the 4 extra girls taking Tracey 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Running time one hour fifteen approx.. It is easy to pick and choose scenes to reduce the length and involve only 5 cast members.

## **EXTRACT ONE**

### **Introduction:**

*Carmel, Jenny, Roz and Jo are on stage dancing as the audience comes in. They can simply stand and use some stereotypical 70's hand jive choreography. They look bored. Tracey sits at the desk where she remains for most of the play. [The Bee Gee's 'You should be dancing' works well.]*

*ROZ to the audience*

Let me take you back in time to the age of big hair, big shoes and big sound ...

*The girls perform the following to a rap beat and a series of seventies dance moves.*

It's 76 when the chicks are hip  
The pants are flared and the platforms thick  
The Osmonds are good the Sex Pistols bad  
And Michael Jackson ain't quite so mad  
The word on the street is for peace not war  
But in Ireland and Cambodia that's something they ignore  
the war in Vietnam has just come to an end  
But in Africa killing is becoming a trend  
Back home the National Front want the Blacks thrown out  
And Gay liberation is what it is all about  
Between Russia and America the war's definitely cold  
And power cuts in Britain are affecting the old  
But down in the salon the styles are hot  
The groove is good and we're giving it a lot  
Down the salon's the place to be  
With Jenny, Jo, Roz, Carmel and on the desk Tracey

## Scene 1

TRACEY

Cut and Curl, how can I help you? Cut and Curl, how can I help you ...? Can I interest you in our new offer? With every cut and curl we are offering a free cut for one of your friends and when that friend comes in, if they have a curl as well as a cut, then you get a free conditioning treatment and if another friend is recommended by them then not only does that friend get a free cut but you are given a free colour treatment of your choice if you come in on the same day. [*This is repeated sporadically throughout the following scene until it becomes grating to listen to. A few minor pieces of ad-libbing can be added.*]

*Each hairdresser stands behind a customer who sits.*

CARMEL *bubbly, naive*

So what are we having done today? I did think that the cut we tried last time worked particularly well. It sort of framed your face, softened your jawline and gave you an aura of femininity ... what d'y' think?

ROZ *caring attentive, said with total belief*

We've got a lovely new range of products in; they may be that little bit more expensive but I think it's worth it. This one with the added vitamins really does feed the hair at the roots and nourishes it so that you can really see that difference. Go on treat yourself ...

JENNY *bored, too intelligent for the job*

So what is it today, Mrs Vine? The usual trim and blue rinse?

JO *a little 'tarty' and chatty to the point of being irritating*

Going somewhere special then? I always think it is nice to have your hair done if you're being taken out for the evening? My Terry always likes me to make that little bit of extra effort if he's taking me out and I think he's right. A girl should always look her best for a man, otherwise they think that you are taking them for granted and, well, that can only lead to problems ... D'you know what I mean? My Terry likes me to wear a skirt and high heels if he's taking me somewhere posh, you know, like the Beefeater. Most men do I think, you know, like high heels and skirts. In fact I think he may be taking me out this Friday ...

CARMEL *steps forward to talk to the audience whilst the others freeze*

Being a hairdresser isn't just about being a hairdresser. Oh no, it's about much more than just cutting and drying: when you're there behind those basins or in front of those mirrors, you're the centre of that person's world. One mistake with those scissors and their life could be in ruins for the next few months. On the other hand, you've got the power to transform them from dull and mousy Miss Nobody to sophisticated and sexy Miss Glamour. It's Barry that really taught me that. He's the manager here and he insists

that in his salon hairdressing is an art form. He shows us all the way forward. 'Tomorrow's hair styles in today's salon', that's what he always says. Take this week when Jean came in ...

## Scene 2

*Barry enters the salon, a man in his forties but trying to look younger, he wears a flared suit and open-necked shirt with one button too many undone and a medallion. His own hair is perfectly styled. He has a self-satisfied smile and definite mince. His mannerisms are camp. You may want to add a slight lisp.*

BARRY

Snip, snip, snip, girls, never let the hair grow under your scissors and always give the client your undivided attention. Now, Tracey, would you bring my lady over from the basins, please. Now, what can we do for you today, Jean? *[stands back and looks at her.]*

JEAN

I thought I'd go for something a little bit different today, Barry, something that would get me noticed.

