

THE SCANDALOUS SCHEME AT THE SWEET SHOPPE

By Cheri Maxson

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THE SCANDALOUS SCHEME AT THE SWEET SHOPPE

A Full Length Melodrama

By Cheri Maxson

SYNOPSIS: It's the 1920s and Shingleville is rife with corruption! That gangster, Big Harry Deal and his thugs are now after Caramel Sweet's candy shoppe. Not only that, but Big Harry has decided that Caramel herself is part of the deal! Caramel's step-sisters want their cut too. The shoppe hasn't been doing too well because the secret fudge recipe is missing! What will become of sweet Caramel and her shoppe? And not everyone is exactly who they seem to be... This 20s themed melodrama is full of period slang, jazz & ragtime music, flappers and lots of gangster fun!

CAST OF CHARACTER

(7 females, 4 males, 2 either, 1 extra; gender flexible)

- BIG HARRY DEAL (m) Gangster; he has the town in his pocket and thinks he is in the clear. *(50 lines)*
- CY KOSIS (m)..... The top henchman; scary dude, doesn't talk much; really loves his tommy gun that he calls "Baby"; cleans his gun a lot. *(14 lines)*
- JUSTIN THYME (m)..... FBI Agent who is working undercover as RICK O'SHEA; a henchman to Big Harry. *(27 lines)*
- TOFFEE SOURS (f) Eldest of the step-sisters; flapper; whiny, sneaky, devious and all around obnoxious...she wants whatever her dear, darling, pain in the neck step-sister has, no matter what! *(17 lines)*

- TAFFY SOURS (f)..... Younger of the step-sisters; she'll do whatever Big Harry says as long as he treats her like a queen. *(17 lines)*
- LULU (f)..... Big Harry's moll. She don't take no guff from no one; and that Sweets tomata' ain't gonna' steal her man! *(14 lines)*
- FARRON HEIT (m)..... Candy maker and friend of our heroine. He tries to protect her, but is a bit of a bungler. He is in love with Penny Candy, the store clerk. *(24 lines)*
- CARAMEL SWEET (f)..... Heroine; recently inherited the candy store; her Aunt Twixie worries about her, she's such a sweet, naïve girl... Her two evil step-sisters are plotting ways to get rid of her so they can get their hands on the store and sell it to Big Harry Deal, whom they are in cahoots with. *(52 lines)*
- AUNT TWIXIE SWEET (f)..... Still mourns her dear departed brother, a champion worrier and advice giver; not afraid to speak her mind. *(31 lines)*
- PENNY CANDY (f)..... Ditzzy, bubble-headed store clerk, totally adorable and funny; loves everybody – even the villains – only sees the best in everything. *(26 lines)*
- TOOTSY ROLLA (f)..... No nonsense diva; a real flapper with an attitude. *(45 lines)*
- JUDGE (m/f)..... Can be a walk on role – audience member that reads from a book - or the role can be cast ahead of time. *(7 lines)*

JOHNNY/JANEY “FINGERS” KEYS (m/f) Jazz playing pianist –this character really does need to be able to play the piano – old jazz/ragtime numbers here and there throughout the play. Wears a fedora hat to hide face.
(*Non-Speaking*)

NARRATOR (m/f) (1 line)

DURATION: 60 minutes.

SET

This play was staged as a simple split set – SR was the gangster’s hideout. SL was the Candy Shoppe. No set pieces were moved/taken off. A cart filled with candy divided the set nearly in the middle. The candy shop front door was USL, the back door was DSL. The gangster hideout entrance was DSR. Effective lighting and spotlighting changed the scene easily.

