

Over The Fence

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Scene 1

The play opens on a summer afternoon in LINDA's backyard. BETTY, LINDA's college-aged sister, has her back to the audience, staring over the six-foot high fence behind her. She gets on her tip-toes, trying to get a better look. LINDA, a legal clerk in her late twenties, arrives home from work. She knocks her sister on the back with her briefcase.

LINDA

Hey.

BETTY

Turning around:

Hey, you're home! You got out early.

LINDA

No I didn't.

BETTY frowns, puzzled. She checks her watch.

BETTY

A quarter to. Geez, I must have lost track of time.

LINDA

Well you waste enough of your time already. Is this all you're going to do with your summer break?

BETTY

Is what all?

LINDA

Just sitting around in the backyard, zoning out in some Zen fashion. Really. You could be doing that at Mom and Dad's house.

BETTY

Oh, Mom and Dad...

She rolls her eyes.

LINDA

Well, they have a backyard, too. I'm sure our parents would let you perform your Feng-Shui there.

BETTY

Linda, you know there's more to my summer than that.

LINDA

Unfastening her top button:

Really...

BETTY

Just today, your new neighbor stopped by to say hello.

LINDA

Neighbor?

BETTY

Uh-huh.

LINDA

I have a new neighbor?

BETTY

Yeah, some guy. Right over the fence here. You know, when he first started talking, I thought he was nervous or something.

LINDA

How long was he here?

BETTY

Just a few minutes. Anyway, I said, "Hi, my name is Betty," and when he responded, he sounded pretty nervous. Then he talks a little more, and I can clearly hear his stutter.

LINDA gives BETTY a "why-do-I-care" look.

He had a stutter. I guess it was just really a stopping thing. It was pretty noticeable. I thought it was fascinating. I tried to get him to talk some more, but then he seemed to get even more nervous. After that, he left.

LINDA

What did he say his name was?

BETTY

Oh... I forget.

LINDA sighs.

Well how about your day? Meet anybody at the firm?

LINDA

Scoffs:

Take a wild guess. Ensley and Moher is the slowest place I have ever seen. In the rare instance that we do get a case, we always try and settle out of court. I seriously don't think anybody in the office has seen a trial.

BETTY

So you've told me...

LINDA

I get so mad about it because it would help me. I know Judge Hall and half the people down at Municipal. I could do so much in a court case. Instead I just shuffle back and forth the same papers all day. That's not what I want.

LINDA turns to see BETTY looming over the fence again.

Betty, is this all you're going to do with your summer? You've been in the backyard all the time for the last two weeks, and now you're practically in the new neighbor's backyard! What's so interesting?

BETTY

She turns:

Why does he stutter?

LINDA

Shrugs:

I couldn't tell you...

BETTY

There has to be some reason...

LINDA

Betty, really, he probably was born that way.

BETTY

That could be... That definitely could be... A stutter is always genetic. But just because you get the gene doesn't mean you'll stutter. And he told me that no one in his family stuttered.

LINDA

You asked him about his stutter? God, Betty...

BETTY

No, no! I asked him something, he tripped over the words, then he apologized and explained what he had.

LINDA

But he didn't explain why?

BETTY

If no one in his family stuttered, it must mean that they somehow learned to talk around the gene. But he must have learned differently. That's where you leave genetics. That's where you enter psychology.

LINDA

God, psychology...

BETTY

I'm pretty sure something happened to this guy that just switched him back to that stuttering gene. He went through something in his life. He's got issues, and it's affecting his speech.

LINDA

You really think so?

BETTY

It's a guess. I want to know his story. I really want to know what happened to him.

LINDA

Rolls her eyes:

Oh, a noble summer project. If you want to waste your days obsessing over the neighbors, be my guest.

BRIAN, LINDA's boyfriend, enters. He is wearing a large blue work coat over what seems to be a shirt and tie. He approaches

LINDA.

BRIAN

Hey honey!