BARRY

Get you noticed, yes, yes, ... *[thoughtfully]*. Before we start, Jean, may I just say how much that colour suits your skin tones and what lovely shoes you're wearing. Now because you're looking so radiant and feeling that little bit adventurous, I'm going to give you the salon special ...

JEAN

Oh, Barry!

*Lighting change, music of 'Staying Alive' by the Bee Gees. Girls break into a dance routine and Jean and Barry go off. When they come back on Jean is wearing a suitably garish wig, but is delighted with it. The music stops, lights revert to normal and the girls turn to look.*

BARRY

The special Jean! *[Moving the mirror around her head.]*

JEAN

Oh Barry, you never let me down!

CARMEL

You're amazing, Barry!

BARRY

Tracey, can you get my lady's coat, please? *[Jean leaves.]* Carmel, darling, take over; I need a lie down after that. *[Barry exits.]*

## EXTRACT TWO

*Pause. The girls settle down to reading magazines and doing their nails. Tracey can be heard in the background - as for opening speech.*

CARMEL

Do you want to play hairdressers, Roz?

ROZ

What do you mean, Carmel? We are hairdressers.

CARMEL

Well, you know, I could pretend to do your hair for practice and you could pretend to be the customer.

ROZ

Well, I suppose I do need my highlights doing but don't let Barry catch us - he'll go mad.

CARMEL

Oh, I didn't want to actually do anything. I just wanted to go through what I'd say to the customers in different situations.

ROZ

What do you mean?

CARMEL

You see, I always end up saying the same things like: 'Can I get you a coffee and a magazine?' Or: 'Have you ever wondered what you'd look like if you could grow a moustache?' And I'd like to be a bit more like Jo, 'cause she is dead good at speaking to the customers; she's always got things to say.

ROZ

You're fine at talking to the customers, Carmel. You've just got to stop worrying about it.

JENNY

Only I wouldn't mention the thing about the moustache to everyone!

CARMEL

No?

ROZ

No, because some ladies have a problem with that, don't they?

JO

Yes... have you seen that Mrs Percival? She's got a really dark moustache. It's like a toothbrush.

CARMEL

Oh yes, I have. I thought it was a bit odd. You see, you're much cleverer than me; I didn't learn anything at school. But then a lot of it didn't seem very useful. Like who needs to know about the angles in a triangle or how the clouds make rain. How's that going to help you in life? I wish they taught you useful things.

JO

What do you mean?

CARMEL

Well, I wish they taught you about love and emotions and what life's about. Almost so that it would sort of train you for life, like sports people train for a race. I can just imagine it...

#### Scene 4

*Change of lighting. Aerobics music. Other girls and instructor march on.*

INSTRUCTOR

Let's march it out. March it out. March it out. OK... let's shake it out. Shake it out. Shake it out. OK, we're going to go for the first move in this week's pop-mobility lesson in LUV. And number one is the greeting. Everyone ready - one, two, three ... [*she blows two kisses in the air and then says:*] Darling! [*This is repeated three or four times.*] And march it out. March it out. March it out. And shake it out. Shake it out. Shake it out... OK, moving into number Two: looking bashful. Everyone ready? And one, two, three ... [*she puts her hand to her mouth and then turns away looking bashful. This is repeated three or four times as before.*]

And march it out. March it out. March it out. And shake it out. Shake it out. Shake it out. And number three: lick those lips. Follow me ... one, two, three and lick those lips ... [*Again this is repeated three or four times.*] And number four: the kiss. Get those tongues ready ... one, two, three and ... [*they all freeze as Jenny interrupts them*]

JENNY

Carmel... will you snap out of it, you've got a customer waiting. [*Aerobics people walk off*] Pull yourself together, will you, and stop staring into space.

#### EXTRACT THREE

BARRY

Girls, I've made a management decision. I want you to be the living examples of the

style that the salon is promoting. I want your presence to say to the customers, 'This is the style of today; this is the style for you.' And the style of today is the Afro. Now Carmel, I'm pleased to say, has offered to be the first to model it for us. Carmel, would you like to come in? [*Carmel enters looking pleased with herself and wearing an Afro wig.*] Now I don't expect you all to change your hairstyles immediately, but do bear in mind that as employees of this salon, I see you as being responsible for establishing and advertising the look of the salon. I see it not only as a question of aesthetics but also of loyalty. [*Barry exits.*]

JENNY

Well, if he thinks I'm going to go around looking as if I've been plugged in to the nearest electric socket, he's got another think coming.

