LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

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 consumed with anxiety over her new neighbors. 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. She quickly realizes that neither God, nor her favorite telephone psychic, has prepared her for the series of showdowns set to take place in her living room. Gafina Hambefferschmidt, an obnoxious, gum-chewing woman, together with her "Maw," an old hillbetty crone; Gafina's 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 them from her cul-de-sac. But she has no support from her husband, the epitome of the couch potato, nor her other neighbor Judy, who is as sweet as pie and about as bright.

Adding to Leona's exasperation are her daily dealings with her refrigerator-raiding neighbor Paul, the local real estate saleswoman, the mailman, an Avon lady, a police officer, and a paper boy, all, she is sure, who were only put on this earth to annoy her. Outnumbered, but refusing to be outmatched, Leona suits up in fatigues and 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 weedeater!

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

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.

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 homophones; 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."*

SETTING

The play takes place in 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 somewhere in the Midwest. The room is tastefully decorated with furnishings and pictures and accents, in addition to an arrangement of marigolds on the dinning table, and a vase of marigolds on the writing desk. However, the focal point of the room should be Leona's "wall of honor," a place where she has proudly displayed her ribbons, trophies, framed awards, and newspaper articles about her successes at flower exhibitions. This is essential to visually instill into the mind of the audience the importance of Leona's flowers as they define who she believes she is. There are three entrances and an imaginary front window in the floor plan. SR is the front door, made at an angle to the room and possibly elevated upon a one or two-step platform. Beyond the door is a porch with a trellis covered with ivy and perhaps a hanging flowering plant. SL is the entry to the kitchen. USC is an archway that frames a hall that leads to the bedrooms and bathroom. DSR (or DSC) is the imaginary window that looks out upon the implied front yard, giving the audience a full view of the spying that takes place there. A large sofa with a coffee table is at SR. A small dinette table with three chairs is at SL. A small writing desk and chair set on the DSL wall. Center stage is essentially open to allow for movement and a visual separation of the living and dining areas. Miscellaneous tables and lamps can be used if room allows.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

"Love Thy Neighbor" was originally produced by The Chamber Players Community Theatre in Garnett, KS, in the spring of 2003. It was directed by the playwright, Gary Ray Stapp with the following cast:

Judy Harrison...Carla Moody
Leona Crump...Charlotte Lutz
Albert...Jim North
Rose Bush...Jo Anne Haegert
Ava...Tracy Hansen
George...Norman Stanley
Gafina Hambefferschmidt...Allison Russell
Mawtilda Feeshenshelbafield...Tracy Hansen
Paul...Kevin Lewis
Officer Doonan...Wanda Taylor
Bambi...Carla Moody
Turner...Kenneth J. Amaya
Paperboy...Brandon Katzer

Props and SFX

Act I: Blanket and pillow, coffee carafe, cups, saucers, plates, napkins, dish of candy, pot of marigolds, newspaper, romance novel, sofa pillow, binoculars, potted rosebush, coffee cake, large bag of Avon packages, hand towel, pen, mail, postcard, cookies, "sold" sign, glass of water with whole lemon.
Act II: Binoculars, large box of garden lights, small notebook, camera, cake pan, sandwich, plate of food, pink flamingos, gun.
Act III: Box of flamingos, photo, deodorant, comb, socks, "pea," coffee cup, solar garden lights, newspaper, purse, money, card, pamphlet, permit, hammer, poster, paint can, rollers and brushes, plastic sheeting, plate of food, mop, crème pie on plate and fork, lady's robe, bouquet of marigolds, postcard and camera in purse, briefcase, weed eater, goggles, yellow and gold flower pieces, handcuffs, wanted poster, gun, whistle, plastic ware, notebook, bowls of food, packed box, cell phone, champagne and glasses, pink flamingos.

SFX

Doorbell, phone ring, hammering, door opening, weed eater, cell phone ring.

ACT I

(AT RISE: Mid-morning, 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.

End of Freeview

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