LINDA

Brian!

They kiss.

How was your day?

BRIAN

He holds up a hand, shaking it for emphasis:

It was horrible... It was frustrating... It was just like every other day this month! We had been planning to replace the elevators in the building for three months now. Every time we get close to actually doing it, though, the shipping company jerks us around!

LINDA

So you are the manager of a building with faulty elevators?

BRIAN

Not faulty. The elevators are up to code, but they're an older model, and the only things in the building that haven't been replaced in two decades. Anyway, after months of wrangling, we finally got the new elevators today. We disassemble the older ones, then we find that the shipping company sent us the wrong model! The new elevators don't fit! We won't get the

BRIAN (cont.)

right elevators for a week! So now it's going to take twice as long, and we're stuck with three empty elevator shafts.

He sighs, then smiles.

But how was your day?

LINDA

Comparatively?

BRIAN

Smiles:

Whatever.

LINDA

The firm is as incompetent and as boring as ever. I tell you, if we ever get some decent work in there I will jump right on it. But comparatively... I had a great day.

BRIAN nods.

BRIAN

Good. So what are you doing—

BRIAN stops as BETTY bumps into him. BETTY has been inching along the fence, looking to the other side. She collides with BRIAN, swings outward, and sandwiches BRIAN between her and the fence. BRIAN gasps. BETTY jumps off and hits the ground. She stands in front of BRIAN and looks at the ground.

BRIAN

Betty! What are you doing?!

BETTY

Oh, Brian! I didn't—

BRIAN

What kind of greeting was that?! I don't come here to get sneak attacked!

BETTY

Brian, I wasn't-

BRIAN

What? Wasn't what? Betty, why were you on the fence?!

BETTY

Sighs:

I was looking over.

BRIAN

Looking over the fence? Why?

LINDA

Apparently I have a new neighbor.

BRIAN

A new neighbor... And he lives there?

BETTY nods.

Oh, I see...

LINDA

What?

BRIAN

Linda, do you remember Steve? Big guy? I play poker with him?

LINDA

He was here last week?

BRIAN

Yeah.

LINDA

I remember. He seemed a little off.

BRIAN

I bet. But that was no fault of his own. It was all because of your sister here.

BETTY

I—

She stops, figuring she should remain silent.

BRIAN

Now, Steve has just a little thing on germs. When we played poker here, Betty was hanging all over him. He's the new guy. Your sister was just so close and so annoying, that now Steve isn't gonna play any more games over here.

He turns to face BETTY.

I'm not saying it to be mean. But Betty, you did scare him away. Now you've got a new neighbor, and you're going to do the same thing!

BETTY

I never knew that Steve—

She stops again. BRIAN continues.

BRIAN

Betty. Stop! If not for the neighbor, if not for your sister, then... for the property values...

He shrugs.

BETTY

Speechless:

I'm... I'm sorry...

BETTY looks at BRIAN, and begins to exit offstage left. BRIAN looks at LINDA and sighs.

BRIAN

I vented at her...

He steps closer to LINDA.

But you know, your sister is insane.

He stands behind her and begins to massage her shoulders. She sighs.

LINDA

Insane, maybe...

She holds BRIAN'S arm.

But I have no complaints...

BRIAN

Hmmm...

LINDA

Oh, this is going to be a slow summer...

BRIAN

That can be a good thing...

LINDA

No...

She sighs.

I mean work...

BRIAN

Linda, remember what I was talking about before?

LINDA

Hmmm...

BRIAN

Why don't you take a few days off work, and we'll go up to the lake together?

LINDA

Oh, Brian, I don't know...

BRIAN

Come on. Last time you said you wanted to wait for it to get warmer. It's warmer.

LINDA

I know, but Betty just got here. She's got to get adjusted for the summer.

BRIAN

Aw, she's a big girl. You can leave her here a while...

LINDA

But she doesn't know anyone...

