

"Lawn Care"

by
Mike Murphy

112 Lovering Street
Medway, MA 02053-2326
508-533-8310
mikeandzachary@gmail.com
WGA Registered

1 INT. DOUGLAS KITCHEN - MORNING

1

In her tidy kitchen, ESTELLE DOUGLAS, a retired senior citizen, looks quizzically out the window and calls upstairs to her husband, HERBERT.

ESTELLE

Herbert!

He calls back.

HERBERT

Yes, dear?

ESTELLE

Can you come to the kitchen
please?

HERBERT

I'll be right there.

ESTELLE

(sotto voce)
Why would he have. . .

Herbert walks down the stairs and into the kitchen.

HERBERT

Is breakfast ready?

ESTELLE

Soon.

(beat)
Why did you move the Christmas
figures around on the front lawn?

HERBERT

Me? I did no such thing.

ESTELLE

You didn't?

HERBERT

Of course not.

ESTELLE

Well, they *have* been moved.

HERBERT

Let's go have a look.

FADE OUT.

It is a crisp, clear morning. Mr. and Mrs. Douglas have donned coats, and Herbert is looking over their collection of holiday lawn ornaments, which includes Santa, a couple of reindeer, and a snowman.

HERBERT

I'll be darned! They *have* been moved around. Santa's always over *here*. And the two reindeer, and the snowman -

ESTELLE

You *didn't*. . . ?

HERBERT

Of course not. You know the order I always put them in.

ESTELLE

Then how are they in different places now?

HERBERT

(beat)
It was pretty windy last night. Maybe the w-

ESTELLE

The wind would blow them *down*, dear, not pull the stakes out of the ground, rearrange the figures, and push the stakes back in.

HERBERT

Then it must have been some kids, you know, playing an April Fool's gag.

ESTELLE

In *December*?

HERBERT

Kids nowadays aren't like they were back in our day. No respect.

ESTELLE

It makes me *nervous* to think that someone was up here on the lawn - probably while we *slept*.

HERBERT

Honey, you know what Dr. Pritchett said about your nerves.

(beat)

Maybe you should go inside, take one of your pills, and lie down for a bit?

ESTELLE

But breakfast -

HERBERT

We can eat later. It's more important that you catch this attack before it gets out of control.

ESTELLE

(sighs)

You're right.

HERBERT

And while you rest, I'll put Santa and the gang back in their proper places.

FADE OUT.

Estelle looks out the window.

ESTELLE

Not *again*!

HERBERT

You're kidding?

ESTELLE

See for yourself.

Herbert looks out the window.

HERBERT

This is getting *ridiculous*.

ESTELLE

Honey, I'm frightened.

Herbert walks to the wall phone and puts his hand on the receiver.

(CONTINUED)

ESTELLE

What are you doing?

HERBERT

Calling the police.

ESTELLE

Why? There's been no crime committed.

HERBERT

Maybe not, but they can humor an old man.

ESTELLE

Honey -

HERBERT

Wouldn't you feel better if an officer came over and had a look around outside?

ESTELLE

Of course, but you said it was nothing - just some kids.

HERBERT

We've owned those Christmas figures for years. Someone's getting his jollies by messing around with our personal property, and I *don't* like it. Just because I'm retired, that doesn't mean I have the time to fix Santa and company every day.

He lifts the receiver and starts dialing.

FADE OUT.

Herbert and Estelle stand in front of the Christmas figures with SGT. GERALD BARKER, a uniformed officer in his mid-30s.

BARKER

You said this happened before?

ESTELLE

Yes, officer. Yesterday morning.

(CONTINUED)

BARKER

Strange.

HERBERT

We're sorry to take up your time
with something so. . . so *trivial*.

BARKER

Not to worry.

(beat)

No footprints. Whoever's doing
this is covering his tracks pretty
well.

We hear the phone ringing, muffled from inside the house.

HERBERT

Could you get that, dear? I'll
finish talking with Sgt. Barker.

ESTELLE

Certainly.

She starts walking away.

ESTELLE

Nice to have met you, Sergeant.

BARKER

And you, Mrs. Douglas.

She opens the door and walks inside the house. The
ringing phone is answered.

HERBERT

Is this anything to be concerned
about?

BARKER

I can't say for sure right now.

HERBERT

(beat)

Sergeant, Estelle is. . . uhm. . .
the nervous type. She's on
medication for her nerves.

BARKER

I'm sorry to hear that.

(CONTINUED)

HERBERT

The idea that someone is sneaking up on our lawn after dark and doing this isn't helping her condition. I'm not crazy about it *myself*. Have there been any reports of trouble in the neighborhood?

BARKER

None.

(beat)

I'll tell you what: I'll arrange to have a couple of officers drive by here a few times during the night starting this evening. If that doesn't work, there are other steps we can try.

HERBERT

Thank you.

BARKER

Hopefully, they'll catch the guy in the act and put an end to this.

FADE OUT.

Herbert is looking out the window at the lawn ornaments.

HERBERT

Oh no!

(beat)

I can't let Estelle see.

He quickly lowers the blind as Estelle enters the kitchen.

ESTELLE

Good morning, dear.

HERBERT

Good. . . Good morning.

ESTELLE

I'm sorry. Did I frighten you?

(CONTINUED)

HERBERT

I didn't hear you.
(chuckles)
You know these old ears of mine.

ESTELLE

What should we have for breakfast today?

HERBERT

Whatever you make will be
delicious.

ESTELLE

(beat)
Herbert, why is the window blind closed?

