

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP - DEAD!

An audience participation mystery

By Craig Sodaro

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PUBLISHED BY

ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The hit TV game show “Stop, Shop, and Bankroll” has come to your town to tape a few segments, bringing its dashing host, Benny Sharpe, and lovely hostess, Loreli Lawless. As usual, director Astrid Cornelius is wound up and worried about her temperamental stars. Tommy Gilmore, the show’s announcer, tries to help smooth the troubled waters, but between Loreli’s new feather dress and Benny’s vanity, trouble is guaranteed.

Contestants from the audience participate in the first segment, oblivious of backstage intrigue. But not for long. During the shopping part of the game, Benny cashes in his chips — poisoned by person or persons unknown! Miss Peabody, the cookies-and-cream librarian who’s no stranger to murder, takes control and attempts to keep order until the police arrive. But Astrid sees a new opportunity for a TV game show - solving the crime with cameras rolling!

Three audience members participate in the shopping game and everyone in the audience looks for clues during intermission. This is one shopping spree your audience will never forget! Interior set.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 4 w)

ASTRID CORNELIUS: Driven, nervous director of hit TV game show, "Stop, Shop, and Bankroll." Late 30s, early 40s.

TOMMY GILMORE: The off-camera announcer for the show, a resigned second fiddle. Late 50s.

LORELI LAWLESS: The glamorous, but vacant-headed hostess of the show. Early 30s.

POLLY PEABODY: An adoring fan of the show whose cheerful exterior masks a cunning, steel-trap brain and determined thirst for justice. In her 60s.

BENNY SHARPE: Appears ageless, looking perhaps 30, the dashing, handsome, but terribly vain host of the show.

JOY CAVEREWSKI: A giggly contestant dressed in 1950s clothing, apparently lost in TV land. In her 20s.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I: Game show set. The present.

ACT II: Same. Fifteen minutes later.

NOTE: See back of playbook for props and list of clues.

SETTING

The set for the hit TV game show, "Stop, Shop, and Bankroll." We see a counter or table SR behind which contestants will stand. It should be long enough for four contestants. The front is covered to the floor with fabric or some decoration suiting the show, perhaps a collage of shopping bags stuffed with goodies. In front of each contestant spot is a self-standing spiral sign. This is designed so each contestant can flip up either the word "Yes" or "No" in response to certain questions. When both words are flipped back, a dollar sign faces the audience. Sign UPS proclaims "Stop, Shop, and Bankroll." Various prizes can be displayed, perhaps set off by sequined fabric.

DSL is podium for host. At left of podium is small vanity table set with comb, mirror, electric shaver, makeup kit, and other beauty devices. Also near the podium is a stool from which Tommy does his announcing and a director's chair for Astrid with her coat hanging from it.

In lobby of playing area, or as audience members enter, are signs announcing the taping of the show giving today's date. Hanging on walls are pictures (if possible) of Astrid, Tommy, Loreli and Benny with a small biography of each.

A phone of some type (regular pay phone is great) needs to be available in the lobby for a small conversation during the intermission.

NOTE: Directions in the script often have Astrid calling to a camera person suggesting angles and shots. It is not necessary to have a camera person at all. Since cameras would be placed off the staging area, she is just shouting into the darkness.

ACT I

(AT RISE: ASTRID is CS checking details. TOMMY sits on his stool nearby, reviewing the upcoming show script.)

ASTRID: Benny?! Benny Sharpe! *(No response.)* Has anybody seen that man?

TOMMY: How much time 'til we tape, Astrid?

ASTRID: Five minutes!

TOMMY: He'll be here in five minutes.

ASTRID: Will you run to his dressing room and tell him he's making my ulcer flare up like a Roman candle?!

TOMMY: It won't do any good.

ASTRID: Tell that bozo to get out here!

TOMMY: *(Moves SL.)* America's number one game show host? A bozo? Astrid, you're too kind!

