

Perils of

Caroline Carlsberg
Canny Cutaway

Richard Shekari

Perils of Candy Cuthway

By Richard Shekari

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DEDICATION

To my little furry companion, Shakur, the cat. Even though we only spent a short time together, you had a huge effect on me.

ACE

‘Where would I be in the next few years? Probably with three kids, and who would be their father, I wonder. Where would I live? In a big mansion or a small beautiful cottage, and would it be by the riverbank or in a big city? I wonder if there would be a future between me and Jake. Well, as they say; what will be, will be. The future is not mine to see!’

“Future...Oh my God! Mellissa and Laura will kill me!” said Candy Cuthway as the waves of reality nuked her off her stargaze. She hurriedly put her diary in her bag, for this isn’t the first time its rich contents have been abruptly interrupted by a more pressing matter.

“Tessy! Wait for me!” she yelled at her colleague as she switched off the light on the table of her cubicle and ran out of what she regarded as a prison of an office, one of the modest spaces of RSL & Partners, a real estate firm within the busiest streets of Nottega, her dream town.

Candy and her passive colleague finally managed to rock their body to a pop song playing on the car stereo, as they drove through town in the red minivan.

“Now, jokes aside Candy,” Tessy said, “we’ve known each other for like two years, right? Don’t you think it’s time you’ve settled for marriage?”

“Tessy you got married at what? Thirty four, am I right? Come on, I still got time! Plus, it’s not that I’m desperate or anything! So, chill, okay!” said Candy as she stared at Tessy in disdain.

Candy, slightly distracted got to the point that she almost ran over a mourning crowd as they marched towards the town square holding candles in memory of the victims of the Undango massacre. A tragedy which gripped the perplexed people of this district in its fourth year anniversary.

“Yes you’re right, I may be forty one now but I sure don’t wish to die this soon, please drive with caution!” said Tessy.

“It scares me whenever I hear people say these words!” Candy responded.

“Yup, there!” pointed Tessy, “I’ll alight right there!”

“Alright, let me get a good spot,” said Candy as she parked, “is here okay?”

“Yes love, and thank you so much! See you tomorrow! Kiss! Kiss!” said Tessy who got out of the car, “give a thought to what I said okay?”

“Okay! Kiss! Kiss!” replied Candy turning up the volume of the car stereo as she masked to conceal the noise and zoomed off.

Candy sang along as she steered through the shortcuts to avoid traffic, it took her about half an hour to get to her destination. Her cell phone rang, she picked it via her Bluetooth headset, “Hello!”

“Hi, it’s Jim! Have you seen my messages?” asked the caller.

“Yes I did, Jimmy, but I’ve told you several times; I already got a man!” she said, staring through the rear view mirror as she reversed.

“Well, can I at least see you now just for a couple of minutes?” asked Jimmy, “hello, are you there?”

“No, it won’t be possible for us to meet; besides, Mellissa is waiting for me at the cafe as we speak!” she smoothly pulled the handbrake as she parked.

“You didn’t...tell her, did you?” Jimmy asked anxiously.

“She doesn’t know anything, but if you keep calling me like this, Jimmy, I’ll have no choice but to tell her!” Candy said, “She’s a nice girl, and she loves you. But most importantly, she’s my friend, okay? Goodbye!”

“Aight! Bye Candy!” replied Jimmy in a weak but respectful tone.

Candy ended the call, removed the headset from her ear and put it in the glove compartment. She switched on the interior light and looked into the vanity mirror then licked her lips, “Hmm!” she sighed as she opened her purse, pulled out a red lipstick setting her eyes on the mirror again. Her phone rang as she applied the lipstick, she picked it, “What’s up girl? I’m right outside, be with you in a minute!” Candy hung up then applied some make-up and some perfume, she kissed the wind with a smile admiring her scrumptious look in the mirror.

Candy walked out of her red minivan, parked outside and not far from the cafe; the regular spot where she and her friends usually hung out, the very same place she met Jake, her boyfriend eight months earlier. She smiled and waved her hand in the air as she sighted her two girlfriends, Mellissa and Laura through the glass entrance.

“Hey gals!” said Candy as she shut the glass door behind her.

“You’re a late, CC!” said Mellissa, “Aren’t you tired of always footing the bills?” referring to their common ritual.

“My boss didn’t leave the office until 6:45 and it took me about thirty minutes to get here!” replied Candy, “Hey Laura, I like your hair!”

“Why thank you,” Laura replied, “but I thought you said your boss was out of town?”

“Well, so we thought,” answered Candy, grabbing a stool, “for that’s all we staff had hoped for, apparently he forgot tomorrow is his kid’s graduation bla-bla-bla!”

“Oh, Jimmy called about an hour ago,” said Mellissa, “he asked after you!”

“Oh, really?” Candy said, “How is he doing?”