BRIAN

How about the neighbor?

LINDA breaks away from the massage and faces BRIAN.

LINDA

Brian, I really don't think it's the time. Can we put it off to another week?

BRIAN

Again?

LINDA

Again.

BRIAN

Sighs:

OK.

He checks his watch.

Oh, I've got to call Steve. Listen, I'm not done badgering you. I'll see you later. Bye.

LINDA

Bye.

He pecks her on the cheek and exits stage right. LINDA sighs and picks up her briefcase. She begins walking stage left toward the house, when she hears a raking sound. She looks toward the fence, and through it sees her new NEIGHBOR, slowly raking his yard. The scene ends.

Scene 2

The scene opens on the backyard a few days later. LINDA and BETTY are playing catch with a football. BETTY is wearing a different outfit and LINDA is wearing a summer jacket.

BETTY

So it's murder?

LINDA

It's murder; that we're sure of. But we have to prove that this guy did it. Or at least, had something to do with it.

BETTY

But isn't murder criminal?

LINDA

I would hope so.

BETTY

No, I mean that your firm only does civil cases. Isn't this murder case a criminal trial?

LINDA

No, that's the problem. This guy was cleared of murder charges, so now he's being sued in civil court for wrongful death.

BETTY

Isn't that double jeopardy?

LINDA

Yes. But it's only the Constitution; we don't care.

BETTY

But this is finally a real case, right?

LINDA

Smiles:

Oh yeah. It's real. There's no way we can avoid taking this one to trial. The firm is going to face Judge Hall, and the firm is going to need me to do it.

She claps her hands.

Finally some action!

Beat. The football is tossed.

BETTY

Say, you don't know what tonsure is, do you?

LINDA

Tonsure?

BETTY

Tonsure.

LINDA

I'm a little unsure.

BETTY

Your neighbor was talking about it. He said the trees in the backyard needed it if his garden was going to get enough sunlight.

LINDA

He's got a garden?

BETTY

Yeah, Warren has a really neat setup back there. He's spent the last few days working with the soil, planting things, bringing in mulch...

She throws the football. It goes high. LINDA stares at BETTY and lets the ball go.

LINDA

Warren?

BETTY

He's been bringing home bags labeled "Living Treasures" all week. Living Treasures is some new home and garden place. But I'm sure it's almost an hour's drive!

LINDA

Warren?

BETTY

There's something about that garden, Linda. I wonder if that's another psychological thing like the stutter...

LINDA

Betty!

BETTY turns.

How did you know his name is Warren?

BETTY

Oh. Ahh...

She shrinks.

LINDA

Did he come back over here?

BETTY

No, no... Actually, I almost forgot to tell you...

LINDA

What?

BETTY

I picked up his mail... by mistake... It was in with our mail...

LINDA

Really? I've never had that happen before.

BETTY

I put it right over here.

BETTY crosses to a small bench upstage left. She picks up a stack of letters.

I really almost forgot I kept it. Here you go.

LINDA

Taking the letters:

It's all of his mail? How did they mess this up?

BETTY

I don't know; it could be a new person thing. I mean, he just moved here. Maybe they're having trouble redirecting the mail.

LINDA eyes BETTY.

LINDA

Maybe...

BETTY

So... I guess we should return the letters to Warren?

LINDA

That would be the legal thing to do.

BETTY

Great. He's usually home by now, so I guess we could go right away.

BETTY gives a quick look over the fence. LINDA looks critically at BETTY.

LINDA

Betty, ahh...

BETTY

What?

LINDA

Tell you what. I'll take the letters over to Warren in a little while. You don't have to. You're... you're creepy.

BETTY

Linda!

LINDA

Betty, you are seriously showing signs of obsession here! You're staring over his fence. You wait for him to come home. You steal his mail!

BETTY

It got mixed with ours!

LINDA

Betty! Everything you've done today has centered around the new neighbor. You have to stop looking at Warren and do something else. Get a job!

