

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LINDA
CAROL
MATT
TINA
CHARLIE
STAN
RENEE

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

ACT ONE: A SUBURBAN BACKYARD

Lights up on a typical American suburban backyard, somewhere in Ohio. The yard is completely fenced in with shrubberies and flowers lining the fence. There is a gate that leads to the front yard of the house, but it is closed. The back of the house is a nice modest but upscale suburban home with a small patio with a table for food, a back porch with a railing, and a nice barbecue grill. A door leads to the kitchen of the house. The backyard is half heartedly decorated for a party with a few streamers and balloons, some of which have not been placed yet.

Linda comes out of the house carrying a bowl of potato salad. Linda is around forty, white, pretty, and dressed in a light brown shorts, and plain off-white button down blouse. She puts the potato salad on the food table. She arranges a few items, and then Carol enters from the kitchen with a platter of buns. Carol is in her forties, pretty, demure, and seemingly very sweet. She places them on the food table.

The women work on decorating.
Carol hangs some streamers from
the back of the house. Linda
holds up a bowl of potato salad.

LINDA

Hey Carol, Do you think it's okay to leave this potato salad
out? The label says it should be (reading) "refrigerated
until it's consumed"...and it's gotten kind of hot out.

Carol is placing streamers with
tape.

CAROL

It won't be out for very long. What kind is it?

LINDA

What kind is what?

CAROL

The potato salad. Is it the kind with mayonnaise? Or vinegar?
Or is it German?

LINDA

I don't know, it's just potato salad. I got it at Kroger.
They scooped it out of a plastic tub.

Carol puts down the streamer and
comes over to Linda.

CAROL

Really? But it's so easy to make.

LINDA

It's also so easy to buy.

Carol picks up another bowl of
potato salad from the table, and
shows it to Linda.

CAROL

I made mine from scratch. It's a family recipe.

LINDA

(skeptical)

Does it really make a difference?

CAROL

I think it does.

LINDA

I've never really thought too much about potato salad. What kind do you like?

CAROL

Oh, I don't eat it. I don't really care for potatoes.

LINDA

I don't eat it either. I wonder if we'll have too much?

CAROL

Charlie eats it. He loves it. So, I make it for him.

Linda hands Carol a deflated balloon from a bag, and grabs one for herself. They both sit on the edge of the porch and start to blow up balloons. When Carol's balloon is about halfway inflated, she suddenly lets the air out of it. Phffffft. Not only is the balloon deflated, so is Carol.

LINDA

What's the matter?

CAROL

The whole thing just makes me a little sad is all.

LINDA

What makes you sad?

CAROL

Well, it used to be so much fun when people cooked for the potlucks, and they would have their own secret recipes and everyone would try to guess what was in them.

LINDA

(unimpressed)

People really did that?

CAROL

Oh yes, absolutely. The neighborhood used to make our own fun. But that was before you and Matt moved here.

Carol starts to inflate her balloon again. Linda just watches her, and then Linda lets the air out of her own balloon. Phffft...

CAROL

Oh no! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to imply that you moved here and things stopped being fun.

LINDA

I'm fun.

CAROL

Of course you are.

Linda tosses her balloon on the ground.

LINDA

Once we get the Neighborhood Association's new charter certified, we're all going to have a lot of fun. It's gonna be great for everyone.

CAROL

I don't think enough board members are going to vote for all those new rules, Linda.

LINDA

Have you read it? It's really not that many changes.

CAROL

I skimmed it. It's a lot.

LINDA

They're all great additions to the Charter.

Linda motions for Carol to help her with some streamers. They each get on an end, and twist two different colored streamers together. They hang them while they talk.

CAROL

Charlie is against the new Charter.

LINDA

Of course he is... but you're the one on the board. You're going to vote for it right?

CAROL

I haven't decided yet. (Looking at the streamer) Oh, this looks so pretty! I love how the two colors go together so well!

LINDA

What's to decide? It's going to keep the neighborhood safer, cleaner, friendlier!

CAROL

Charlie says there's going to be too many new rules.

LINDA

Do you just do everything Charlie says? It's a secret ballot. He'll never know.

CAROL

Do we really need all those new rules?

LINDA

There'll be some new rules, yeah. But they're good rules. And with this new Charter, when electing members to the board each family will get one vote no matter how big their property is. That's good for you and Charlie because your property is one of the smaller ones. The way it is now the Frasers have way too much power. You get that, right?

She motions to the streamer.

LINDA

Tape your side up there on the eave.

Carol tapes her side up.

CAROL

I do like the idea of everyone having equal say.

LINDA

Exactly. Equality. It's really not that big of a change. It's just some new regulations to keep the neighborhood safe and beautiful is all.

CAROL

I guess.

Linda finishes putting up her streamer and speaks directly to Carol.

LINDA

I hope you vote for the new charter, Carol.

CAROL

I probably will.

LINDA

(emphatic)

I really hope so.

Linda hands Carol the end of a "Happy Birthday" banner with individual cardboard letters, but the "B" is missing.

LINDA

Help me with this banner?

CAROL

This says "Happy Irthday" what happened to the "B"?

They hang the banner.

LINDA

It's fine. Matt doesn't care about his birthday.

CAROL

He doesn't?

Linda goes over to the food table to assess the situation.

LINDA

No, we really don't do birthdays. Well, we do mine, but he doesn't care about his. We usually just go to Buca Di Beppo down in Columbus and he really enjoys that. Do you think we have enough hamburger buns?

