(Helen bumps into Rob in her local laundrette.)

Helen
Hello Rob. I didn't know I would find you here. I love this launderette. The washing machines are very efficient.

Rob
I hope so. I bought a very expensive washing machine for my house but when I put my clothes in, they ended up dirtier!

Helen
What do you mean?

Rob
Well, apparently there's some oil leaking in the motor and it stained all the washing! So I'm trying to wash them again here in this launderette!

Helen
Oh, I can see all the yellowish stains … This white shirt … it's an expensive, designer one …

Rob
Yes, it is. That was my best shirt. It's probably ruined now! If this stain doesn't come out, I'll sue the washing machine manufacturers! I'll take them to the cleaners!

Helen
Calm down, Rob! It's the shirt that has to be taken to the cleaners!

Rob
Not exactly, Helen. In English, when we say we're going to 'take someone to the cleaners', we mean we're going to take a lot of money from them.
**Helen**
So you want to ask the company to give you a lot of money – maybe all they’ve got – to compensate you for the loss of your very expensive shirt.

**Rob**
Yes! I’m very angry with them. Anyway, you can use the phrase in a sports context, too, when one team defeats another one by a large number of points. ‘Take to the cleaners’ is today’s expression in The English We Speak. It used to mean getting money from someone else in a dishonest way but now it can just mean getting a lot of money from someone else.

**Helen**
Shall we listen to some examples of how this phrase is used?

**Rob**
Yes.

**Examples**
*My husband cheated on me with my best friend! I’m going to get the best divorce lawyer in town and take him to the cleaners!*

*My team has the best players and we’ll take you to the cleaners in this Sunday’s match!*

**Helen**
No need to sue the company, Rob. Call your washing machine manufacturer and ask them to replace it.

**Rob**
But I’m angry!

**Helen**
Don’t be. I can take you to the cleaners, but not in the sense of this idiom. I can take you to the cleaners next door – the people who remove stains from clothes. They’re very good.

**Rob**
Okay. Well, do you think they might be able to remove this stain?

**Helen**
Of course they can. Come on, Rob.

**Rob**
Okay. Come on, take me to the cleaners! Thanks, Helen.
Helen
You're welcome. Bye.

Rob
Bye.