PROPS

- Plastic revolvers and tommy guns – for gangsters and FBI agents
- Badge for FBI agent/Business Card
- Recipe card taped underneath fudge making table
- Ropes for tying up various characters
- An oar for “boating” scene
- Big Harry’s fake cigar
- Vintage newspaper on Big Harry’s desk
- Cleaning rag for Cy to clean “Baby” with
- Book to hide the judge’s lines in if you do an audience walk on
- Picnic Basket
- Hanky
- Oar

SETTING**CANDY SHOP:**

- Counter
- Large sign above that says “The Sweet Shoppe”
- Counter full of shelves with candy in jars and some in wooden baskets
- Suckers/stick candy in displays on top of counter
- Fudge
- Work table and couple of chairs
- Mixing bowl, wooden spoon, pans for fudge

BIG HARRY DEAL’S PLACE:

- Desk/rolling old-fashioned chair
- Piano
- Couple of straight wooden chairs
- Contraband bottles of “liquor”

SOUND EFFECTS

- Knock at the Door
- The Store Bell Rings

MUSIC NOTES

A real pianist plays the character of Fingers. Throughout the gangster hideout scenes, he/she would play 1920s jazz/speakeasy/ragtime background music. It added a lot of mood and a period feel to the play. She also played before the curtain opened, during intermission and during bows. The sound was dampened and stage mics used to amplify lines over the music. We found public domain pieces for the pianist so that no copyright issues would arise.

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

Johnny/Janey “Fingers” Keys – Jazz playing pianist –this character really does need to be able to play the piano, playing old jazz numbers here and there throughout the play – it creates mood and gives the show the feeling of the 1920s. He/she doesn’t say anything. Also, we never really see him or her much, a Fedora hat was pulled low over the actor’s face. He/she is an undercover FBI agent who likes to stay unrecognizable. (Can be cast as either a male or female with slight name change.) It’s fun for the audience that this character is so mysterious. For the original 2011 production this character was played by one of the school coaches who played the piano – the students loved it!

In the original 2011 program we included a disclaimer about the use of props guns – The use of guns in this production is in keeping with the 1920s gangster culture. They are stage props and used only for theatrical purposes. We are respectful of school safety.

Remember this is essentially a melodrama – the acting should be over the top. Big Harry should be an actor with lots of personality; Penny should be as bubble headed as possible...Caramel should cry like her heart is breaking ... etc.

The Judge was cast through chance – an audience member sat in a seat that had a sticker under it. Each night of the show it was someone different from the community. It was a lot of fun and folks even came to the show again to see who it would be next! However, you can cast the part if you prefer.

NARRATOR: (*Enters.*) Ladies and gentlemen, sit back and imagine yourself in another time, but a similar place. The year is 1926. The sounds of jazz and ragtime are in the air. On the banks of the Oswayo River, Shingleville's citizens find themselves involved in high drama!

Our story begins with sad news... Sugar Daddy Sweet and his second wife, Lemony Sours, were tragically killed in a trolley accident on their way home to Shingleville from Buffalo six months ago. Sugar Daddy's daughter, Caramel Sweet, has inherited sixty percent of Sugar Daddy's famous candy shop, The Sweet Shoppe, known for its famous chocolate fudge. Caramel's stepsisters, Taffy and Toffee Sours, each inherited twenty percent.

Unfortunately, the shop isn't doing very well, because the fudge recipe that made the shop famous was Sugar Daddy's secret fudge recipe. People came from miles around to buy Sugar Daddy's amazing fudge. Since Sugar Daddy's apprentice, Farron Heit wasn't let in on the secret recipe yet because he was still an apprentice candy maker, he hasn't been able to duplicate the fudge recipe, and business has dropped off. Since Sugar Daddy hid the recipe so well, Caramel can't find it. If she could find the recipe she knows it would save the store.

Her stepsisters want their percentage of the store in cold, hard, cash, but Caramel can't afford to buy them out. And, that notorious gangster, Big Harry Deal has been sniffing around Caramel and drooling over her shop's location. He lost his "consulting business" - an underground speakeasy - in the Bank Block fire on Academy Street last month. If he could get his paws on Caramel's shop, he could reopen his illegal gin joint and make money hand over fist. He wouldn't mind getting his paws on Caramel either - by fair means or foul! (*Exits.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: (SL) *Curtain opens. Sweet Shoppe. CAMEL, AUNT TWIXIE, PENNY and FARRON are in the Shoppe. FARRON is mixing fudge; PENNY is straightening shelves, CAMEL and AUNT TWIXIE sit at the table quietly talking. BIG HARRY, CY and JUSTIN stroll in.*

BIG HARRY: Well, well, well. The gang's all here, boys. (*Looks at his henchmen.*) Looks like a party. Must be our invite was lost in the mail. (*Chuckles evilly.*)

CAMEL: (*Stands up.*) Mr. Deal, I thought I'd made myself very clear during your last visit. The Sweet Shoppe is not for sale. (*Puts her hands on her hips.*) I want you and your "associates" to leave, right now.