“He’s okay, it’s just that he’s been busy lately, you know!” Mellissa relayed.

“I don’t think I can marry anybody working for the Feds!” said Laura.

“Shut it girlfriend,” Candy interjected, “yours is even worse! Who dates reporters these days, when we live in troubled times?”

“Oh, shut up! No way, I’m cool with Shoham’s choice of job!” Laura said in defence.

“Yeah right, aren’t we all?” Candy implied.

As the ladies continued on, in defence of their partner’s occupations, a fine young man of average build walked towards them.

“Hello! I was wondering if you ladies could join me and my two cool friends over there,” he said.

“Well, hello! Oh, um...We um...we would love to, but we actually have like a small meeting, you know, girls stuff!” a nervous Laura responded, as she couldn’t take her eyes off the enchanted fellow.

“Oh, I see. Well, maybe when you’re done, you can join us, what do you say?” asked the young man.

“Sure,” said Mellissa, “be with you in a jiffy!”

“Yeah, once we’re done analysing your butt and physique!” said Laura, “I mean, analysing the uh, both our physics...assignment! We just gained admission into the University.”

“Okay then!” he responded as he walked back smiling on his way to his buddies.

“Laura?” Mellissa whispered.

“Hmm, cute guy,” Candy said, “but he ain’t my type!”

“Liar! You didn’t notice the clean cut hunk by the counter, did you?” Mellissa asked.

Candy turned then grinned, “Oh my God,” she said, “and he didn’t tell me he was going to be here!” referring to the handsome man by the wine counter, “Give me a minute gals! Be right back!”

“Go get him tigress!” a mocking Mellissa said as they all laughed.

“Grrrr!” exclaimed Candy playfully, she left her items with the ladies as she approached the stud looking male.

“Hey handsome, mind buying a lady a drink?”

“You sexy lil’thang,” said the young man as he turned, “Come over here!” wrapping his arm around her waist with a sterning grip as he plunged her succulent lips over his, “how’s my ace doing this evening?”

“Mmm...she’s fine! Now you’ve got red lipstick all over!” she smiled, as she wiped his lips with her thumb and kissed him again, “marking my territory!”

“She doesn’t need to mark any territory that she owns! Jake belongs to her. I’ve missed you so much,” he said gazing into her eyes.

“Missed you too, baby! So, what’s my Jake doing here? He never told his Queen he was going to be here this evening!” Candy emphasised as she poked his chest.

“I’m on a mission tonight!” Jake responded.

“A mission, huh?” Candy asked.

“Where’s your phone?” Jake asked.

“On the table, right over there!” she said, “What, you wanna make a call?”

“Nope!” he said, “Got this new app you would love!”

“Should I get it now?” she asked.

Jake smiled, “Yeah!?” he raised his eyebrows for a split second then dropped them back.

“Baby, what are you up to?” Candy pouted, “Okay, I’ll be right back!” she kissed him as she left to get the phone.

Candy unzipped her purse and pulled out her cell phone, as she was about to go back, Mellissa held her hand, “Candy, you know why we are all here, right?” said Mellissa, “You better tell Romeo to give you 30minutes, you two have all the time in the world to go kill all the whales in the South China sea, once we are done!”

“Mellissa?” said Laura, “Don’t be a pain in the butt!”

“I am so sorry,” Candy replied as she looked at Laura, “give me a minute gals, please?”

Laura nodded as a signalled expression.

“Thank you! Love you all,” Candy smiled.

“Spoiler alert!” Laura pitched as she held the hands of her curious friend, “We’re going to witness it, CC!”

“Witness what?” asked Candy.

“Laura, seriously?” yelled Mellissa, “Come on!”

“What are you talking about?” Candy asked.

“Go finish with Romeo, I’ll tell you when you get back!” answered Mellissa, she turned and stared at Laura.

Candy shook her head and as she turned to go, she was stunned to see Jake on his knees right behind her, holding a priceless ring, and looking a bit nervous!

Jake smiled looking up into her heavenly eyes, “Candy Cuthway, my ace...I know I’m not the wealthiest man in the world, nor am I the strongest, the flyest nor the toughest...but I do know one thing; I cannot live without you and I find myself falling in love with you every day that passes by and...I just want you to know that I would love to spend the rest of my life with you. Candy Cuthway, will you marry me?”

The silence of the room was deafening.

“Jake,” said Candy as she looked around and saw all eyes on them in the cafe, with all the people smiling and staring, including her prideful friends, “Yes! Yes! I will marry you!”

“Oh my God!” said Jake.

“Get up!” she commanded with a blissful smile.

Mellissa and Laura’s actions were worthy of paparazzi as they took series of shots of their excited friend with their phones.

“Girls?!” yelled an embarrassed Candy.

“I was there!” said Laura, tongue in cheek.