BETTY

I try!

LINDA

Well you don't try very hard when you're sitting in the backyard!

BETTY

That's not fair! Linda, you've seen me filling out applications; you know I keep taking the classifieds.

LINDA

Yeah, I know. I know that right now there are three applications sitting on top of the microwave. They aren't going to do a lot of good unless you get them back to the stores!

BETTY

But I have done that! Once...

LINDA frowns.

It was a week ago. I put in an application at the sporting goods store.

LINDA

Really?

BETTY

Yes. I'm just waiting for them to call back. That's all I can do.

LINDA

Huh. Well if you want practice, you can start by putting that football away. Then see if we have those coupons, and call out for dinner.

BETTY

All right...

She picks up the football and heads offstage left. LINDA exhales sharply and flips through the mail.

LINDA

Under her breath:

Betty Betty Betty...

As she flips, WARREN comes in from stage right. He holds a hoe, and is dressed for gardening in jeans and a flannel shirt. WARREN is about 10 years older than LINDA and appears tired. He is always smiling, but his eyes give the appearance of "deer-in-headlights".

WARREN

Ah, hello.

LINDA

Looks up sharply:

Huh? Oh, hello!

She puts the letters to her side and extends her hand.

WARREN

With slight difficulty:

Hi, I'm Warren. I'm your neighbor—just around the corner.

LINDA

Oh, hi! I'm Linda. Nice to meet you!

WARREN

Yeah. I saw your car in the driveway and I ththought I'd stop by. I met your —your sister before...

LINDA

Oh yeah, Betty...

She rolls her eyes.

WARREN

Nice kid...

LINDA

Well, she's home from college for the summer...

WARREN

Yeah... So what do you do for a living?

LINDA

I am a clerk at Ensley and Moher... It's a law firm. How about you?

WARREN

Exhales:

Semi-retired. I—do a little gardening now. I'm fixing up the backyard.

He holds up the hoe for emphasis.

LINDA

Oh wow. You must really enjoy gardening.

WARREN

Well... it's gardening!

He shrugs, then smiles.

LINDA

Oh, you know what Warren? I think I have your mail...

WARREN

Really? I wouldn't think they have it redirected by now.

LINDA shuffles through the stack.

LINDA

Well they showed up in my mailbox, and Betty told me they belonged to you, so I was going to bring them over later. I guess it's good that you—

She stops. She fingers one letter and stares at it intently.

WARREN

So that's mine?

LINDA

Oh. Oh yeah, here you are.

LINDA hands the stack to WARREN, except for the one letter she has found. As she turns it in her hand, it becomes obvious that this letter has been opened.

WARREN

He points at the letter.

And—what's that one?

LINDA

This?

She holds up the letter.

LINDA (cont.)

Oh, this was mine.

She holds the letter down and puts her hands behind her.

But yeah, if we get any more of your mail, we'll let you know.

WARREN

OK, thanks!

LINDA

Listen, it was really nice meeting you!

WARREN

You, too!

LINDA

I'm sure I'll see you around.

WARREN

Yeah. Have a nice night!

He waves and exits right. LINDA looks off at him, then back at the letter. She calls out.

LINDA

Betty!

She exhales.

Betty, get out here!

BETTY walks outside.

BETTY

Yeah, what's wrong?

LINDA

This is what's wrong!

BETTY

It's a letter!

LINDA

It's a letter, Betty, and it's an open letter! It—

She glances over the fence and lowers her voice.

It's Warren's open letter! Betty, you're opening his mail!

BETTY says nothing and shrinks down.

Why?

BETTY

I... I just...

She sighs.

Take a look at who it's from.

LINDA looks at the envelope.

LINDA

"Saint Oliver Memorial Hospital..."

She looks at the letter inside.

It's a bill...

BETTY

You see? Linda, I thought this might explain something. The letter could have shown what was wrong with Warren.

