

The Car Wash Caper
Tim Thomas

Cast of Characters:

SUSIE: Our heroine. She's blond and very sophisticated. She's in college at an all female college. I'm thinking Brown. She's extremely curious and just can't let anything go.

MARSHA: SUSIE's sidekick. She's a brunette, and a bit of a tom-boy. She'll follow Susie anywhere. She's in awe of Susie's ability to say just what's on her mind.

FRIEDA: Frieda is a south florida ex-money type. She's inherited this old car wash from her family but not much else. She's an old southern bell who's a bit bitter about not having spent her life better. She's a bit lecherous also.

Setting:

An old abandoned car wash. There is a desk, and not much else that would indicate it was a car wash. All of the actual equipment has been sold long ago. It's pretty much just a long room with an office at one end.

MARSHA

Smells like High School.

SUSIE

Gee, I'd hoped I'd never smell that again. Cheap perfume, unwashed hair, sweaty boys...

MARSHA

Ughh...

SUSIE

So your mom thinks we should get a job here? At an old carwash?

MARSHA

Yes, unloading boxes.

SUSIE

What a drag.

(looks around and spies feather lying on the floor. she picks it up and puts it in her hair.)

SUSIE

This is pretty? Is it me?

MARSHA

Oh, Susie, you make anything look like a million bucks.

SUSIE

Thanks. (beat) I wonder if anyone's around. (shouting) Anybody home?

MARSHA

Hello?

(FRIEDA pops up from behind a desk. SUSIE screams. MARSHA does a quick self defense move and pins FRIEDA against the desk.)

MARSHA

(quickly releasing FRIEDA)

Sorry...

SUSIE

Golly Marsha, violence is not becoming in a woman.

FRIEDA

I didn't mean to scare you.

MARSHA

Sorry. I've been taking self defense classes.

FRIEDA

(staring at Marsha)

No reason to be sorry. I shouldn't have popped up on you like that. Now what are two charming young ladies doing in my neck of the woods?

MARSHA

(aside to Susie)

Did she just wink at me?

SUSIE

Marsha's mom read your ad.

MARSHA

(aside to Susie)

I know she winked at me that time.

SUSIE

You need two women to help you take inventory?

FRIEDA

That's right, it's not a lot of work, but it's more than I can handle. I'm Frieda Marshall by the way.

SUSIE

I'm Susie.

FRIEDA

(shaking Marsha's hand)

Then you must be Marsha.

MARSHA

If I must I must.

SUSIE

You must.

(they all laugh, in that strangers in a completely unfunny situation sort of way)

FRIEDA

You have such a pretty laugh Marsha.

MARSHA

Thanks, I guess. I always though I sounded like a horse.

(Susie snorts)

FRIEDA

No, it's very pretty. (beat) I have to tell you, I don't have any work for you just yet. I didn't anticipate a response to my ad so... quickly. Why don't you too go have a swim?

SUSIE

That sounds delightful.

MARSHA

I could really use a nice long one. (beat) Swim. A nice long swim. Oh, I always put my foot in my mouth.

FRIEDA

I'll need you in the morning, so don't spend all night carousing with the young men.

SUSIE

Don't worry about us.

MARSHA

We always turn in early.

(they walk out of the carwash. SUSIE realizing she has forgotten something whirls around dramatically.)

SUSIE

We didn't ask her what time to be back in the morning.

MARSHA

Golly, it would look really bad to be late on your first day.

SUSIE

Marsha! Don't use slang.

MARSHA

Sorry.

SUSIE

It's unladylike.

(SUSIE hikes up her skirt in a very unladylike fashion and jumps up on a stack of boxes to look in the window)

SUSIE

I wonder if she's still in there.

MARSHA

Where would she have gone?

SUSIE

Oh goodness.

MARSHA

What?

(we see FRIEDA pour herself a drink out of a decanter, she peruses an accounting ledger)

SUSIE

It's only five o'clock.

MARSHA

She's drinking?

SUSIE

Yes. Can you believe it? And she seemed so nice.

MARSHA

Maybe it's a martini. Old ladies like Martini's She winked at me. She's certainly saucy.

SUSIE

Marsha, why would she do that? You're thin as a rail, and plain as a pail. No one would wink at you. Let alone a lonely old lady.

MARSHA

She probably thought I was a boy.

SUSIE

I'm sorry.

MARSHA

Everybody thinks I'm a boy.

SUSIE

No, I'm sorry, you're very pretty. You just don't accentuate what you have.

MARSHA

I should stuff...

(FRIEDA picks up the shortwave radio and begins making a call)

SUSIE

Well, maybe... oh wait, she's making a call.

MARSHA

Probably to the people bringing in the shipment. (wailing) I am soo ugly.

SUSIE

Your whining Marsha, that's unbecoming.

MARSHA

(wailing)

I know, I'm just one skinny, plain unbecoming woman.

SUSIE

Marsha! Hush! Oh, now see what you've done. She's left.

MARSHA

Oh well. Let's just come back later after our swim.