BIG HARRY goes over to CAMEL, gets very close-too close, CAMEL inches away, but he follows.

BIG HARRY: Now doll, don't be so quick to give us the bum's rush. You haven't heard my latest offer. It's a beaut, completely on the level!

AUNT TWIXIE: (*Snorts in a very unladylike way.*) Huh! Nothing about you is on the level, Mr. Deal. You aren't fooling anyone around here. You want to get your grimy paws on my sweet Caramel's Shoppe just to turn it into another one of your illegal speakeasies. The big Bank Block fire last month put a cramp in your business – everyone knows you had a gin joint in the basement of the hardware store that was destroyed. Well, forget it. You're just going to have to find someone else to bully into selling.

CY putting his hand in his jacket and pulling his tommy gun out for all to see.

CY: Boss, you want I should make the old bag pipe down?

AUNT TWIXIE glares at CY.

BIG HARRY: Let's not be hasty, Cy. Miss Twixie is simply concerned, as she should be. She knows folks that cross Big Harry Deal always get the short end of the stick.

BIG HARRY runs his finger down CAMEL'S arm.

FARRON: (*Shaking in his shoes, but trying to help.*) That, (*Gulps.*) that sounds like a threat, Miss Caramel. Maybe you should let the sheriff know.

FARRON gives a dirty look to BIG HARRY and the HENCHMEN – CY flashes his tommy gun again – JUSTIN just stares at him.

AUNT TWIXIE: (*Snorts.*) What good would that do? The sheriff is on Mr. Deal's pay roll.

PENNY: (*Naively and bubble-headed.*) Oh, Mr. Deal wouldn't hurt Miss Caramel, would you Mr. Deal? You didn't mean that. (*Bats her eyes at BIG HARRY.*) Why, nobody would hurt Miss Caramel.

CAMEL: (*Moving away from BIG HARRY.*) Again, Mr. Deal. I want you to leave. Stop trying to intimidate me into selling. I won't sell out to you or anyone. This place means too much to me. My daddy left it to me and my sisters to continue on.

BIG HARRY: Yes, your sisters. Step-sisters to be exact. My understanding is that they aren't interested in this silly little candy store. They want to sell. And I know you don't have the cash to buy them out. I've heard rumors that your fudge just isn't what it used to be. It would be too bad if you were forced to go out of business because your candy maker just can't produce the quality of candy that your father did.

BIG HARRY sends FARRON a snide look, FARRON gets mad.

FARRON: (*Sputters.*) I'm working on it. I'm getting close. And when I do, this shoppe will be so full of customers that we'll have to open a second one in Coudersport, just to meet the demand!

BIG HARRY: Keep on dreaming, you sap. You'll put her out of business for me.

FARRON clenches his fists and starts toward BIG HARRY, but JUSTIN steps in front of BIG HARRY and places his hand on his shoulder holster.

JUSTIN: *(As RICK, in an intimidating manner.)* You don't want to do that, son. You'll find more trouble than you bargained for.

FARRON stops, looks scared, but stands his ground.

BIG HARRY: Settle down, Rick. Well, I think we've done all we can do here today. But, Miss Sweet, I will be back, mark my words. And I will have this shoppe. *(Turns to the door.)* Come on, boys.

BIG HARRY and HENCHMEN exit.

AUNT TWIXIE: Oh, that four-flushing, bootlegging, rotten, nasty gangster!

FARRON: *(Wipes his brow and nods.)* Amen.

CARAMEL: Aunt Twixie, you shouldn't have antagonized him. I was handling it.

AUNT TWIXIE: Caramel, you can't "handle" a hoodlum. He will do whatever he wants and he's got those two ne'er do well henchman to do his dirty work for him. We've got a real problem here and I'm afraid that Big Harry is going to get his way no matter what we do.

PENNY: Oh, Miss Twixie, he can't be all that bad. Everybody's got some good in them somewhere. And those two fly-boys were the bee's knees!

