

MONEY to BURN

By Pat Cook

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STORY OF PLAY

It's business as usual for Wilson and Associates, a suspiciously funny firm consisting of three flat-broke lady con artists. They'll do practically anything to meet the rent, from reading horoscopes over the phone to renting themselves out as graveside mourners. "And Wednesday is laundry day," Gail tells a new employee. "That's when we do laundry?" the employee asks. "No, that's when we ARE a laundry."

One client, a dithering old lady, happens to absent-mindedly drop the fact that she has just held up the local bank and the action springboards from there. The girls find themselves in a web of arson, counterfeiting and robbery and then, their worst fears confirmed, the Better Business Bureau shows up!

One liners and wise-cracks race at breakneck speed as the girls try to get out of this one.

CHARACTERS

(4m, 7w)

GAIL WEBSTER: A fast-thinking woman, in her mid 20's, boss of the outfit.

TIGER MURRAY: Gail's co-worker and friend, also mid 20's, a bit sarcastic.

NANCY PLUNKETT: Third member of the trio; the deep thinker.

BEBE WILSON: The new addition, about 27, seemingly a bit naive.

MRS. GOSSETT: A large, loud landlady who's seen and heard it all.

FIONELLA FROBISHER: A flustered woman in her late 40's, a bit hard to believe.

RAY HARDING: Large jock of a college, buddy to the ladies. A happy-go-lucky moose of a guy.

KATHLEEN CASAGRANDE: A rather sinister lady in her 50's.

HORATIO PURDY: A round, amiable delicatessen owner.

A. B. BARNES/OFFICER MICHAELSON: Poses as an employee of the Better Business Bureau.

OFFICER TAGGERT: A suspicious police officer.

SYNOPSIS

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The upstairs apartment of an old rental house.

PLAYING TIME: About an hour and fifteen minutes.

SETTING

The setting for this frantic farce is the living quarters of Gail Webster. Occupying the second story of an old house, the room was obviously built to be something else. However, it has been renovated, about a thousand years ago, to house boarders. There are two practical doors to the room. The front door is located SL and leads to an outside hall. The second door is located USC and leads to the bedroom and bathroom. Two large practical windows, one of which is forever open, occupy almost all of the SR wall. The rather old wallpaper is peeling in spots and most of the holes are covered up by various, unrelated pictures, diplomas and awards. The room is filled with clutter.

The furniture in the room consists of a large, recovered sofa, DSL, a desk, and a dinette set. The desk is located directly in front of the windows and faces the front door. A telephone rests on the desk, which has several on-line buttons. The dinette, which is used as a desk, is located USL. On the dinette table is a very old typewriter and stacks of typing paper, some already used. There is a tall filing cabinet, overflowing with papers, on the SR wall next to the windows and a hat rack in the SR corner. A small table next to the hat rack holds a coffeemaker and cups. The rest of the room is rounded out with various other accouterments such as lamps, dying or dead plants and an odd chair or two.

PROPS

Multi-line phone, pens and paper on desk, coffeepot, cups, wastebasket near desk, binoculars, typewriter, paper on dinette, purse with business card, paper money, crumpled note, lighter, 3 hymnals in bottom file drawer, large anatomy book, watches, key, newspaper out window (SR), large handkerchief over robber's face, bandanna and ratty coat, water pistol, pistols, watch and ring, purse, suitcase, overdue phone bill in waste can, paper list, baseball bat behind desk, business card, legal document, notepad.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: GAIL is standing at the window and looking out through a pair of binoculars. TIGER is at the desk, on the phone, and is tapping her cheek with a pencil.)

TIGER: Yes, that's right, I only tell you what's on the horizon. No, it's all done with the latest state of the art techniques. No, no hocus-pocus involved. All strictly scientific, with the utmost in computer input and a direct feed to an almost unlimited library of facts and information. Now. What's your birth date and how many letters are there in your last name? *(SHE takes the pencil and begins writing.)*

GAIL: She's still over there. Why did she pick today to come by?

TIGER: *(Into the receiver.)* Oh, you're a Pisces, with your moon in conflict with Jupiter. Is that good? Is that good? *(To GAIL.)* Is that good?

GAIL: She's paying for the call, it's sterling.

