



MARY MORRIS is an award-winning playwright and screen writer for both adults and young people. Mary was head writer of the series *The Story of Tracy Beaker* for the BBC over five years. She followed that with an original telemovie about Tracy Beaker called *The Movie of Me* and a stage musical called *Tracy Beaker Gets Real* which had two national tours in the UK. Her work on that series, the musical and the telemovie brought her four children's BAFTA nominations, including a nomination for the Best Adapted Screenplay award and won the Best Children's Programme Broadcast Award and a Royal Television Society Award. *Zig Zag Love*, a 70-minute original telemovie starring Robert Carlyle for BBC Scotland won a Welsh BAFTA award for Best Youth programme as well as National Film Festival awards.

BOSS OF THE POOL

THE PLAY

Mary Morris

adapted from the novel by Robin Klein



Currency Press, Sydney

CURRENCY TEENAGE DRAMA

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Boss of the Pool, the play was first performed by Acting Out on 7 July 1990 at the Playhouse Theatre, Perth with the following cast:

BEN	Paul Tolton
SHELLEY	Christine Ewing
ANNE, PETRA	
BEN'S MOTHER	Diane Jeffries
JANINE, SHOPGIRL,	
DENISE, CLAUDIA	Camilla Sobb
MRS MURRAY, MEGAN,	
TANIA	Damien O'Doherty

Director, Grahame Gavin
Designer, Lou Westbury

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

p11 Christine Ewing as Shelley and Paul Kennedy as Ben in the Riverina Theatre Company production at the Riverine Playhouse, Wagga Wagga on 7 March 1992. Photographer: Tim Levy. p7 Christine Ewing as Shelley and Paul Kennedy as Ben in the Riverine Theatre Company production. p11 Paul Kennedy in the Riverine Theatre Company production. Photographer: Tim Levy. p15 Christine Ewing, Paul Kennedy, Lucinda Armour as Tania and Barbara Fitzgerald as Anne in the Riverina Theatre Company production. Photographer: Tim Levy. p24 Paul Kennedy and Christine Ewing in the Riverina Theatre Company production. Photographer: Tim Levy. p28 Vanessa Stuart as Shelley and Diane Jeffries as Anne in the March 1993 Acting Out production at the Playhouse Theatre, Perth. Photographer: David Dare Parker. p40 Paul Tolton as Ben and Vanessa Stuart in the 1993 Acting Out production. Photographer: David Dare Parker. p51 Vanessa Stuart, Monica Main (front) and Kahren Hampton in the 1993 Acting Out production. Photographer: David Dare Parker.

Characters

BEN	a mentally handicapped boy
SHELLEY	an adolescent
ANNE	Shelley's mother, a worker at the hostel where Ben lives
JANINE	a nurse at the hostel
TANIA	a resident at the hostel
MRS MURRAY	Anne's neighbour
PETRA	friends of Shelley
MEGAN	
DENISE	

Setting

The play takes place at Shelley's house, the hostel and at the shops.

PART ONE

SHELLEY is making her bed. She throws a big blue sheet (or doona) the length of the bed. As it billows and settles she dives into it and dry-swims like mad to the sound of a race-call.

LOUDSPEAKER: And they've set up a cracking pace straight off in the two hundred metres freestyle. Alison Derby for Newhart swimming in lane one. In lane two Debra Harrison for Swandale, and in lane three Shelley Treloar for Blackburne. And Debra looks to be just in front— Yes, Debra takes the lead. A strong girl Debra, almost unbeatable in the two hundred. And it's Debra leading by two strokes at the one hundred mark. Alison Derby for Newhart chasing her hard and Shelley Treloar trailing for Blackburne. Doing a grand job for Blackburne, but Debra's got the muscle. And it's one lap to go, and Newhart's tiring, Alison Derby for Newhart tiring. Shelley Treloar in three hanging on, she's working hard, she's hurting, Alison is holding her off—Half a lap—and Shelley Treloar's sprinting! She's eating up space! This is incredible! Shelley Treloar pulling everything out of the bag and she's passing Alison! Twenty metres and Shelley Treloar fighting for the medal and the cup for Blackburne! It's Debra Harrison, ten metres to go it's Debra Harrison and Shelley Treloar! Look at Shelley go! Shelley Treloar! Shelley Treloar touches an instant before Debra Harrison! This is incredible! It's Shelley Treloar, Shelley Treloar for Blackburne! Blackburne snatches the cup and Shelley Treloar wins the medal in the two hundred metres freestyle, and it looks like a record time! This is incredible! An incredible swim from Shelley Treloar for Blackburne...