LINDA

Betty, I'm more interested in what's wrong with you! This is criminal! I just met the guy, and you're upset because he doesn't yet fit your romantic description of a scarred man!

BETTY

You talked to him? Then you see what I mean!

LINDA

Betty, he has the stutter... and it is kinda...

BETTY

Kinda?

LINDA

Betty, you're still wrong.

BETTY

I always am...

LINDA

Examining the letter:

All right, when the mail comes tomorrow, I'll say this one showed up. I'll tape it, somehow, and—

She stops and looks closer.

That's pretty high.

BETTY

What?

LINDA

This bill. Warren paid for some pretty expensive procedures.

BETTY

Which ones?

LINDA

It doesn't say, but even without insurance, regular visits shouldn't cost that much. That's really odd...

LINDA studies the bill intently until she notices that BETTY is peering over her shoulder. LINDA frowns and turns.

But seriously, this needs to be returned. Betty, dinner's gonna be here soon. You should... go wait for it.

BETTY

But—

LINDA

Go!

BETTY slowly starts back inside. LINDA sighs and sits down on the bench. She runs her fingers through her hair, and her attention goes back to the bill. She looks at it critically, then looks up in thought. Very slowly, she gets up and turns to the fence. She attempts to casually peek into WARREN's yard. She stops herself. But curiosity wins over, and she pulls the bench over to the fence, climbs on it, and looks over. The scene ends.

Scene 3

A week later. LINDA is once again looking over the fence. She leans over for a better view.

WARREN

Entering:

Linda! Hello!

LINDA whirls around to see WARREN holding a department store clothing box. She gasps and walks briskly away from the fence and toward WARREN.

LINDA

Warren! Oh my God, hi! Why are you here?

WARREN lifts a rose from the box and hands it to her.

WARREN

Here you go!

LINDA

Warren! It's beautiful!

WARREN

Mmm. Yeah; It—it's from the old garden. I figured I'd I'd bring them around the neighborhood.

LINDA

The whole neighborhood?

WARREN

Yeah. I just finished my block. I'm gonna see how far...the rest of this box can go.

LINDA

Wow, you're growing them and going door to door with them? That has to take up a lot of time.

WARREN

Yeah. Yeah, but it—it's part of the hobby. Everybody needs a hobby.

LINDA

Warren, this really is a beautiful flower.

WARREN

Thhanks. That's a real compliment. I'm still pretty new at this, but I try. I try to keep them—keep them alive.

LINDA

No, this is so professional looking. Thank you.

WARREN

You're wel... No problem. I'll see you later!

LINDA

Bye...

WARREN exits stage right. LINDA watches as he goes. BETTY walks on from stage left, wearing a work shirt. She touches the flower in LINDA's hand.

BETTY

A flower...

LINDA

From Warren...

BETTY

Ohhh...

LINDA

So how is the world of sporting goods?

BETTY

It's the world of sporting goods.

She sits on the bench, sighs, and stares up at LINDA.

Well?

LINDA

Well what?

BETTY

What's today's Warren Report?

LINDA

Oh. It isn't much. He got up at his usual time, then around 10 he had a pretty long phone call...

BETTY

Oh, that reminds me. Your law firm called for you this morning. Again.

LINDA

Yeah. I can call them back...

BETTY

So what was the conversation about?

LINDA

What?

BETTY

Warren's phone conversation?

LINDA

Right. I couldn't tell. But then an hour later a white van pulls up, and Warren gets in. He seemed like he knew the driver.

BETTY

A white van? You mean like a maintenance van? Like a hospital?

LINDA

I don't know exactly. But it was obviously some guy he knew from before.

BETTY

A white van, wow...

She takes the flower from LINDA, puts it down on the bench, and gets up. BETTY smiles.

Hey. I didn't tell you what I did last night.

LINDA

No, you didn't. But you're going to.

BETTY

Alright. Well, Warren left for the garden store at 8:30 last night—

BOTH

Together:

...as usual...

