

# AIN'T SHE SWEET

By Craig Sodaro

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## CHARACTERS

|                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| EDNA                  | twenty, a boarder at Mrs. Gunther's |
| HOPE                  | twenty, another                     |
| LUCILLE LOU LOUT      | neighbor next door                  |
| HARRIET GUNTHER       | owner of Gunther House              |
| CAMILLE               | twenties, another boarder           |
| MARIAN                | another                             |
| MARSHALL FIELDING III | seventy, a tycoon                   |
| ZELDA                 | twenties, another boarder           |
| ITCHY FINGERS KLONTZ  | a gangster                          |
| PRETTY BABY SCHNERD   | another                             |
| BABS MALONE           | their moll                          |
| DEDE                  | twenties, another boarder           |
| AUBREY HILL           | thirty, a film director             |
| RUFUS VALENTINE       | twenty-five, a film star            |
| SUZIE                 | a fan                               |
| BLANCHE               | another                             |
| DOROTHY               | another                             |
| X. SCOTT FITZHERALD   | a would-be writer                   |
| OFFICER O'MALLEY      |                                     |
| ELLIOT MESS           | a crimefighter                      |
| VIOLET                | his wife                            |

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

- Scene One      Parlor of Mrs. Gunther's boarding house for young ladies of good reputation, early evening.
- Scene Two      The same, several hours later.

### **ACT II**

- Scene One      The same, an hour later.
- Scene Two      The same, midnight.

### **SETTING**

The parlor of Gunther House, a boarding house for young ladies in Chicago, 1925. Wing entrance down right leads to outside. Wing entrance down left leads to other parts of the house and the small backyard. Large window up center with curtains on either side that are long enough actors can stand behind them. Window box under the window large enough for actors to get into. (It should have no back so the actors can crawl out) Window looks onto brick wall and a single scrawny tree which fades as night falls. Up left is small fireplace, now not in use. Table up right set with several chairs. Down left near entrance a radio sits on small table or shelf. Couch sits center with perhaps a small table and chairs close by. The room is decorated with a hodgepodge of artifacts from various exotic countries - fans from the Far East, a blanket from Mexico, bras trinkets from the Mideast, a small statue of a Chinaman, and so on, reflecting the 20s interest in exotic, foreign lands.

## PROPS

Paper, pencil, notebook (Edna)  
Large fan (Harriet)  
Cane (Marshall Fielding III)  
Paper (Zelda)  
Newspaper (Camille)  
Ice cream bowl (Dede)  
Paper/pencil (Dede)  
Books (Zelda)  
Hat (Marian)  
Plate of sandwiches (Edna)  
3 violin cases (Itchy, Pretty, Babs)  
Dust cloths or handkerchiefs (Itchy, Pretty, Babs)  
Mug (Dede)  
Hammers, chisels, crowbars, etc. (Itchy, Pretty, Babs)  
Paper bag (Babs)  
Guns (Itchy, Pretty, Babs)  
Chinese handcuffs (Pretty)  
Radio  
Small Chinaman statue (Pretty)  
Car keys (Marsh)

## **AIN'T SHE SWEET**

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### **ACT I**

#### **SCENE ONE**

***Setting: The living room of Gunther House, a boarding house for young ladies in Chicago, 1925. Wing entrance down right leads to outside, wing entrance down left leads to other parts of the house. Large window up center with curtains on each side looks out on brick wall and one scrawny tree, the branches of which we can see during the daytime scenes. Below window is a window box, large enough so an actor can get inside. (Have a false back so actors can get out easily.)***

***Up left stands fireplace, though it is not in use. Table up right with a few chairs set around it. Down left near entrance is radio. A couch sits left with chair and table. The room is decorated with a hodgepodge of artifacts from various exotic countries - fans from the Far East, a blanket from Mexico, brass trinkets from the Mid-east, and so on reflecting the interest in the 20s in exotic, foreign lands.***

***At Rise: It is evening. EDNA sits at table, writing. SHE crosses her last "t" and dots a final "i," with passion, then rises and reads aloud.***

EDNA: Dear Mama, I am taking this opportunity to say I hope you're fine in Keokuk; I miss you every day. I'm still here in Chicago where everything is fine. I'm living at Miss Gunther's by the elevated line. I know you hate the thought of my living all alone, but at the age of 20, I am completely grown. I make six dollars every week at Harmon's Books and Stamps, and the girls at Miss Gunther's are nothing but real champs. As you can tell I'm practicing so that one fine day I'll be crowned the new Edna St. Vincent Millay. But my candle burns at both ends; the night is passing through - This stain is but a teardrop that I have shed for you. (***savoring the poem a moment***) Gee, Edna, you're good! (***a knock right; calling***) I'll get it!