AUNT TWIXIE: Oh Applesauce! Penny, sometimes I swear your elevator doesn't quite hit the top floor!

CARAMEL: Aunt Twixie, Penny just tries to look on the bright side. There's nothing Big Harry can do short of murder to get this store. And he's not going to resort to that.

FARRON: Don't be too sure about that, Miss Caramel. I heard he's bumped off a lotta' fellas.

CARAMEL: Oh, those are just rumors. And besides, we're going to find the fudge recipe – I just know it, and then everything will be fine, you'll see.

PENNY: Atta girl, Miss Caramel. You bet your buttons we'll find it. Why, I was just thinking last night that if I was a recipe, where would I be? And then I thought, well, I'd be in a nice, cozy recipe box. But we've already looked there, so that's not it, so then I thought, well, maybe I'd be stuck under a plate or along the side of a cupboard if I'd fallen out!

AUNT TWIXIE: *(To the audience.)* Ding dong, nobody's home...

FARRON: Come on, Penny, let's go to the back room and look around again. You might be right and it's stuck under something.

FARRON takes PENNY'S arm and leads her off stage.

CARAMEL: Aunt Twixie, I do appreciate your concern, but I will be fine. Penny and Farron are here.

AUNT TWIXIE: Hmph! You'll have to excuse me if I don't put much faith in those two. That Penny Candy is a bit of a dumb Dora. Oh, I know her heart's in the right place, but honestly... And Farron Heit, well I know he'd do anything to help you, but he doesn't stand a chance against Big Harry and his goons. My dear, you are in a lot of trouble.

CARAMEL: Don't worry, Aunt Twixie, I'll think of something. Big Harry doesn't own everything and everybody. There's bound to be someone, somewhere who will help me, I just know it.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *(SL) Sweet Shoppe. CARAMEL and TOOTSY are at the table talking.*

TOOTSY: What's eatin' you, Buttercup?

CARAMEL: Oh, Cousin Tootsy, I just don't know what to do. Big Harry Deal won't take no for an answer. I am at my wit's end trying to figure out how to make him understand that I am not going to sell.

TOOTSY: Doll, that gangster doesn't just want your shoppe; he's in the market for a moll, too.

CARAMEL: What!?

TOOTSY: Honey, he looks at your gams and sees a ripe tomata'!

CARAMEL: I have no idea what you are talking about.

TOOTSY: Sweet pea, he wants you too. And believe you me, he's gonna' do whatever it takes to get you. That piker's lookin' to get you down the middle aisle.

CARAMEL: (*Aghast.*) You think he wants to marry me?

TOOTSY: Hello! Now you're on the trolley. What better way to get his hands on this place without shellin' out the dough? He marries you and gets the Sweet Shoppe too – a smokin' deal.

CARAMEL: There is absolutely no way I would marry that man! He's, he's, why he's a gangster!

TOOTSY: Lotsa' Janes would jump at the chance. With all the hooch and moonshine, gin mills and bootlegging he does a girl would be set for life.

CARAMEL: Well, not this girl!

TOOTSY: I know honey, I know. You're a regular Mrs. Grundy. Not a speck of greed in you. But you watch out for him. He's the type to take what he wants and not bother with the askin'. And you listen to me, sweetie, you watch out for those two gold diggin' step-sisters of yours. They're just as dangerous.

TOFFEE and TAFFY enter as this last line is delivered. Both saunter in looking like they are the queens of everything.

TOOTSY: Well, well, speakin' of she devils...

CARAMEL: (*Says quickly.*) Hello, Toffee, Taffy. What brings you here today?

TOOTSY: Nothing good, I'm sure.

TOFFEE and TAFFY glare at TOOTSY.

TOFFEE: We want to know why you turned down Big Harry's offer. He gave you a good price on this dump and we want our money.

TAFFY: What, you too high and mighty to sell to the likes of him? His money's just as good as anybody else's. Who else in this town is dumb enough to want this crappy dive? He's got big plans for it – gonna' spruce it up really nice and make a swingin' joint, if you know what I mean! (*Winks at TOFFEE.*)

TOFFEE: *(Looks at CAMEL and points a finger at her.)* You need to get off your high horse and smell the coffee.