SHELLEY heaves herself out of the bed triumphant, holding her arms high in victory. The crowd roars its approval, the band plays 'Advance Australia Fair'. SHELLEY, singing the anthem, acknowledges the crowd. SHELLEY's mum ANNE enters and watches, puzzled. SHELLEY, absorbed in her dream, does not notice her.

ANNE: What on earth are you up to?

SHELLEY: Making my bed of course!

ANNE: Yeah, right, I should have realised.

She goes.

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SHELLEY *goes into the lounge*. MRS MURRAY *comes in carrying photo albums and sits beside her*.

MRS MURRAY: I'm sure you haven't seen these. They're of my three when they were at school. I showed you the wedding photos last night didn't I love—or did I?

SHELLEY: You did. For three hours.

MRS MURRAY: I told you we'd make time fly. Well, tonight you can see them in Infant school and in Primary and in High school. I've kept every school photo of every one of them. Then we'll have a cup of tea and watch the wrestling, and before you know it your mum will be home. It's a shame she has to work nights at that—what d'you call it? A nursing home?

SHELLEY: A hostel for mentally handicapped people. A retard farm!

MRS MURRAY: That's not very nice, love. Your mum must be exhausted when she gets home. Takes it out of you caring for the handicapped. Still, I'm sure you are a great help to her, eh?

SHELLEY: Mmm.

MRS MURRAY: Mum tells me you won your swimming at school.

SHELLEY: Yeah.

MRS MURRAY: Got a great big medal.

SHELLEY: Yeah.

MRS MURRAY: Let's have a look at it then.

SHELLEY: [*showing her the medal*] It's no big deal.

MRS MURRAY: Oh, very mintox.

SHELLEY *cringes*.

Something you can look back on when you're older. You ought to get it engraved.

SHELLEY: Yeah, I will, one of these days.

MRS MURRAY: Going anywhere nice for the holidays?

SHELLEY: No. [*She mimics her mother*] 'We can't afford holidays on my wage, Shelley.'

MRS MURRAY: It can't be easy for your mum, love.

SHELLEY: Well, she doesn't have to work with a bunch of retards! She could get a decent job!

MRS MURRAY: She was telling me she was lucky to get that job, her not being qualified for anything.

SHELLEY: Petra Van Rees's mother has a great job managing a music shop. She gets cassettes and everything half price.

MRS MURRAY: Well, money isn't everything. I expect your mother likes it where she is.

SHELLEY: How could anyone like working with those... morons! Some of them can't even speak properly.

MRS MURRAY: We all have our place in the world. Look there's my youngest, first day at school! And to think she's just about to have her own baby. I'll be off to her place when the baby comes, give her a bit of a hand.

SHELLEY: [*perking up*] When you going?

MRS MURRAY: Any day now. I'll bring back some photos, so you can see who it looks like.

SHELLEY: Great.

MRS MURRAY: Has your mum arranged for someone else to baby-sit you?

SHELLEY: I don't need a babysitter! I'm old enough to stay on my own.

MRS MURRAY: Just as you say dear. I'll get another album.

She goes. SHELLEY mimics her mum.

SHELLEY: 'You can't stay on your own Shelley, there's been some burglaries round this neighbourhood. I can't risk leaving you alone'. As if anyone would break into this dump! As if there's anything worth pinching! I can't stand listening to that boring old Mrs Murray every night! 'You don't have to stay with Mrs Murray Shelley, you could come to work with me, they have table-tennis, and a craft room'. Oh sure, come and play with a bunch of retards! [*She stomps around, eyes crossed, making retard noises and waving her arms around spastically.*] 'Don't be silly Shelley, you could swim in their lovely indoor pool.' If she thinks I'm getting in water that these... things have been in, she can think again! Petra Van Rees stays home on her own when her Mum goes to aerobics and she's a month younger than me. I'm not going and that's that. She'll

have to leave me at home. I'll have a party when she's at work. I'll invite Petra and her cassettes and Denise and Megan and we'll dance till we drop! She can't make me go with her to that place, she can't!

MRS MURRAY: [*entering with more photos*] This one's of my eldest in Year Two. He was such a sweet little boy. The image of me they said. What do you think dear?

SHELLEY: Oh God!

SHELLEY drags herself back and sits beside MRS MURRAY and looks dejectedly at the photos. The phone rings. SHELLEY dives for it. Enter PETRA with a novelty phone.

PETRA: Hello? Shell?

SHELLEY: Petra! How ya goin'?

PETRA: Great. Guess what? Mum's sending me to a holiday ranch for two weeks. I got the brochure here. Riding every day and an Olympic size swimming pool. We don't have to do anything except have a great time. It costs heaps, most people only go for a week, but I'm going for two. Hey—why don't you ask if you can come?