***(EDNA exits right as HOPE enters left in a slinky robe.)***

HOPE: Who's here? Is it that darling man who helped me at the automat? I gave him my address and he told me he'd stop by!

**(LUCILLE LOU LOU, wearing a Victorian dress and shawl, enters right followed by EDNA.)**

LUCILLE: **(furiously)** She's not home, hmmm? Just what I'd expect!

EDNA: I'm sure she'll be back in a few minutes, Miss Lou.

LUCILLE: Mrs. Lou! I had a husband, but he went to an early grave.

HOPE: Yeah, he jumped! Oh, hi, Mrs. Lou! How's trix?

LUCILLE: **(pointing to HOPE)** THIS is what I want to talk to Mrs. Gunther about!

HOPE: Me? Gosh, are you on THAT again?

LUCILLE: I saw you in the backyard dressed in trousers!

EDNA: If Hope was in the backyard, what difference would it make?

LUCILLE: Today the backyard, tomorrow the sidewalk! And then...and then... **(crumples into a chair)**

HOPE: Then what?

LUCILLE: Downtown!

EDNA: But Mrs. Lou, times are changing! It's 1925!

HOPE: Yeah! Women can even vote!

LUCILLE: You won't catch ME in a voting booth!

HOPE: We burned our corsets.

LUCILLE: Ladies of breeding did not!

HOPE: Hey, if you want to do any breeding these days, you'd better have burned it!

LUCILLE: Oh! I will not sit and listen to such... such... decadence!

**(LUCILLE rises as HARRIET enters right wearing a Chinese ensemble including pants and a jacket. SHE carries a large, Chinese fan.)**

HARRIET: Good evening, dears! Look what I found! **(spins the fan)**

HOPE: That's the bee's knees, Harriet!

EDNA: That's your prettiest fan yet. Where are you going to hang it?

HARRIET: I'm not going to hang it. I'm putting it right here. **(places it in front of the fireplace)** It'll cover up this silly old fireplace! With central heating, who needs these dirty old things, anyway.

LUCILLE: Mrs. Gunther!

HOPE: Oh, yeah... Mrs. Lou's here.

HARRIET: Why, Lucy Lou out! How could I have missed you standing there?

LUCILLE: Do NOT call me Lucy Lou!

HARRIET: I think it's a cute name. Like something out of the Sunday funnies.

LUCILLE: I am here to lodge a complaint.

HARRIET: Another one?

LUCILLE: This... this... lady - and I use the term loosely - was in the backyard wearing trousers!

HARRIET: (*indicating her own*) Like these? (*to HOPE*) Did they fit? How did they look?

HOPE: Sinfully good!

LUCILLE: Oh! I don't know what's happening to young people these days, but I can tell you this: unless you mend your ways, young lady, you'll never even SEE the Pearly Gates let alone pass through them.

HARRIET: Why, Lucy Lou, I didn't know you have a hotline to heaven!

LUCILLE: You KNOW what I mean, Mrs. Gunther. And not only have I seen the girls who live in this house wearing slacks, but I have seen them smoking and I've heard them playing jazz! They probably even DANCE in here! If I see any further defiance of social norms, I will contact the police and they'll close this house of ill repute down before you can play the first five notes of Beethoven's fifth.

HOPE: Play Beethoven's fifth! I thought you drink it!

LUCILLE: You, Mrs. Gunther, stand warned! (*LUCILLE moves right, then stops and turns back*) And your new fan is shamefully garish! (*flounces off right*)

HARRIET: Good! If you don't like it, Lucy Lou, I know it's perfect!

HOPE: The nerve of the dame!

CAMILLE: (*enters left*) What dame?

EDNA: Mrs. Lout was here again.

CAMILLE: I told you not to wear pants in the backyard, Hope. She's got binoculars.

HOPE: I had to get the feel of 'em. And they're just lovely! I don't understand how men have kept it a secret all these years.

CAMILLE: Come on! You know how well men communicate.

EDNA: Do you really think she'll call the police?

HARRIET: Oh, Edna, don't worry your pretty little head. The Chicago police have enough trouble trying to round up the rumrunners and gangsters and close the speakeasies.

HOPE: Speaking of which, I'd better get dressed. My millionaire is taking me to Club Babaloo tonight.

HARRIET: Oh, to be young again!

HOPE: There's no age limit. You can come!

HARRIET: Sorry, I'm playing Mah jong tonight.

HOPE: So THAT'S why you're in that getup.

HARRIET: (*spinning around*) Like it?

CAMILLE: It's the cat's pajamas! Say, Mrs. Gunther, I just got a note

from my sister and she said she and her husband are going to be passing through Chicago and wonder if they can stay here tomorrow night?

HARRIET: Well, of course! We've got that extra bed in the attic. It's nice and cozy up there and nobody will bother them.