*Carmel looks dismayed.*

ROZ

I think your hair looks lovely, Carmel. It really suits you.

JENNY

So you are going to be the next one to have it done, are you?

ROZ

I didn't say that; I just meant it looks really good on Carmel.

JENNY

Well, she would have it done, wouldn't she? Anything to impress Barry, as if it is going to make any bloody difference. [*Carmel starts crying and goes out.*]

ROZ

Now look what you have done ... [*She goes out. An awkward silence follows.*]

JO

I think my Terry would quite like me to have an Afro. He likes big hair on a woman. He says it's sensual. It's funny that, isn't it, 'cause although he likes Afro hair, he's very against all these blacks and packies being over here. He says Britain is for the British and we should all be demonstrating to get rid of them. He says they'll take all our jobs if we are not careful and anyway there's not enough room for them.

JENNY

So, Terry's a racist as well as an idiot, is he?

JO

What do you mean?

JENNY

I mean that Terry is starting to sound like a fascist.

JO

Well I happen to think that he is right. I mean, what can we possibly have in common with races that don't use a knife and fork? And it's not as if we need all these Chinese and Indian takeaways. I mean, our chippy has always done a lovely curry sauce.

JENNY

Don't you ever think for yourself? I mean, do you have any thoughts of your own, or do you always just agree with Terry? Terry this and Terry that ... I bet Terry even tells you when to fart ...

*Roz comes back on.*

ROZ

She's all right. [*The others ignore her.*]

JO

Just because you can't keep a man for more than a couple of weeks ... I mean, look at the last episode in your love life ...

ROZ

Oh, come on, girls... leave it out, will you? It's the end of the week and we're all tired. There's no need to take it out on each other.

JENNY

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have gone on at you, I'm just a bit uptight at the moment.

JO

It's all right. I know I go on about my Terry too much. It's just that ... [*Roz stares at her and puts her finger to her lips*]

ROZ

How about we all go out to the disco for a girls' night out?

JENNY

Yeah, why not? I need to wind down.

JO

Sounds good to me. What about you, Tracey?

TRACEY

Oh, no. My mum's doing one of her specials. It's her latest from her cord-on-blue night-school classes: Beef Bourginoin and Black Forest Gateaux. And my Dad says he might even bring us some After-Eight mints for a treat.

ROZ

Hey, we can practice our dance for tonight. There's no one in the salon and Barry's gone out to the wholesalers.

JO

Put the music up, Trace.

JENNY

Handbags, girls ...

#### EXTRACT FOUR

BARRY

Turn the music down, Tracey. Perhaps I should remind you that the OAPs are in soon. So lots of TLC and Tracey, put the Max Bygraves on.

*[Music changes to Max Bygraves.]*

JENNY

Well, I just hate OAPs day! It's just depressing thinking that in days to come that'll be me. Blue rinse, pork pie hat and wrinkly stockings.

JO

It doesn't have to be like that.

ROZ

I like it when the OAPs come in. I get on with old people. I suppose it's because my gran brought me up really. My mum was on her own, you see. My dad left her for the bar-maid in the Horse and Hound. She had to work really hard to make ends meet. She did a cleaning job in the day and then a night shift stacking the shelves in Kwik Save. So I always went to my gran's after school. She had time for me. Always had something nice to eat waiting for me when I got home. On Thursdays, when she got her pension, she'd go to the cake shops and get some chocolate eclairs for a treat. So I like chatting to the old ladies; I see it as my chance to do a bit of good in the world. I mean, for some of them you are their lifeline; the only person they might talk to that day. It's my opportunity to be a little ray of sunshine, a warm friendly voice in a cold uncaring world, a comforting hot chocolate after a snowy winter's walk.

JENNY

Oh, give over, Roz. Here they come!

*Four old ladies enter and struggle into the chairs*

ALL FOUR HAIRDRESSERS TOGETHER

Morning Mrs ...