SUSIE

I wonder if those papers say what time the shipment's due to arrive.

MARSHA

Susie, you're such a snoop.

SUSIE

(proud of herself)

I know, aren't I? Are you coming?

MARSHA

No, I'm going swimming.

SUSIE

Suit yourself.

(Susie enters the carwash. She pulls a pair of debutante gloves out of her pocket and puts them on. She obviously has done this before. She walks over to the ledger and starts flipping through it, she arrives back at the page it was open to. Slowly reading the page, a look of horror spreads slowly across her cheeks. The horror turns to anger. As she does this, Frieda emerges from the shadows with a hook. She sneaks up behind Susie and hooks her violently around the throat with that purple thing of Brandon's that we'll pretend has something to do with mooring boats. Susie gasps for air, too stunned to do anything about it.)

FRIEDA

What are you doing Susie?

(she takes off Susie's gloves, one by one, and stuffs them in her mouth)

FRIEDA (cont.)

I saw Marsha heading down to the beach. Why aren't you with her? You should both be getting some sun. You're too young to concern yourselves with my affairs.

(she begins to tie Susie's arms behind her back with an electrical cord.)

FRIEDA (cont.)

I'm only doing it for the money. Do you know how hard it is to survive these days? I haven't had anything to wash in 30 years. Ever since the historical society decided to ban cars on the island.

(she ties Susie's legs with another electrical cord, and pushes her roughly beneath the desk.)

FRIEDA (cont.)

I need the money Susie, so I'm just going to have to keep you here until I can decide what to do with you. I must go meet the boat at the dock.

(FRIEDA walks out again leaving SUSIE under the desk. We wait a couple minutes and MARSHA enters. She puts on her debutante gloves out of habit, oh if only she was wearing a bathing suit and yet still had the gloves on her. That would be some fantastic stage business. Although if she's been stuffing with them, that'd be funny too I think. She wanders around not looking closely at much of anything completely oblivious to SUSIE under the desk. Frieda enters.)

FRIEDA

Hello Marsha.

MARSHA

Hello, Frieda. Have you seen Susie?

FRIEDA
I thought I just saw her going down to the beach..

MARSHA
Hmm... that's odd I just came from there...

FRIEDA
You must have just missed each other.

MARSHA
Must have.

FRIEDA
Yes you must.

(they both giggle at the reference to earlier, when they laughed and it wasn't funny)

MARSHA
Oh, that reminds me, Susie and me were...

FRIEDA
and I.

MARSHA
Right, Susie, and I, were wondering when we should arrive for work tomorrow morning.

FRIEDA
I mean to tell you.

MARSHA
We didn't want to be late.

FRIEDA
That's very thoughtful.

MARSHA
Since it's our first day and all.

FRIEDA
You're a very thoughtful young woman Marsha.

(Frieda leans in towards Marsha)

MARSHA
Um thanks...

FRIEDA
Why aren't you down at the beach, with all the young men?

MARSHA
(I see Marsha playing with her gum as she talks)
Well, I was looking for Susie, and well I don't really, you know feel comfortable on a beach... alone.

By myself. I'm too skinny, and I look silly alone. Silly, plain, ol' skinny me.

FRIEDA

You're not skinny or plain.

(she leans in closer)

MARSHA

Umm... Frieda.... Mrs. Marshall. You're very close.

FRIEDA

(leaning in closer)

Is that unpleasant?

MARSHA

Well...I guess...

(in one fluid moment FRIEDA has taken another electrical chord and tied it around MARSHA's wrists)

MARSHA (cont.)

(completely misunderstanding what FRIEDA is doing)

Mrs. Marshall, I'm not like that!

(she pulls off one of Marsha's gloves in a fluid motion and stuffs it in her mouth, then she slowly peels off the other glove)

FRIEDA

Oh, Marsha dear, who are you kidding? Ya know ya're.

(MARSHA's eyes are wide as saucers as FRIEDA pushes her to the ground and hog ties her with the electrical cord. Being at ground level, MARSHA is finally staring face to face at the bound and gagged SUSIE.)

FRIEDA (cont.)

(slapping her hands together, in that "I'm done" satisfied sort of way)

Mrs. Calf Tie 1962. I've still got it. Now, if you two will excuse me, I have a boat to unload. I'm sure by now the captain has gone into town on a bender, and thanks to your meddling I will have to unload all the crates myself.

(FRIEDA exits. MARSHA and SUSIE start struggling. The next conversation is all done through their mouth full o' gloves. Meanwhile we can see FRIEDA on the "cliff" above them, doing inventory on the crates in the boat. How does a boat dock to a cliff? High tide. Yessir.)

MARSHA

I'm so so sorry Susie.

SUSIE

It's not your fault. I'm the one who got us into this, and I'll get us out.

MARSHA

How?

