

Birds of a Feather

by Gary Ray Stapp

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Kim, and to our children, Lacey and Taylor.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Armed with a sharply judgmental attitude and a pair of binoculars, homeowner Leona Crump is overwhelmed with curiosity and consumed with anxiety concerning the type of people who are to become her new neighbors on her respected little cul-de-sac. Will they be California beatniks? Or paroled drug pushers? Or more frightening yet, perhaps someone with children?! Her worst fears are realized when an odd-ball "hill-folk" family moves in across the street. And nothing has prepared her for the series of showdowns that take place in her living room.

Gafina Hambefferschmidt is an obnoxious, overbearing, picture-snapping, gum-chewing woman. She, along with her "Maw," an old hillbetty crone; her simple-minded, love-struck boyfriend, Turner; and her "trampy" sister Bambi, turn Leona's neighborhood upside down.

Threatened by the over-zealous friendliness of the women and romanced by the disgusting Turner, Leona vows to purge her cul-de-sac of these undesirable neighbors and quickly tries to recruit others to help. However, she gains no support from her husband, who is the epitome of the couch potato, nor her neighbor Judy, who is as sweet as pie and about as bright.

Adding to Leona's exasperation is her daily dealings with her refrigerator-raiding neighbor Paul, the local real estate saleswoman, the mailman, the Avon lady, a police officer, and a paper boy, all who, Leona is sure, were only put on this earth to annoy her. Outnumbered, but refusing to be outmatched, Leona suits up in Army fatigues and irrationally resolves to "mop up" the new neighbors all on her own.

Ultimately, it's a flock of pink flamingos that drives her over the edge and lands her in the local jail. But in the end, will she be victorious and drive her new neighbors away? Maybe, maybe not—it all depends on her weed eater!

CHARACTERS

4 m, 5 w, 1 flexible, optional 1 boy

LEONA CRUMP: In her 50s, all brass and sass, and dripping with sarcasm. She is a sour, judgmental, neighborhood snoop, and champion marigold horticulturist.

JUDY HARRISON: Late 20s or early 30s, a neighbor in the cul-de-sac. She is sweet, naive.

Judy doubles as BAMBI: Gafina's sister. Provocatively-dressed young woman who never speaks, but says a lot with her body.

GAFINA HAMBEFFERSCHMIDT: New to the neighborhood, in her 40s. Obnoxious woman with an annoying "machine gun" laugh.

ROSE BUSH: In her 50s, give or take 10 or 20 years. A successful, eccentric real estate sales lady whose trademark is a rosebush.

AVA: A saleswoman of various cosmetics and goods. Dressed to the nines and not afraid to match fists with Leona.

Ava doubles as MAWTILDA FEESHENSHELBAFIELD: Gafina's loud, intrusive hillbilly mother. Her teeth would make "Mr. Ed" envious.

ALBERT: Leona's husband. Retired career soldier, now the epitome of the couch potato.

PAUL HARRISON: Judy's husband. Likes to spell out homophone words; he frequents Leona's kitchen for sustenance.

GEORGE: A mailman in his 50s. Easy going but snaps up every opportunity to subtly get Leona's goat.

TURNER: Gafina's simple-minded boyfriend, who courts Leona. He's right at home in an ear-flapped cap, overalls, and a soiled undershirt.

OFFICER FRANK (FRANCIS) DOONAN: (gender flexible role) Takes his job seriously, but could use another semester at the police academy.

PAPERBOY: (optional role) A young kid, terrified of Leona.

A NOTE ON DOUBLING: It is necessary that the roles of Ava/Mawtilda be played by the same actress in order for the ending to be believable to the audience. For the same reason, it is recommended that the actress playing the role of Judy should also play the role of Bambi. The program should list the actress playing both roles of Ava and Mawtilda. The actress playing the role of Bambi, however, should be shrouded with a little mystery. In this way, the ending is more likely to be a surprise and more fun for the audience. As an example: *“Bambi: (To Be Announced) — The actress filling the role of Bambi may vary from night to night. She might be someone you know, then again, you may not know her at all. It’s also possible that the role may be performed by a man in drag—you’ve seen an idiot do that a time or two. Or perhaps she might be someone from the audience. Look around and see if anyone is missing. Who knows, if might even be you.”*

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

PLACE: The living/dining room of Leona’s home, which sets on the west side of a three-house cul-de-sac in a mid-scale neighborhood in a mid-size city somewhere in the Midwest.