SHELLEY: We can't afford it.

PETRA: Hasn't your Mum got a decent job yet?

SHELLEY: Nuh. She's on evening shift. I'll be staying on my own soon. I thought I might come round one day and stay the night at your place. I'll make us a chocolate cake and we'll stuff ourselves and dance and...

PETRA: Sorry, Mum got me in straight away, a cancellation, I'm going tomorrow. They have log cabins and I don't have to share my room and we can stay up as long as we like. Mum got me new riding gear and new bikinis and new jeans and two new tops and...

SHELLEY: Yeah? Look, I got to go now, I promised Denise I'd call her before nine... Have a good time... see ya.

PETRA: See ya.

SHELLEY: [*she puts down the phone and mimics PETRA*] 'New riding gear and new jeans and two new tops!' Pity you don't get new brains!

PETRA leaves. SHELLEY dials DENISE's number. DENISE enters with a different novelty phone.

DENISE: Hello?

SHELLEY: Hi Den, it's me, Shell.

DENISE: Hi Shell.

SHELLEY: How ya goin'?

DENISE: Aw, I'm having a great time! My cousins are here from Canberra. You know, I told you.

SHELLEY: Oh, yeah.

DENISE: I'm exhausted, we've been everywhere. We went to the beach today and my cousin went up to these guys—I nearly died—and she asked them if she could borrow their block-out 'cos hers was only factor six and they asked us to have a burger with them—I nearly died—don't tell my mum or she'll kill us. We got burgers and cokes and this one guy, he was really spunky, he said he would be looking for us same spot tomorrow—I nearly died. We're going to Rotto, but and when we get back we're going to see Whitney Houston—I'll prob'ly die—Dad paid for all the tickets. On Thursday we're all going to the pictures, you could come if you like.

SHELLEY: Yeah, I'd like that, maybe I could stay over...

DENISE: You'd be lucky! Mum reckons if we try to fit any more people in our house we'll have to sleep standing up. My cousins are great, but. Sandy, she's the one in high school, she's going to bleach my hair at the front like hers, for the concert. These are the best holidays ever... [*She hears someone calling her and answers.*] Yeah, won't be a minute! What are you doing for the holidays Shell?

SHELLEY: Nothing.

DENISE: How come?

SHELLEY: Mum reckons we can't afford anything and she's got this stupid job being an occupational therapy aide at the retard farm.

DENISE: Yeah, I heard! Yuk!

SHELLEY: Yeah, it's really embarrassing.

DENISE: What's she do there?

SHELLEY: Teaches them how to make things! Can you imagine?

DENISE: [*hearing someone calling her*] I'm coming, hang on willya! What sort of things?

SHELLEY: Who knows? Maybe they paint Christmas cards with their teeth or knit dog blankets or something. Who cares?

DENISE: God, I'd die.

SHELLEY: Yeah, I know, and guess what. [*She lowers her voice.*] She's working nights and I have to have Mrs Murray next door in.

DENISE: Why?

SHELLEY: Cos Mum reckons I'm too young to stay on my own. She's so used to working with retards she must think I'm one.

DENISE: Petra Van Rees stays home on her own and she's...

SHELLEY: Yeah, I know, I know.

DENISE: Never mind, Shell. Maybe Mrs Murray will teach you to knit dog blankets.

SHELLEY: Very funny.

DENISE: [*hearing someone calling her again*] I said, I'm coming! I gotta go Shell, we're all going to the Pizza Hut for tea.

SHELLEY: Yeah, well, Mrs Murray's going to her daughter's soon and I'm having a party while Mum's at work and...

DENISE: Gotto go. See ya!

She runs off.

SHELLEY: Yeah, see ya.

She dumps the phone down.

MRS MURRAY: The wrestling will be on in ten minutes, love. Lets pop in the kitchen and make us a cup of tea. I've brought you some sponge fingers, your favourites.

SHELLEY: I'm not hungry.

MRS MURRAY: Nonsense! I never saw a child who wasn't hungry when there's a few grouse biccies around.

SHELLEY: I'm not a child!

MRS MURRAY: Just as you say, dear. Bring the photos, we'll look at them while the kettle boils.

She goes.

SHELLEY: I can't wait till she goes to her daughter's. Mum'll have to leave me on my own. I'll have everyone round and we'll have the sound up really loud and...

There is a blast of current bubblegum pop music and SHELLEY begins to dance. PETRA and DENISE enter and dance too. Disco fights flash, it looks wild. Suddenly the music stops. A kettle whistle is heard, the dancers freeze.

MRS MURRAY: [*from out the kitchen*] Kettle's boiling, bring the photos dear.