TOOTSY looks at the audience, shakes her head and rolls her eyes at these mixed metaphors.

TOFFEE: There ain't no one else that will shell out the simoleans we want for this stupid candy store. You're gonna' sell it, or else!

TOOTSY: Or else what, Toffee? You'd better be careful. Very, very, careful!

TOOTSY gives TOFFEE a very menacing glare and stands up.

TAFFY: You just put a sock in it, Tootsy! We're not scared of you! You're nothing but a cheap flapper!

TOOTSY: Better that than a couple of gold diggers with no sense of style.

TOFFEE: Oh you...

TOFFEE goes to grab TOOTSY, but TAFFY grabs her.

TOOTSY: That's right Taffy, control your doggie...

TOFFEE shrieks again and lunges for TOOTSY, but TAFFY holds on to her.

TOOTSY: Now you two beat it. I've got better things to do than take out the trash.

TOOTSY turns her back and sits down, ignoring them. TOFFEE continues to struggle to get to TOOTSY, but TAFFY strong arms her out the door glaring at CAMEL and TOOTSY all the way out.

CAMEL: Well. *(Sits down across from TOOTSY.)* I keep hoping they will have a change of heart and realize how much the store means to all of us, but it's never going to happen, is it?

TOOTSY: Not a chance, sweetie. The only language those two understand is cold, hard cash. And since you don't currently speak it, they are gonna' make your life miserable. You need to watch your back, or you're gonna' find a knife in it.

CARAMEL: That's rather melodramatic, Tootsy. Surely you don't think they'd try to kill me over the store? That's ridiculous. Why, we're sisters!

TOOTSY: Blood's thicker than water, sweetie. And where you are concerned, those two see a deep well.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: (SR) *Big Harry's office. BIG HARRY sits at his desk, reading a copy of the star mail newspaper. CY is cleaning "baby" and JUSTIN is leaning on the piano watching FINGERS play. LULU is sashaying around holding a drinks tray, and trying to get BIG HARRY'S attention. He ignores her. SFX: We hear a loud knock at the Door. JUSTIN goes to the "door" and brings in TOFFEE and TAFFY.*

LULU: (Just loud enough to be a not so subtle whisper to FINGERS.) What do these broads want, 'cause it's pretty obvious they ain't sellin' girl scout cookies.

BIG HARRY: Ah, the Misses Sours. And to what do we owe this dubious pleasure?

TOFFEE and TAFFY look at each other, then at JUSTIN cluelessly.

JUSTIN: (As RICK. Shakes head.) He wants to know what you want.

TOFFEE: (Slyly, looks at BIG HARRY.) It's not what we want; it's more what he wants.

TAFFY: Yeah. (She saunters over to BIG HARRY, rubs her hand up and down his arm, gets real close.) We got something you want. (Perches on the corner of his desk facing him, swinging her long pearl necklace around in his face.) And we can help you get the rest of it – the part our dear step-sister won't give up. You interested, big boy?

TAFFY rubs his arm again. BIG HARRY raises his eyebrows, looks at her hand, and then removes it from his arm. He pushes back his chair, stands up and moves away from TAFFY. LULU glares at TAFFY and gets in between TAFFY and BIG HARRY with her arms crossed. JUSTIN perks up. He walks closer to the conversation and is very interested to hear the plan. LULU leans against FINGERS' piano.

BIG HARRY: So, you are proposing a partnership of sorts?

TOFFEE: Yeah, that's right, a partnership. We'll get Caramel to sign the papers to sell. And you make sure we get our cut.

BIG HARRY: How do you plan to get her to agree? I've tried sweet-talking her and intimidation. She's proving to be very stubborn.

TAFFY: You just leave that to us. And we're gonna' need to take one of your men to help us. See, what we gotta' do is get her away from her Aunt Twixie and that sneaky Cousin Tootsy. We'll bring her here. She'll sell. We're gonna' make her.

BIG HARRY: Clever, very clever. Kidnap her. Hmmm. Reminds me of that time in Chicago. Remember that job, Cy?

CY: *(Looks up from polishing "baby".)* Yeah, boss. *(Strokes "baby".)* Me and Baby here took out a lot of bums during that job. *(Grins evilly.)* Baby's been kind of sad lately. Not much work around here.