JENNY

Smith

JO  
Jones  
ROZ  
Arscot  
CARMEL  
Carter.  
ALL HAIRDRESSERS  
How are you today?  
OLD LADIES TOGETHER  
Oh, not so bad, dear. I've just got this pain in my ...  
MRS SMITH  
Back.  
MRS JONES  
Hips  
MRS ARSCOT  
Chest  
MRS CARTER  
... .. [*She mouths something silently and points below in the manner of Les Dawson.*]  
ALL HAIRDRESSERS  
Well, I hope you've been to the doctor's.  
ALL OLD LADIES  
There's nothing he can do at my age, dear. You've just got to cope as best as you can.  
ALL HAIRDRESSERS  
Is it the usual blue rinse?  
ALL OLD LADIES  
Yes, please, dear, and not too tight with the rollers. It hurts me 'ed.  
ALL HAIRDRESSERS  
Are you going out tonight, Mrs ...  
JENNY  
Smith  
JO  
Jones  
ROZ  
Arscot  
CARMEL  
Carter  
OLD LADIES  
Pardon me? I'm sorry, you'll have to speak up - my hearing's not too good.  
HAIRDRESSERS  
Are you going out tonight?  
OLD LADIES  
Oh, just the usual ...  
MRS SMITH  
Bingo  
MRS JONES  
Whist  
MRS ARSCOT  
Coronation Street  
MRS CARTER  
Toy boy and me, out on the town.  
HAIRDRESSERS  
I hope that these awful power cuts haven't been bothering you too much.  
OLD LADIES  
Oh no. dear. My generation have been used to hardship. We haven't been accustomed to all these modern comforts. When I was a girl you didn't have ...  
MRS SMITH  
Central heating

MRS JONES

Hot water

MRS ARSCOT

Electric gadgets to do the work for you

MRS CARTER

Electric blankets. You had to find other ways of keeping warm in bed, if you know what I mean ...

OLD LADIES

Our idea of a treat was ...

MRS SMITH

Putting your feet in the gas oven to warm up

MRS JONES

A piece of stale bread with a bit of marge

MRS ARSCOT

Eating the pet rabbit for Sunday lunch

MRS CARTER

Getting the milkman to give you a bit extra on the side

*Actors freeze.*

*JENNY to the audience*

And so it goes on, the same thing week after week. I wouldn't mind but as soon as you've done their hair they put their hats back on.

*Old ladies put their hats back on and slowly make their way to the door.*

HAIRDRESSERS

See you next week then Mrs ...

JENNY

Smith

JO

Jones

ROZ

Arcot

CARMEL

Carter

OLD LADIES

If I'm still here, dear.

MRS ARSCOT *turning back as she is about to exit*

I hope you get over your shock, dear. You must have had an awful fright to make your hair stand up on end like that.

EXTRACT from Production Notes

## **PRODUCTION NOTES + TECHNICAL CUES etc.**

### **INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTION.**

This is a fun, bubbly play which is not intended to be too serious in its intentions. There is a modicum of social comment inherent in the light satirical style but it is largely an affectionate glance at seventies' fashions: its music, clothes and, of course, its hair.

The interest and main focus of the play are the girls themselves. Somewhat in the style of 'Dreamjobs' - a perennial favourite with drama teachers with GCSE exam classes- it focuses on the dreams and aspirations of the four hairdressers.

Conflict is added by the tension between Jo and Jenny on the subject of Jo's boyfriend Terry.



## CHARACTERS:

**CARMEL** is described as 'bubbly and naive'. Her voice should be light and delivery quite fast. She has a tendency to dream - a contrast to the others - and this should be built into her characterisation. For instance, whenever Barry enters we should be aware of her adoring interest in him - she watches him all the time with an expression of alert attention and tries to bring herself to his notice not by flirting but by extra efficiency when he is around. When he leaves the stage - a beat or two as she watches after him and the dreamy expression takes over her face - before she gets back to work. She needs to come over as pleasant and rather young for her age - a 'nice' girl.

**JENNY**, described as 'bored and intelligent,' acts as a good contrast to the others. Her tone of speech should be slower, deeper, emphasising the undertone of irony which is in much of what she says. At times she is sharp, cutting, hurtful - because she is impatient with the silliness of others. The increasing conflict with Jo, which is only explained at the end of the play needs to be carefully underlined. The audience needs to be asking - what is behind all this? - and this gives a necessary depth to the play. The real Jenny is only revealed in this final scene on Page 14, but we do need to notice the progress of her bitterness about Terry before that. The speech on Page 14 should be delivered with a kind of wry bitterness - not with self-pity; that isn't Jenny's style.