BETTY

—and while he was gone, I made a trip over the fence...

LINDA

Betty!

BETTY

What?

LINDA

That's trespassing!

BETTY

Yeah...

LINDA

Betty, that's—

BETTY

Linda, there's only so much we can see from the backyard. If we want to find out about Warren, we've got to dig a little deeper...

LINDA pauses and wrings her hands. She looks up.

LINDA

So what did you do?

BETTY

I looked around the garden a little bit. He has an amazing setup back there. Not much is growing yet, but everything is set apart and labeled, though I couldn't read it cause it was dark... He's hanging onto this garden.

LINDA

How's that?

BETTY

This garden is important to him. Maybe it's his escape from whatever caused him to stutter. I tried to figure that out, but I left after a little while.

LINDA

You didn't see anything else?

BETTY

No, just tools and seeds. Not even a dead body in the shed.

LINDA

The shed?

BETTY

Smiles:

Oh yes. Apparently, Warren doesn't lock his shed.

LINDA

Oh...

She looks down at the ground and speaks quietly.

Warren doesn't lock his car, either.

BETTY

What?

LINDA reaches into her pocket and pulls out a pine-tree car air freshener. BETTY is astonished.

Linda! When did you—

LINDA

When the van pulled away, I went right over to his car.

BETTY

His car! I can't believe it! What did you find?

LINDA

Well, not much...

BETTY

Tell me!

LINDA

Well, his car has a lot of miles on it, but that's no surprise considering how often he drives back and forth.

BETTY

Right.

LINDA

His car is pretty clean. No ashtray, no CDs in the car. The glove compartment didn't have much, either. Registration, manual... Actually, there was one weird thing.

BETTY

What?

LINDA

All of the registration identification that he had, he had made photocopies of. That's not odd, but usually you keep the photocopies someplace different.

BETTY

And he didn't?

LINDA

He even had it set aside in an envelope labeled "Registration". And get this: The label was written in a woman's handwriting.

BETTY

A woman! Warren's woman!

LINDA

Betty, this really is a puzzle, you're right...

BETTY

Oh. What about that air freshener?

LINDA

Oh, don't worry. I found this underneath his passenger side floor mat. He probably never knew it was there.

BETTY

Let's hope so...

LINDA

Betty, we're still being careful enough. Hey, I even wore gloves!

BETTY

Sudden shock:

Gloves! Oh my God!

LINDA

What?

BETTY

I knocked Warren's gloves off of the rack when I was looking around his shed. Has he been in there yet today?

LINDA

No.

BETTY

Oh, Geez... I'm going to have to go back over there, put his gloves back in case he notices.

LINDA

Hurry up! Warren's out right now, but he'll be back soon!

BETTY

Geez...

She runs offstage right. LINDA goes to sit down on the bench. She brushes the rose onto the ground and sits. She admires the air freshener as BRIAN comes in, perturbed, to say the least.

BRIAN

Linda!

LINDA

Brian!

BRIAN

Explain something to me. I was just in the elevator with two lawyer types. They were arguing with each other about some case, about how it wasn't prepared or whatever. And they were ready to come down hard on whoever was responsible.

He steps in front of her.

BRIAN (cont.)

Linda, those were Ensley and Moher guys. They're ready to come down on you. What's wrong? Why haven't you prepared this case?!

LINDA

Getting up:

Oh, Brian... I've just had things come up.

BRIAN

Linda, you're almost getting fired, you're not talking to me... Something's wrong!

LINDA

Brian...

BRIAN

You're doing something to yourself... I just want you to explain.

LINDA

Brian, it's nothing. Betty and I have—

BRIAN

Oh, Betty! Don't get me started on her. You know what I just found out?

BRIAN is interrupted by BETTY's entrance. She runs in, on the verge of tears, both frightened and saddened by something. She nearly crosses the stage, then turns to LINDA.