TOFFEE and TAFFY look at him, horrified. JUSTIN just stares at CY. LULU looks at the gun, CY, then BIG HARRY.

BIG HARRY: Oh, don't worry Cy. I'm sure we can liven things up around Shingleville real soon. Once we get the speakeasy up and running in the back of the Sweet Shoppe there will be lots of work for Baby again. *(Turns to TOFFEE and TAFFY.)* I do believe we will take you up on your generous offer, ladies. This will expedite things nicely. My associate, Mr. Rick O'Shea will accompany you and take care of whatever you need to aide you in getting Miss Sweet here. Once she sees things our way, you will definitely get what's coming to you.

BIG HARRY gives CY a sidelong glance. CY strokes baby again, the TOFFEE and TAFFY don't see it, but JUSTIN does and he gives the audience a horrified look.

TOFFEE: *(Moving toward the door.)* I just knew we'd make good partners, Mr. Deal. We'll be back with Caramel later. Make sure you've got the cash.

TAFFY: *(Walks away from the desk; once again making a play for BIG HARRY, she bats her eyes and gets close.)* It was a real pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Deal. A real, real, pleasure.

BIG HARRY: *(Moving away from TAFFY.)* Yes. We'll see you ladies later. Rick, you get the job done and get back here.

JUSTIN takes TOFFEE and TAFFY's arms, and leads them offstage.

BIG HARRY: *(To CY.)* Finally, my plans are coming together. We'll get that building and get back to business as usual. I've had to turn away a dozen bootleggers this week. It's bad for business.

CY: Hey, boss, you want I should follow 'em and make sure they get that Sweet bird?

BIG HARRY: No. Rick can handle it. He's new, but he's got brains. I've got some other things for you to take care of. The first of which is getting this place spruced up. I can't have my future wife getting married in a filthy dive, can I?

CY: *(Very confused.)* Whadda'ya mean, boss? What future wife?

LULU: Huh? *(Looking horrified at BIG HARRY.)*

BIG HARRY: *(Pointedly ignoring LULU.)* Why, Miss Sweet, Cy. Miss Caramel Sweet. I find myself entranced by her. She stood up to me, Cy. Nobody's ever done that. She's a fine woman, despite being misguided. I'm going to marry that girl. And you are going to help me. Once those Sours broads get her here we're going to have a nice little wedding ceremony. And then I'll have the Sweet Shoppe and a new bride all in one fell swoop.

LULU: But, but, Big Harry... whaddya want a wife for? You like the single life, the swingin' times at the speakeasy. You don't wanna' wife, she'll just be a wet blanket.

BIG HARRY: *(Finally acknowledging LULU.)* Oh, there's a lot to be said for the married life, Lulu. And Miss Sweet, she's something special.

CY: *(Still a little confused.)* But what about them sisters, boss? They got shares in the shoppe too. You gonna' give 'em their dough?

BIG HARRY: Cy, Cy... what am I going to do with you? Do you really think I'm going to give up my profits to those two dames? No. You and Baby are going to deal with them.

CY: Oh! Yeah... *(Grinning evilly.)* Me and Baby. *(Pats baby lovingly.)*

LULU: *(Aside to audience.)* And I'm gonna' deal with Miss Sweet. Ain't no dame gonna' get in my way with Big Harry. *(Points to herself and chuckles evilly.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *(SL) Sweet Shoppe. TWIXIE and TOOTSY are enjoying some fudge that CAMEL is serving them. PENNY and FARRON are making fudge, putting candy in displays, etc.*

AUNT TWIXIE: Farron, your fudge is improving. It's good, but you aren't quite there yet. Oh, I just wish you could find Sugar Daddy's recipe. Why he had to keep that recipe such a big secret is beyond me.

TOOTSY looks at CAMEL to respond, CAMEL tears up and pulls out a hanky, gesturing for TOOTSY to tell the story.