Linda holds up two plastic bags
of hamburger buns.

CAROL
It looks like it should be plenty.

LINDA
(sarcastic)
I'm sorry that I didn't bake them myself. But hopefully store
bought will be okay with you.

CAROL
See, now I've hurt your feelings. I'm sorry I said anything
about the potato salad. I know you have to work more now
because of Matt and the...the...the thing. And you just don't
have the time to cook, and I should have been more
considerate.

LINDA
Matt will get another job.

CAROL
As a teacher? Do you think anyone will hire him again as a
teacher?

LINDA
I don't know Carol. But thank you for bringing it up.

CAROL
I'll bet he was a good teacher.

LINDA
Not really. Why don't you put this bowl of gazpacho over on
the other end of the table next to the bowls and spoons?

Carol moves the bowl of gazpacho.

CAROL
Next time, why don't you just call me and I'd be happy to
make the potato salad for you.

LINDA
(dead pan)
Would you?

CAROL
(cheerful)
I would.

LINDA

Okay. Sure. Next time.

CAROL

I'd be happy to do it. See! Now that wasn't so hard. Anything to help out a neighbor.

Linda goes into the house.

CAROL

(speaking to Linda off)

I think there will be plenty of food since the kids aren't coming. It was nice of Denise to agree to take them to the park for the afternoon.

Linda comes back out of the house with a bowl of fruit salad, she places it on the table.

LINDA

Denise owes me.

A beat.

LINDA

She knows why.

CAROL

It's nice that she volunteered to watch the kids.

LINDA

She didn't really have a choice.

CAROL

She's on the board. Do you know how she's going to vote?

LINDA

However I tell her to.

Linda looks at the fruit salad with disappointment.

LINDA

This fruit salad has SO much cantaloupe.

CAROL

Being a Mom is exhausting, but- you know that better than anyone. Working, taking care of the kids. President of the Neighborhood. You're like Super Woman.

Linda stirs up the fruit salad.

LINDA

Yup. I love my kids, but sometimes there are days when I just want to strap them into the back seat of the Prius and drive the car into the lake.

Carol looks at her in horror.

LINDA

I'm kidding!

CAROL

Oh, that was a joke?

LINDA

Yes! ... You know I don't own a Prius.

Carol fake laughs. She abruptly stops laughing.

CAROL

I just don't think drowning children is very funny.

Linda holds up a large, single serving spoon.

LINDA

I'm sorry. It was just a joke. We're gonna need more serving spoons for all this potato salad.

CAROL

Did you know, before you moved here, that happened?

LINDA

What happened?

CAROL

A child was drowned in the lake.

LINDA

By one of their parents?!

CAROL

No, it was in a swim class.

A beat.

CAROL

And apparently he wasn't a very good swimmer...Poor little Artie McBean. They named the new lifeguard tower after him though. It's okay. You couldn't have known.

Matt enters with a plate of raw hamburgers. Matt is around forty, good looking and charismatic.

MATT

It's burger time!

LINDA

Isn't it a little soon to start grilling?

MATT

I'm just getting things prepped. It's a whole thing to try to cook a bunch of hamburgers at the same time and not have them suck. I just want to be prepared.

Matt goes over to the grill and starts organizing the grilling tools. He pulls a very long match from a box and lights the grill with it.

CAROL

(sweetly)

Like a boy scout.

MATT

(making the scout salute,
three fingers)

Troop 444. Life Scout here!

CAROL

Happy birthday Matt.

MATT

Thank you, Carol. (To Linda) What was the final count?

LINDA

Well, aside from you and I... there's Carol here...

CAROL

(waving cheerfully)

Here I am!

LINDA

There should be the Carltons—Stan and Renee, and I think Tina is coming but I don't know about Jeff.

MATT
(to Carol)

What about Charlie?

CAROL

Sorry only one Weaver. Just me. Charlie isn't going to make it.

MATT

Wait, what? Why not?

CAROL

He's not feeling well.

MATT

What's wrong with him?

CAROL

He said his sinuses were flaring up.

MATT

He's faking right, to get out of it?

CAROL

Probably, yes.

MATT

He knows it's my birthday right?

CAROL

He knows.

MATT

I came to his birthday.

CAROL

You know things have just been a little weird since the...the ...the thing between you and him. I'm sorry Matt. He'll come around.

MATT

He's still hung up on that? Why won't people let it go? So stupid. I don't need Charlie here anyway. He always tries to be the center of attention.

CAROL

He just has that kind of personality.

MATT

(to Linda, cheerfully)

At least Ben is coming and he's bringing his cousin Roy. That should be fun.

LINDA

It would...but...uh- no, he's not.

MATT

What?

LINDA

He's not coming and neither is his cousin Roy.

MATT

When were you going to tell me?

LINDA

Right now... Ben and Roy aren't coming.

MATT

Why isn't he coming? Is he sick too?

LINDA

No, he's not sick. He said he's just been busy and he's a little tired.

Matt puts down the grilling tools. He knows something is up.

MATT

This thing has gotten out of control. It's ridiculous. Everyone is making such a big deal out of it!

LINDA

I'm sorry. Maybe this wasn't a good day for your birthday.

Tina enters from the side gate. She has a mountain of Tupperware bowls of different shapes, sizes and colors. They are filled with various foods. Tina is dressed in a flowing groovy dress. She has long hair with ribbons woven into it.