LINDA

Betty!

BETTY

Oh, Linda! We've been wrong! We've been terrible!

LINDA

Betty, what is it?

BETTY

Warren! His garden! It's—it's—

BETTY stops and her eyes go wide as WARREN enters. He still holds his box of flowers. BETTY struggles to keep her composure.

WARREN

Hi guys!

BRIAN

Hey! Warren...

WARREN

Nice seeing you again-Brian!

LINDA

Warren, you're—

She gives a quick glance at BETTY, then turns back to WARREN.

You're back!

WARREN

Yeah. I had a few leftover flowers, and then I remembered—I missed somebody...

He approaches BETTY.

Betty?

He hands her a rose. BETTY gives a pained look.

BETTY

Oh! Uh...

And BETTY bursts into tears. WARREN looks at her.

WARREN

Betty! Are you... are you all right?

LINDA

Hiding her concern:

Oh, she—she's had an exhausting day.

WARREN

Uneasy:

Well, I—I guess I'll take that as a thank you...

LINDA

Warren, you really did a beautiful job.

WARREN

Aw, hey— It's what I do. Hey—take care of her...

BRIAN crosses to BETTY, approaches her cautiously, but goes to comfort her.

LINDA

We will! See you later!

WARREN

Take care!

WARREN exits. LINDA turns to BETTY, cocking her head. BETTY, still upset, begins walking gingerly toward her sister.

BETTY

Linda... I, I think— I changed my mind... Linda, I'm going to stay with Mom and Dad this summer.

LINDA

What?

BETTY

I really have to. Linda, after what we did— I just need to...

She is lost for words.

I'm gonna pack...

She runs for the house. LINDA looks on, astonished.

LINDA

Betty!

LINDA shakes her head.

BRIAN

I think I know what's going on here, and I don't like it...

LINDA turns to him.

Linda, what was it that you and Betty were doing that was so wrong? And be honest.

LINDA exhales sharply.

LINDA

Betty and I were trying to find out why Warren stutters.

BRIAN's eyes narrow.

BRIAN

And this was why Betty was always peeking over the fence?

LINDA nods.

BRIAN (cont.)

And I don't suppose you ever tried to ask him?

LINDA

Brian, that's not exactly how it works.

BRIAN looks down.

BRIAN

Linda, I just had a conversation with Warren. I asked him about the sign on his shed.

LINDA

There's a sign on his shed?

BRIAN

Yeah. It's on the other side; you can't see just by looking over. Linda, the sign reads "Alice's Garden".

LINDA

Alice...

BRIAN

Alice was Warren's wife. Alice was the gardener of the family. Alice was shot when their house was broken into. She went into a coma and eventually died. That left Warren speechless, literally. He told me he's had trouble speaking ever since.

Beat.

Can you blame him?

LINDA

That's it? And you just asked him?

BRIAN

That's it! It only takes a conversation! It doesn't take the sneaking around that Betty—and apparently you—have been doing!

He sighs.

Linda, it disgusts me that at the expense of your job, everything, you spent weeks stealing what I got from one conversation. That's not the way to deal with people! You can't expect to get to know them by sneaking around. What they give says more than what you take.

LINDA is motionless, gears turning in her head.

LINDA

If his wife was killed in a break-in, why doesn't he lock his doors?

BRIAN's response is cold and flat.

BRIAN

What else does he have to lose?

He stares at LINDA.

Linda, I don't think the guys are coming over for poker this week. I know I won't.

He begins to exit right. He turns to her.

I'll see you.

BRIAN exits. LINDA looks after him, thinking hard. She stands, unsure of what to do. Finally, she walks over to the bench. LINDA picks up both the air freshener and the rose she has swept to the ground. She walks center, the rose in one hand, and the air freshener in the other. She looks critically at both. LINDA sighs, and throws the air freshener over the fence. With the rose in her hands, she exits toward the house. The lights fade.