TOOTSY: He was afraid someone would steal it. He had big plans to sell that recipe to a huge candy factory and make a boat load of cash. He just didn't get the chance. *(Sees how sad CAMEL is, gets up and hugs her.)* I'm sorry sweetie. We all miss him. But, you gotta' move on. You can't spend the rest of your life in mourning. Sugar Daddy wouldn't have wanted that. He'd want you to have some fun. And you gotta' quit wearing all that black. I mean, come on, doll! You could be the cat's meow if you'd put some glad rags on!

PENNY: *(Looks over from putting away candy.)* And how, Tootsy! She's got this little red number in her closet she's never even worn yet, and I'll tell you, it's the berries!

AUNT TWIXIE: *(To audience, pointing at PENNY.)* You ever feel like she's on another planet?

CARMEL: I hear what you're saying, but I'm just not ready yet. Everything is so awful, and now with Big Harry making such a nuisance of himself I feel like there's no hope at all. (*Tearing up, takes out a hanky.*) There doesn't seem to be anything to be happy about.

TOOTSY: Don't let that deadbeat get ya' down, sweetie. He'll get what's coming to him, don't you worry. I gotta' feelin' that Big Harry's days are numbered.

AUNT TWIXIE: She's right, Caramel. Let's not dwell on this. You need a break. Why don't you close the shoppe early today and we'll take you out for an early dinner and there's a picture show tonight at the Star Theatre. Wouldn't that be fun? Now, I know you wanted to see that picture show. They're doing a tribute to Rudolph Valentino. Poor man, to have tragically passed at such a young age. But oh, so handsome! I think tonight is "Son of the Sheik."

CARMEL: Oh, Aunt Twixie, you are a dear. But no, actually, I'd like to be alone. You and Tootsy go and enjoy yourselves. I'd just be a wet blanket. (*Looks at FARRON and PENNY.*) I've given Farron and Penny the afternoon off – they've got a lovely picnic on the river planned.

FARRON: Oh, Miss Caramel. That's all right. We can go boating anytime. We should stay here and finish up today. I don't think you should stay here alone.

CARMEL: Oh, horse feathers! I'll be fine! Now, you and Penny run along and get your things. It's a beautiful, sunny, Indian summer afternoon. Too nice of a day to waste on working. You two go on!

FARRON and PENNY look at each other, then at CARMEL. she nods emphatically. they go backstage to put on their boating things. CARMEL looks at AUNT TWIXIE and TOOTSY.

CARMEL: Please, stop worrying about me. I'm fine. I want you to go without me. I need some time alone to think things through. It's not very often that I have the store all to myself. Now, off with you! (*Points to the door.*)

TOOTSY: Well, I guess you mean scram. Ok, sweetie, but we'll stop by to check on you after dinner. Maybe you'll change your mind and go to the picture show with us.

AUNT TWIXIE: Yes, we'll do that. Now, try to forget about all this and just relax, dear. We'll worry about things tomorrow, all right?

AUNT TWIXIE gives CAMEL a quick hug. ANUT TWIXIE and TOOTSIE exit. CAMEL starts cleaning up the table, straightening the candy counter, etc. FARRON and PENNY enter from backstage in their boating gear – red and white striped jacket and boater hat for him, big picture hat for her, FARRON holds an oar, PENNY has a small picnic basket.

FARRON: We're leaving, Miss Caramel. But, are you absolutely sure you want us to go? We don't mind staying. Do we, Penny?

PENNY: Of course we don't. Why, Miss Caramel, why don't you come with us?

CAMEL: What? Not a chance! Oh, you both look so nice and what a wonderful day for a romantic picnic on the water. I wouldn't dream of intruding.

FARRON blushes and PENNY giggles.

CAMEL: You two don't need a chaperone.

FARRON: Well, okay. But we'll come back later and make sure everything is closed up for the night, all right?

CAMEL: Oh, for Pete's sake! I'll be fine. Aunt Twixie and Tootsie said they'll stop in after dinner. You don't have to bother with me.

FARRON: Just the same, we'll drop by, Miss Caramel.

PENNY: Come on, Farron. Miss Caramel is tired, and I want to see if anyone else is out on the river. I heard that Ima June Bugg and Oliver Sudden are going to get engaged! Isn't that the cat's pajamas! Come on! I don't want to miss it!