**ROZ** is described as 'caring' and that is a good clue to her character. She is kind, forgiving of others, a peacemaker. She ends up happily looking after old people. Her tone is pleasant and warm - sometimes placatory, as she often has to soothe the feelings of others. She should speak quite slowly, show that she listens to others, be distressed when someone, like Carmel, is hurting, treat her customers with gentleness and warmth. She is not desperately bright - a bit literal - but she is not a weak character. Her positivity gives her strength and she always smiles and has a good word for everyone.

**JO** is described as 'a little tarty and over-chatty.' She is the other side of the coin from Jenny - flouncy, sure of herself, full of received opinions from her boyfriend Terry. She hasn't an original thought in her head. Her delivery could be harsher in tone than the others - the kind of voice that grates on you - and very fast, hardly drawing breath between sentences. Her body language could be mannered, subject to posing - in a very stereo-typical way. Care should be taken to emphasise the fun side of her character, though, because we should not dislike her at the end when she hears the truth about her beloved Terry. She is so full of feistiness throughout the play, that this scene should show the stuffing being knocked out of her. She is gutted - and for once almost silent.

**TRACEY**, the receptionist, has little to do until Page 11, when she has a chance to reveal her character a bit. Up to then she is a caricature receptionist using that typical bored phone voice with its strange stresses on inappropriate words so familiar to us all. Though the script does not always spell it out, we should hear her 'set phone speech', given on Page 2, often throughout the play. It should act as a background, preceded by the brief ringing of a phone, keeping us aware of where we are. Her speech on Page 11 reveals that she has a pretty low intelligence level. This should be reflected in her voice delivery which may be a little too slow, with less varied modulation than the others have. She lives at home and dotes on her parents. Though Carmen admires her for her confident phone manner, this is ironic, since clearly Tracey has little confidence in herself. Her opinions are her parents' and one has the feeling she will never break away from their protection.

**BARRY**, the salon manager is a type pure and simple: camp, extrovert, full of himself, with emphatic and extreme body language and the over-pronounced way of speaking and over-emphatic lip movement, that we associate with the camp type. He does not

listen to others, flounces around, is tetchy and difficult. I cannot imagine why a nice girl like Carmen might think she loves him - but he does pay her attention and that is flattering. He should touch her often - a little squeeze, an arm round her, that sort of thing - which might, to someone as naive as Carmen, be misinterpreted. If he is generally touchy - feely, then that would make more sense of his character.

All the other characters are types and self-evident. The skill for those undertaking them, is to show distinct differences between all the characters - in voice and body language.

All the characters are to a degree stereotypical, but care should be taken to differentiate them as indicated above, otherwise interest is lost. Their characters should be reflected in their dances, too - the moves varying in slickness and punch according to the dancer. I am not saying that moves should be wrong - just that facial expressions should differ [Tracey fiercely concentrating, Jenny sure of herself, scowling a little - etc.] Dance inserts in pieces are one area that I have noticed young actors tending to drop character and enthusiastically perform the dance as themselves. Just a warning.

The girls should have varying degrees of regional accents - Jo's the strongest.

## **SETTING**

There needs to be plenty of free performance space in the centre, for the dance and dream sequences. As the author suggests, a central flat - can be free-standing - set towards the back, with the name of the salon on and posters and images reflecting the fashions and icons of the seventies, would add interest and a focal point. You could add Barry's slogan, written large across it: 'Tomorrow's hair styles in today's salon.' This flat could also be an 'exit/ entrance for the parts of the text that require customers going off into another part of the salon itself - e.g. for washing or to the dryers. Have a table set behind it with Mrs Willis' and Jean's wigs on it. This would add variety to the usable stage entrances.

Sharply angled at one side of the stage - a row of chairs, for the customers and for the girls to stand behind. On the other side of the stage - Tracey's desk, chair and phone. It would be good if chairs matched.

This is all that is necessary. Any other dressings are up to you. You may want a long table or a trolley for the hairdressing equipment - sprays, scissors, hand mirrors and so on, that the girls use as part of their 'business.' And of course you are free to create a whole salon if desired.

## **LIGHTS**

Lights can be very simple. Three main statements need to be made by them: ...