CAMILLE: You're the best!

HOPE: Say, Camille, did you read that little tidbit in the Trib?

EDNA: That's right! Some big Hollywood producer's coming to Chicago to find a new leading lady for Rufus Valentine!

CAMILLE: Rufus Valentine! Oh, my gosh! I melt when I hear his name.

HOPE: You and ten gazillion other dames.

CAMILLE: But when I get into pictures, I'll probably have to work with him, and all those other women can just eat their hearts out. Do they give a phone number or an address where he can be contacted?

HOPE: Are you kiddin'?

EDNA: You're just going to have to get lucky.

HARRIET: (*leafing through paper*) Girls, are they still running my ad for a couple?

EDNA: Right at the top of the column headed "Domestics Needed."

HARRIET: But no calls?

CAMILLE: Not one all day.

HARRIET: I can't believe how hard it is to get good help these days. ANY help these days. It seems there's always a better job. And it's not like I'm paying chicken feed. I'm offering a dollar a day and a room!

MARIAN: (*enters left, hurriedly*) Oh, gosh! What time is it?

HARRIET: Just about seven.

CAMILLE: I thought you left already.

MARIAN: I feel back asleep! Does my face look all right?

HOPE: It's kind of scrunches up and puffy, but since you're playing a vampire, I guess you look okay.

MARIAN: Hey, a job's a job.

EDNA: You're so lucky to be acting with John Verryman.

MARIAN: He's a real peach, but the stage manager is a creep! He told me if I showed up late one more time, he'd put a stake through my heart!

HOPE: Sirloin, rib eye, or T-bone?

MARIAN: You're about as funny as a hemorrhoid attack! Bye, all! (*races off right; from off right*) Yeah, she's in there! Go on in!

**(MARSHALL FIELDING III, an old man wearing a top hat and sporting a cane, enters right.)**

MARSHALL FIELDING III: Evening, ladies! I'm looking for Hope.

HARRIET: (*suspiciously*) Well, sir, there's a Rescue Mission just down the street and they serve lots of hope with their hot soup.

HOPE: Harriet, I think he means me.

MARSHALL FIELDING III: You're the chickee who works at the automat?

HOPE: And you're the cute little fellow who lost his dime in the corned beef and cabbage slot?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: How about lettin' me repay you tonight with dinner?

HOPE: Gosh! You don't have to do that.

MARSHALL FIELDING III: Oh, don't I? (*growls like a tiger*) Grrrrrrrrr! All my wives call me Tiger!

HARRIET: (*shocked*) How many wives have you had?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: I lost count, so I've given up on marriage. I'm just gonna whoop it up!

HOPE: Then let me slip into something comfortable. (*exits left*)

HARRIET: You know, sir, that these are all upstanding young ladies here at Gunther House. This is Edna, who's quite a poet.

MARSHALL FIELDING III: I know a poem!

EDNA: Really?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: There was an old lady from - -

HARRIET: Wasn't that sweet? And this is Camille, who's going to be in pictures.

MARSHALL FIELDING III: Know who I like? Clara Bow! She's got IT!

HARRIET: My point is, sir, who are you and are your intentions honorable?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: I sign my checks with Marshall Fielding III... but you can call me Bob. And as for my intentions -

HARRIET: You're Marshall Fielding III?

EDNA: You own that big store downtown?

CAMILLE: And have a gazillion dollars? What were you doing at the automat?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: That's how I got my gazillion dollars, my dear!

HARRIET: But your store has so many wonderful restaurants.

MARSHALL FIELDING III: And they cost an arm and a leg. You won't find me paying twenty cents for a dish of vanilla ice cream, no siree! And regarding my intentions -

HOPE: (*enters, now dressed*) I hope you've got intentions, Bob. Ready?

MARSHALL FIELDING III: Vavavavooooom!

**(MARSHALL FIELDING III almost tips over with excitement. HOPE catches him, then leads him off right. ZELDA enters left carrying a**

***sheath of papers, a pencil stuck in her hair.)***

ZELDA: Darlings! Listen to this and see if you like it.

CAMILLE: Another chapter of your book Desire Under the Oaks, Zelda?

ZELDA: Just a paragraph. Now, listen. **(reads)** He was older and should have been wiser. But when he saw her honey streaked hair and bee-stung lips, a tingle of excitement rushed through him. He felt young again and with the arms of a boy hovering on the brink of becoming a man, he grabbed her and crushed her to his beating heart. She gasped slightly, her eyes pools of liquid reflecting her hopes and dreams. She melted at his touch. Her lips sought his and they kissed - long, hard, and meaningfully. When they separated, gasping for breath, he turned away with remorse. "I shouldn't have done that," he said. But she turned him back toward her and kissed him again, longer, harder.

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