(TOMMY exits SL, as LORELI enters SR. She is dressed in a ridiculous feathered outfit.)

LORELI: Like it?!

ASTRID: What is that?

LORELI: Donatelli's latest creation. Isn't it a dream?

ASTRID: It's a nightmare! We can't tape with you wearing that thing!

LORELI: Why not?

ASTRID: You look like a parrot!

LORELI: But he designed it specially for me! I was his inspiration!

ASTRID: Yeah, a birdbrain!

LORELI: Look, Astrid, I don't care if you are the director, I'm Loreli Lawless, the star!

ASTRID: Star?! You're nothing but a glamorous bag girl at a supermarket.

LORELI: *(Sweetly.)* I am America's favorite hostess. *(Toughly.)* And I've got a contract that lasts the run of the show.

ASTRID: You come out here in that thing, and it'll stop dead in its tracks. Put something else on!

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LORELI: Donatelli's contract says I wear his clothes and nobody else's.

ASTRID: Then go put Donatelli's clothes on! Beat it!

LORELI: You'll hear from my agent!

(LORELI flounces off SR. ASTRID checks her watch, then turns to audience.)

ASTRID: Oh, no! They let you in too soon! *(Calling off)* Hal! What's an audience doing in here?! We're not ready yet! Hal?!

(MISS PEABODY rises from her seat.)

MISS PEABODY: Can we help you in any way, Miss Cornelius?

ASTRID: Do you have any Tylenol?

MISS PEABODY: I'm afraid not.

ASTRID: That's all right. It wouldn't have done any good, anyway.

MISS PEABODY: Is television always this exciting?

ASTRID: No, it's usually very sane.

MISS PEABODY: Well, I speak for the whole audience when I say we're so excited about being able to see a taping of "Stop, Shop, and Bankroll" in our hometown! I've got a secret.

ASTRID: I didn't have anything to do with that show. It was before my time.

MISS PEABODY: No, I've really got a secret, Miss Cornelius. I watch "Stop, Shop, and Bankroll" every day. Sometimes twice a day.

ASTRID: A loyal fan, hmmm?

MISS PEABODY: Oh, absolutely. Let's make a deal.

ASTRID: I didn't direct that show, either.

MISS PEABODY: No, I mean a real deal.

ASTRID: Like what?

MISS PEABODY: If I get you some Tylenol, will you let me get Benny Sharpe and Loreli Lawless's autographs after the taping?

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ASTRID: Sure! Great. Only problem is neither of them can write yet.

(BENNY SHARPE, debonair and dashing in his suit, enters SL, followed by TOMMY. MISS PEABODY leads the audience in clapping.)

MISS PEABODY: It's him! Benny Sharpe!

BENNY: Astrid! I had two more minutes to get ready!

ASTRID: Knock it off, Benny! Your call is ten minutes 'til taping! You're supposed to warm up the audience!

BENNY: Actually, if they get any warmer, they'll melt. Any way to kill a few of these lights? Crew?! Can we do something about these lights? You know what it does to my makeup.

TOMMY: Yeesh!

BENNY: Go hop on your stool, hopalooser.

TOMMY: Look, Benny! If I'd only been able to make that callback...

BENNY: *(Bored.)* Yeah, yeah, yeah...your mother was sick and you had to take her to the hospital and if she hadn't had respiratory failure, you'd be America's number one host. We've heard that sob story before. So go hop on your stool and be America's least favorite background voice, okay?

(BENNY moves to small table, picks up mirror and studies his face. He primps during the next bit of dialogue. TOMMY moves to ASTRID who is CS.)

TOMMY: How long are you going to let him treat me like this?

ASTRID: Consider the source, Tommy!

TOMMY: Day in! Day out!

ASTRID: Look, you've had other offers.

TOMMY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, if it weren't for you, I'd be walking. How about you? You hear from that new show "Aces and Deuces"?

End of Freeview

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