HERBERT

The. . . uhm. . . the sun is blinding. It was hurting my eyes.

ESTELLE

The *sun*? I looked out the bedroom window before coming downstairs. The sky is one big cloud.

HERBERT

Well, yeah, uhm. . .

ESTELLE

What are you. . . Let me at that window.

HERBERT

But. . . But why? There's nothing to see but clouds. You said so yourself.

ESTELLE

Herbert!

She walks to the window and quickly raises the blind.

ESTELLE

Oh no!

HERBERT

I'll put them back the way they were.

Estelle starts getting very emotional.

(CONTINUED)

ESTELLE

That's not the *point*! Whoever's doing this could easily take the next step!

HERBERT

Next step?

ESTELLE

Breaking in here and *killing* us in our sleep.

HERBERT

Estelle, I hardly -

ESTELLE

I thought the police were driving by.

HERBERT

Sgt. Barker said they would.

ESTELLE

Then how -

HERBERT

They must have. . . *missed* him.

ESTELLE

Herbert, I. . . I. . .

HERBERT

Dear, I think you need to take a pill and -

ESTELLE

Not this time! Those pills aren't the solution to everything.

(beat)

I want to go away.

HERBERT

To where?

ESTELLE

Anywhere. Someplace safe.

HERBERT

You're overreacting.

ESTELLE

Please! We can't stay in this house with. . . with. . .

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED: (3)

5

She breaks down crying.

HERBERT

I'll call Heartland Travel and
make a reser-

ESTELLE

No! No reservations. We just need
to pack up and go as soon as
possible.

(beat)

You keep in touch with Sgt.
Barker. Once the police catch
whoever's doing this, we'll come
home.

FADE OUT.

6 INT. GRIFFIN HOME - MOMENTS LATER

6

THOMAS GRIFFIN, a man in his late 40s, sits at his
kitchen table, a sort of radio before him. We hear
Estelle's voice through the speaker.

ESTELLE

You keep in touch with Sgt.
Barker. Once the police catch
whoever's doing this, we'll come
home.

Griffin turns the radio off.

GRIFFIN

(chuckles)

That mike I planted is worth its
weight in *gold*. Mom said Mrs.
Douglas had a bad case of nerves.
That was *all* I needed to know.
Once the old lady and her husband
hightail it out of there, the
place will be mine for the
picking.

FADE OUT.

7 EXT. DOUGLAS HOUSE - NIGHT

7

Griffin stands under a tree near the empty Douglas home,
crowbar in hand. The Christmas lawn ornaments are not
lit.

(CONTINUED)

GRIFFIN

(sotto voce)

It was so *simple*. All I had to do
was get on the old lady's nerves
with the switcheroo a few times,
and what's theirs is mine.

Griffin starts prying open a window with the crowbar. We
hear a quick series of popping sounds. He quickly stops
and looks about.

GRIFFIN

What the. . .

(beat)

Nothing.

He shrugs and gets back to work. We hear the sound of
creaking metal.

Griffin turns to see the now-lit Christmas lawn ornaments
moving toward him as though alive, their lights rapidly
blinking.

GRIFFIN

This can't. . . You're not *real*.

He nervously brandishes the crowbar.

GRIFFIN

Stay away!

The extension cord powering the lawn ornaments is yanked
from the outside socket. The figures continue blinking,
even without power. The cord whips about in the air a few
times and then wraps around Griffin's neck. It gradually
grows tighter, making it tough for him to breathe or
speak.

He drops the crowbar and frantically tries to pull the
tightening cord from his neck.

GRIFFIN

Help! I can't. . . breathe. . .

We hear the crunching of the bones in Griffin's neck. He
screams in great pain and drops to the ground.

The figures move back to their original places, the
securing stakes magically going back into the ground.
Their lights turn off. All is dark.

FADE OUT.

8

INT. TV NEWS STUDIO - LATER

8

SHARON, a news anchor, relates the news on a typical news set with a graphic reading "Lakeville Mystery" behind her.

SHARON

Shocking news tonight from the small town of Lakeville: A man has been found dead on the front lawn of a Hampton Road home. For more on this story, we go to Monica Jacobson at Lakeville police headquarters.

(beat)

Monica?

The scene switches to MONICA, a reporter, standing outside in the night. A sign behind her reads "Lakeville Police Headquarters."

MONICA

Thank you, Sharon.

(beat)

Police have identified the body as that of 47-year-old Thomas Griffin, also of Hampton Road. Sgt. Gerald Barker had this to say about the grisly discovery during a press conference that ended only moments ago.

On tape, Barker is shown in the police department's press room answering reporters' questions.

BARKER

The body was discovered at approximately 10:16 p.m. by two officers patrolling the neighborhood. A crowbar was found near the corpse, and there were signs of an attempted break-in. The owners of the house were not home at the time.

Monica's questions are heard off camera.

MONICA

Do we know the cause of death?

(CONTINUED)

BARKER

Not yet, but the coroner will be conducting an autopsy as soon as his schedule permits.

MONICA

I've heard through my sources that Mr. Griffin's death may be considered. . . "suspicious."

BARKER

We're investigating that possibility.

MONICA

Can you confirm the condition of the corpse when found?

BARKER

(clears throat)

Mr. Griffin's body was discovered with the extension cord to the homeowners' Christmas lawn ornaments pulled tightly around his broken neck. We are unsure at this time how such a thing could have happened, and further investigation is pending.

FADE TO BLACK.