ACT I: Mid-morning, present day.

ACT II: Next day.

ACT III:

Scene 1: Very early the following morning.

Scene 2: Later, same day.

Scene 3: Two days later.

*See additional notes at the end of the script.

ACT I

(AT RISE: Leona's living room. ALBERT is buried beneath a blanket on the sofa. JUDY is peering out through the front window, DSR. LEONA walks in from kitchen SL with a coffee carafe and refills the cups on the table. The table is set with cups and saucers, cake, plates, napkins, a candy dish, an arrangement of marigolds, a newspaper, and a romance novel.)

LEONA: Judy, have you seen anyone?

JUDY: No ma'am. And I've been here at the window the whole time you've been in the kitchen.

LEONA: I just can't stand it! I have to know who Rose is showing Ms. McFurdle's house to. This is simply way too stressful on me. I can tell you one thing, Rose had better be careful about the kind of people she moves in across the street from me. Do you see anyone yet?

JUDY: No ma'am, I don't see anybody or anything, except Rose's big Pontiac. You know the brown-colored one that looks almost pink, but nobody really thinks it's pink besides me, but I can't help it, it just looks pink...sort of a dirty brown pink, but pink.

LEONA: Judy, I know what kind of car Rose drives. And, yes, it is a Pontiac, but it's not a pink Pontiac. It's not even brown. Its color is champagne. I have told you that before. Your husband has told you that! Anyone and everyone you've debated the color of that car with has told you it's not pink. Even Albert says the color is not pink and generally he never says two words about anything. Isn't that right, Albert?

ALBERT: *(Still curled up on the sofa beneath a blanket, his face hidden.)* Huh?

LEONA: Rose's car...it's NOT pink, is it?

ALBERT: Nope.

LEONA: Its color is champagne, isn't it?

ALBERT: Yep.

LEONA: Tell me, Albert, just how would you describe the color of champagne? *(Pause for an answer.)* ALBERT! Do you know what color champagne is?

ALBERT: Nope.

LEONA: That's what I thought! If I said it was bright orange, you'd agree with me then too, wouldn't you, Albert?

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ALBERT: Yep.

LEONA: You don't really give a rat's rear-end either, do you, Albert? *(Crosses to ALBERT with a newspaper rolled up in her hand.)*

ALBERT: Nope.

LEONA: You're a real conversationalist, Albert. *(SHE smacks him with the paper.)*

JUDY: He's a man of few words.

LEONA: You can say that again.

JUDY: He's a man of few words.

LEONA: I didn't mean literally.

JUDY: You didn't mean what—?

LEONA: Never mind. *(Crosses back to table.)* I give up on you, Albert! Judy, I warn you now, do not ever let your husband lay down on your sofa. If you do, you will never see him again. As God is my witness! He's the laziest, most good-for-nothing...and I emphasize NOTHING! He's too lazy to even argue. I don't know how he ever made a career in the Army. Early retirement has been hard on me, Judy!

JUDY: Oh, Leona, Albert's not so bad. *(Crosses to stand behind sofa.)* He could be like some husbands who spend half their nights at beer joints and pool halls and Rotary meetings. You're lucky to have him home with you every night and day.

LEONA: Uh huh...he's lots of company!

JUDY: You know, Leona, I suddenly realize I can't remember what Albert looks like. I have seen him before, haven't I?

LEONA: How long have you lived here in the cul-de-sac?

JUDY: About a year and a half now.

LEONA: Nope, I doubt if you've ever seen him. But don't feel bad, I don't even remember what he looks like!

JUDY: *(Leans over sofa and pats ALBERT.)* Hi ya, Albert! Why don't you pull that cover off your head so I can get a look at you.

LEONA: No! Don't do that! Are you crazy? *(Scolded, JUDY returns to a dining table chair and sits.)* He's been camped out on that sofa for three solid months—it's probably stuck to him! I don't want to know what he looks like. I'll just try and remember him as he was. Albert? ALBERT!

ALBERT: What?

End of Freeview

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