TIGER: *(Into the phone.)* Well, I think you're in for a streak of good luck. Beginning today, that's right, only don't take a shower until after sundown.

GAIL: Nice touch, what does that mean?

TIGER: *(Hand on the receiver.)* Who knows. *(Back to the phone.)* I see you achieving your main goal in life, your fondest aspirations are about to come true.

(GAIL puts the binoculars on the desk and moves to the dinette.)

GAIL: When's that new girl getting here? *(SHE sits at the dinette and looks at the page in the typewriter. She shrugs and begins typing. TIGER picks up the binoculars and gets an idea.)*

TIGER: *(Into the phone.)* Yes, you need to make sure to see the whole picture. See what things are like down the road. *(SHE looks through the binoculars.)* Things far away will suddenly seem closer than they ever were. That's right, it just takes vision. *(The PHONE buzzes.)* Oh, that's our business. Astrology for the Common People. Hold please. *(SHE pushes a button.)* Eagle Laundry. Yes sir, your eagle is ready. You can pick him up anytime. Thank you. *(SHE pushes a button.)*

GAIL: We washed an eagle?

TIGER: It was a flag for the Betterment of America League. You know, that group that's always striving for more understanding and harmony.

GAIL: What was wrong with the flag?

TIGER: It got stained during a food fight. *(SHE pushes another button.)*

GAIL: Well, at least they're serious about it. How do you spell "scuz bucket"?

TIGER: *(Hand over the receiver.)* I don't use words like that.

GAIL: I GOT it from you.

TIGER: Told you not to listen in when I'm talking to my brother. *(Into the phone.)* Now, Miss Halderdecker, what is your dearest ambition? What? I think England HAS a queen. *(GAIL laughs and continues typing.)* Well, you might try marrying a prince. Well, keep kissing frogs. I read that on a sweatshirt somewhere.

(NANCY enters from SL and crosses to the coffee pot.)

NANCY: Morning, guys. We start a new occupation during the night?

GAIL: No, I think the six we have going ought to keep us pretty busy. How do you spell "degenerate"?

NANCY: *(Pouring HERSELF a cup.)* I don't know. Try "scuz bucket."

TIGER: *(Hand over the phone.)* Does EVERYBODY listen in on my calls?

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NANCY: (*Puts cup on the desk.*) No, your brother keeps asking me for a date.

TIGER: I told him you were a lot of fun. Great personality. I'm surprised he called. (*SHE picks up the cup.*) Yes, Miss Halderdecker, it all depends on your outlook on life. Sometimes you need to just wake up and smell the coffee. (*SHE sips it.*) Ooh, well, sometimes you need to sweeten it. (*NANCY takes her cup back.*)

NANCY: Count your blessings. I WAS going to wash out my socks. (*SHE moves to GAIL.*) Anybody been up yet?

GAIL: You got a fish?

NANCY: Client, please. And I think she pays. (*SHE pulls a dinette chair over to the sofa.*)

GAIL: You mean actual money?

NANCY: I hope so, I'm tired of trade outs. So far, I've gotten six baskets of fruit, nine pairs of nylons and four boxes of candy bars. I feel like World War Two.

GAIL: You LOOK like World War Two.

NANCY: I gotta quit sleeping on a Murphy bed.

TIGER: (*Hands over the phone.*) You have a Murphy bed?

GAIL: You sleep?

NANCY: Yeah, but the thing keeps folding back up into the wall. Twice I woke up, my mouth tasted like Sheetrock.

TIGER: (*Into the phone.*) Well, Miss Halderdecker, you never know. After a good night's sleep, things might look different in the morning.

NANCY: If it looks like plumbing, SHE'S got a Murphy bed, too.

GAIL: How do you spell "moron"?

NANCY: What're you writing, the landlady?

GAIL: My novel. I've been working on this thing for over a year now.

NANCY: (*Crosses to HER.*) Where are you?

GAIL: Page four.

NANCY: That's 'cause she can't type.

TIGER: That's 'cause she can't spell. (*Back to the phone.*) No, I said you can't tell! Just give it a chance and send us your payment right away. (*The PHONE buzzes.*) That's right. Please, recommend us to your friends.

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