“Me too!” said Mellissa.

“Me three!” said someone in the cafe as Jake, Mellissa and Laura laughed.

Jake stood to his feet and once again kissed Candy, his most possessed prize and as everyone applauded and whistled, Jake put the ring on her finger.

“Wrong finger baby!” whispered Candy.

“Oh, sorry!” he responded as he put the ring on her itchy finger, where she pointed.

Candy hugged and kissed him then turned and flashed the ring at her friends, and the people in the cafe excitedly. “Ladies and gentlemen, I got him!” she said as they all happily laughed along with her.

Candy turned to Jake, “So this was your plan all along?”

“They offered to help!” he said as he bit his lower lip.

“You set me up! You’re gonna have to buy me a drink!” she teased.

“Anything for you baby, anything,” he held her hand and led her back to the counter as some of the customers congratulated them.

Jake sat on the stool by the wine counter as Candy wrapped her arms around him.

“I’m kind of nervous!” she whispered to his ears, “baby I am not dreaming, am I?”

“We’re going to be fine, baby!” he assured her. He placed their order, then turned to her, “I just couldn’t wait to come back, love!”

“Aww! Well, I’m here baby, what now?” teased Candy, “wait, I know! Selfie!” she buried herself into his arms, raised her phone with her right hand. She took two Selfie shots at the same time flashing her sparkling ring at the camera, “Now let’s see...” she scrolled through her phone gallery, “Urgh!” she snorted, “How about a smile for a change baby, why the long face?” Candy emphasised, turning and facing the entrance to the cafe, she raised the phone again, this time at a ninety degrees angle, “Okay baby, smile!”

“Your friends are looking at us, you know!” he whispered as he gently placed his head on her right shoulder.

“Say cheese!” said Candy. They posed, as she placed her red lips on his cheek and was about to take a snapshot when suddenly a stray bullet shattered her phone and pieced through Jake’s skull; his head hitting the counter as his lifeless body fell to the floor, Candy quickly ducked and fell along as bullets shattered the counter.

“Oh my God!” screamed her friends across from under the table as the hail of bullets continued to fly.

Candy turned in shocking dismay to realize the motionless corpse of her precious Jake; the bullet had gone through the socket of his right eye.

Jake was dead.

“Baby? Noooo!” She screamed endlessly as the bullets kept pouring in. She had no choice but to quickly crawl her way to a safer position and hid under a perforated table, Candy watched as three

threatening men in dark trench coats crouched in shooting back at some cars outside the cafe. Horrible was this Drive-by-Shooting as something out of a thriller. The chubby of the trigger happy men hid behind an asbestos pillar as the other two laid flat behind a table.

“Where’s Pago!?” shouted the chubby one, “Pago!”

“I think he got hit, boss!” responded one of the men.

More shots were fired from outside as the petrified customers continued to scream. The three men fired back with every chance they got, bullets ricocheted from within and outside the cafe, hitting bystanders as well as waiters and waitresses in the cafe, turning it into a dead pool. As the shooting continued, the sound of sirens were heard approaching. The shooters from outside then zoomed off immediately. The three men noticing the stern possibility of being outgunned ran out firing shots at possible pursuers only to be ambushed by the police resulting to a retreat back into the cafe.

“What now, boss?” asked one of the men.

“Grab that one, the brunet in red,” ordered the chubby gangster, “she’s our ticket out of here and for God’s sake shoot the damn lights!”

Instantly one of the men fired shots at the chandelier, the cafe’s major source of illumination, giving the other the chance to grab hold of Candy.

“No! Please don’t!” Candy cried out in plea.

“Get up you broad! Play it nice and simple, and you could get out of this alive!” said the henchman as he grabbed her by her hair. Candy had to hold it together, for she knew she represented the strong of the bunch.

The henchman handed her to the chubby gangster who without hesitation placed a gun behind her head, the hot tip of the pistol pressing against her delicate skull as they walked out of the cafe. Mellissa and Laura could not help but watch in horror as Candy was being used as a hostage likened to a human shield. Candy looked around and saw that Jake was not the only victim, for many of the customers were slaughtered in the crossfire.

“Freeze!” said one of the policemen.

“We don’t want any trouble officers!” yelled the chubby gang leader, “We just want to get home to our families, just like you, and I believe so does this young woman, do you disagree, Red?” as he pulled Candy’s hair harder. She lost a couple of strands.

“Drop your weapon!” said the police again.

“Officers, come on, haven’t any of you heard of a Mexican standoff?” mocked the joking gang leader. “Red, I asked you a question;” as he licked her face with his slimy tongue, “do you disagree?”

“No!” Candy said crying, “Please don’t hurt me!”

“We won’t hurt you sweetheart,” replied one of the henchmen, “if anything happens to you, blame it on these pigs, not us!”

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