PENNY grabs FARRON'S hand and pulls him toward the door, he looks back at CAMEL, terrified since he heard the word "engaged", she chuckles and shakes her head. CAMEL moves around the shop, picks things up, looks around. Sighs. TOFFEE, TAFFY and JUSTIN enter.

CAMEL: Toffee, Taffy.

CARMEL looks at JUSTIN with her eyebrows raised, he just stares at her.

CARMEL: What brings you back here today?

TOFFEE: Well, you see, we aren't finished talking about selling this place. You gotta' come around to our way of thinking or there's gonna' be a problem.

TAFFY: Yeah. And we don't like problems. Toffee and me like to have fun. So, it's like this. Either you agree to sell or we're gonna' make you do it.

TAFFY walks around behind CARMEL, and stands a bit behind and off to the side, ready to grab her when TOFFEE gives the signal.

CARMEL: *(Squares her shoulders and crosses her arms.)* There is nothing either of you can say or do to make me sell the Sweet Shoppe. My father built this business and wanted me to continue on with it. I'm sorry neither of you are interested. As soon as business picks back up I will buy out your shares.

TOFFEE: That's not good enough. We want our money now. You're going to be sorry you tangled with us, sister dear. Taffy, grab her!

TAFFY grabs CARMEL and they struggle. TOFFEE pulls rope out of her beaded purse and proceeds to tie her hands and feet. She also gags her. JUSTIN stands watching all this with his arms crossed.

TAFFY: Stop struggling! Your just gonna' hurt yourself. *(Looks at JUSTIN.)* Hey, you, whatever your name is. Make yourself useful. Come over here and hold on to her. Toffee, come on, we're gonna' toss this place so it looks like burglars came in and robbed it and kidnapped her.

JUSTIN comes and takes hold of CARMEL. TOFFEE and TAFFY walk across to the counter and start making a big mess. JUSTIN pulls CARMEL over to SR on the edge of stage.

JUSTIN: *(To CAMEL, as an aside. she continues to struggle.)* Miss Sweet, listen to me. Stop moving and listen.

CAMEL stops struggling momentarily.

JUSTIN: I'm an undercover FBI agent. My real name is Agent Justin Thyme. *(Quickly pulls a badge out of his pocket and shows it to her.)* I'm here to help you, but you have to cooperate. If you just play along, everything will be fine, I promise.

CAMEL looks up at JUSTIN, wide eyed, then out at the audience. She then nods her head.

JUSTIN: Okay. You can struggle a little now, so they won't get suspicious. We're going to take you to Big Harry Deal's office. I have a plan, so don't panic.

CAMEL nods again, then struggles some as TOFFEE and TAFFY look over. They have overturned chairs, scattered candy everywhere and made a general mess.

TAFFY: This dump never looked better. Well, Toff, I think we're done here. Let's take our dear little sister to Big Harry and get our clams.

TOFFEE: *(Kicks some candy around looks at TAFFY, confused.)* Whadda' we want with smelly clams?

TAFFY: *(Shakes her head.)* Our money, you dumb Dora. *(Looks over at JUSTIN)* Come on, Mr... ah, what was your name?

JUSTIN: *(As RICK.)* Rick O'Shea.

TOFFEE: Sounds like an eyetalian name. You eyetalian?

JUSTIN: *(As RICK. Looks at TOFFEE and deadpans.)* No. It's an Irish name.

TAFFY: *(Shaking her head again at TOFFEE.)* Toffee, I swear sometimes I wonder if our mother found you under the ding-a-ling tree. Come on, we've gotta' get back to Big Harry's. He's waiting for us. *(To JUSTIN.)* Take her out to the Model T, and make sure no one sees you.

JUSTIN takes a still struggling CAMEL out the door.

TAFFY: (*To TOFFEE.*) I don't trust that fly-boy. Something about him seems fishy.

TOFFEE: Aw, Taff, he's swell. A real dapper dan. And besides, if Big Harry trusts him, he's gotta' be on the level. Nobody messes with Big Harry.

TAFFY: I suppose you're right. But I'm gonna' keep my eye on him. Something just doesn't jive. (*Looks around and grins.*) We done real good. Those maroons will think they been robbed and our dear sister's been kidnapped. No one'll ever suspect it was us.

TOFFEE and TAFFY LAUGH and exit out the door.

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