(Susie shakes her hair in full farrah fawcett mode, the feather from earlier drops out if it hasn't done so before. If so she notices it. She picks it up with her teeth and starts picking at her hands

with it as though it is a lockpick. This should look McGyver-ish and ridiculously futile at the same time. Marsha meanwhile realizing that the knots are simply the type of slip knots (Travis, eagle scout boy, can we use your assistance here?) used in calf roping, easily loosens them and slips them off her hands, she unties her feet and pulls out the gag, she then does the same for Susie.)

SUSIE

I would have gotten there.

MARSHA

Thank goodness she used a weak knot or we'd be toast.

SUSIE

Thanks though.

MARSHA

Your welcome.

SUSIE

(putting her hand on MARSHA's arm)

You're a good chum Marsha.

MARSHA

You're pretty keen yourself.

(they stand looking into each other's eyes just a moment too long)

SUSIE

Let's hurry we haven't a moment to loose. Who knows what nefarious scheme Mrs. Marshall has cooked up.

(they exit the stage, Marsha takes an electrical cord with her and run up to the cliff where they encounter FRIEDA. It'd be awesome if we could get some seagull sound effects for the cliff)

FRIEDA

(speechless)

How.... you!

MARSHA

Miss Calf Tie 1995. You've gotta be able to untie the calf when you're done Mrs. Marshall.

SUSIE

And that's where your plan failed Frieda. You're going to jail. We're putting your white slavery trade out of business.

MARSHA

White Slavery?

FRIEDA

White Slavery? Susie, my dear, you seem bright, but your brain cells don't appear to be communicating with one another. I traffic in narcotics.

SUSIE

Ah... so your captain must be a chinamen.

MARSHA

(overwhelmed by the turn of events)
Opium smugglers... the yellow menace in Florida... Golly!

SUSIE
Slang Marsha!

MARSHA
Sorry.

FRIEDA
You read too many books. It's heroin, my dear.

MARSHA
But, we would have found out. How would you have keep us from finding out?

FRIEDA
Marsha, I've had many peope help me unload boxes. Officially I am importing violin resin. I've always had a fondness for violins.

SUSIE
Truly nefarious.

MARSHA
What a fantastic scheme.

SUSIE
Marsha!

MARSHA
A fantatically evil scheme.

FRIEDA
In any case, I suppose I'll have to kill you know. I certainly can't just let you go free, knowing what you know.

(FRIEDA picks up an axe from the boat and swings it at SUSIE who steps backwards to avoid it, in doing so, she gets too close to the edge of the cliff steps on a rock and trips. She screams and slowly slides off the side of the ledge until she's only hanging on with her fingers. Frieda walks over and begins grinding her fingers with her feet. Marsha comes up and tries to save her, but Frieda takes a swing at her with the axe.)

FRIEDA
I've been doing this for 30 years Marsha. Did you really think I wouldn't be able to dispatch two meddling girls?

(In intense pain, Susie looses grip with one of her hands [btw, I see her as standing on her tip toes on the steps by the "cliff", so this will not require herculaeen strength]), she is hanging on with only one hand.)

SUSIE
Help Marsha, I don't think I can hold on much longer.

MARSHA
Hold your horses Susie, I'm trying!

SUSIE
Slang...

MARSHA
Now is not the time Susie!

(FRIEDA swings at MARSHA again, but this time she swings too wide and loses her balance slightly. MARSHA grabs the axe from FRIEDA, throws it into the "water" and proceeds to hog tie her with the electrical cord she brought with her from the car wash.)

MARSHA
Well I guess we know who the better tie-er(sp?) is now.

(she reaches down and helps Susie back up the cliff)

SUSIE
Thanks Marsha. You're a lifesaver.

FRIEDA
You'd better run. The man who drives this boat will be back soon, and he's a very, very dangerous terrorist. He's known the world over.

SUSIE
Oh, stuff it Frieda. You said yourself he's in town getting smashed.

MARSHA
Susie, slang!

(they both laugh)

SUSIE
You're put you away for good, you dirty terrorist smuggler. You won't even get a trail!"

MARSHA
Our President sure is swell.

(they link arms and walk back down to the carwash. they pick up the short wave radio and call the mainland)

MARSHA
We need a police cruiser to the old abandoned car wash on the small island A.S.A.P. We've caught a terrorist heroin bandit.

DISPATCHER
Right away, ma'am.

SUSIE
(looking into Marsha's eyes)
You sure were brave up there Marsha. And I'm sorry I called you plain, that's simply not true, and I'm sorry I called you skinny. I only said that because I was jealous. Because I'm such a cow.

MARSHA
It's okay, and you're certainly not fat.

(Susie winks at Marsha)

MARSHA (cont.)

Susie, did you just wink at me?

(SUSIE grabs MARSHA and gives her a big old kiss)

SUSIE

I think you're pretty keen.

MARSHA

Me too. I mean, you... I mean, you're pretty keen too.

(They walk out of the carwash and sit on the beach. Looking at the waves and the moon.)

MARSHA

The moon shining off the Ocean looks so, so... (beat) did the moon just wink at me?

(They both laugh and wink at each other. The light tightens to only moonlight shining on them and then blackout.)