

Such Good Neighbors

SUCH GOOD NEIGHBORS

a 10-minute play

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Synopsis: An elderly couple are awakened in the middle of the night by their next-door neighbors who are having an argument. The wife becomes intrigued, the husband wants to distract her. This 10-minute play has two characters and a simple set.

Such Good Neighbors

Such good neighbors

Cast of Characters

Mavis, 62, a grandmother who works for the federal government

Walter, 65, retired, Mavis's husband

Time: the present

Place: the upstairs bedroom of an urban rowhouse

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The stage is dark. A double bed is at stage right. Next to it is a nightstand with a glass and pitcher of water. There are many plants and potted seedlings around the room. Offstage, a man and a woman are yelling at one another in anger. The audience doesn't hear the actual words they're using, just the volume and tone.

(Mavis sits up in bed and turns on the light. She is wearing a flannel nightgown.)

MAVIS

My word. What a commotion.

(She shakes her husband, Walter, who is snoring.)

Walter, wake up. The neighbors are at it again.

(She gets out of bed, crosses to the wall and listens.)

WALT

It's three in the morning.

MAVIS

I can't sleep.

WALT

Put cotton in your ears and come back to bed. It'll blow over in a few minutes.

MAVIS

This time he sounds like he's going to kill her. I'm calling the police.

(She goes for the door.)

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WALT

Mavis, wait. It's none of our business. Stop meddling.

(He gets out of bed.)

Damn. This floor is cold.

(They both listen.)

They've stopped. Now come back to bed. I can sleep in. But you've got to work in the morning.

MAVIS

A calm before the storm. I wouldn't trust that Hick if he wore white socks and carried a Bible. I'm calling 911.

WALT

You exaggerate, Mavis. Too many soap operas.

MAVIS

You didn't see Sandra that time in the supermarket. Dead of winter and she was wearing sunglasses. She tried to cover it up but I could see she had a black eye.

WALT

You've seen the outfits she wears. Are you sure it wasn't Halloween?

MAVIS

Of course, I'm sure. Remember that terrible ice storm we had? I was next to her in line. I was buying milk, bread and toilet paper. Sandra had a bag of rock salt. Nobody buys rock salt at Halloween, Walter.

(She heads for the door; he puts his arm around her and brings her back into the room.)

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WALT

You're overreacting, dear. Remember the night you thought you saw burglars outside the Gallaghers' dining room and called the police? Turned out to be a couple of garbage bags full of leaves.

MAVIS

I wasn't wearing my glasses. (Pause) He is so angry with her this time. He'll wake the children. Poor little tykes must be terrified.

WALT

Married people have been known to fight occasionally. Shows they have deep feelings for one another.

MAVIS

She dresses like the Queen of Sleaze. But that doesn't give him the right to-- (Pause) We don't.

WALT

(He is watering the
tomato plants.)

My tomato plants are doing better than I expected. Must be that new fertilizer.

MAVIS

You'd drive 90 miles out of your way to avoid an argument.

(The fighting begins
again, louder this time.
Mavis picks up the glass
and places it against
the wall with her ear
next to it.)

WALTER

I can't believe he'd spoil that pretty face.

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(He inspects the plants
for dead leaves.)

MAVIS

The language. What a vile man. (Pause) He accused her of having an affair.

WALTER

(His head pops up. He
makes a beeline for
Mavis.)

Mavis, leave the neighbors alone. Come see the buds on these tomato plants. We'll have a good crop this summer.

MAVIS

He says it has to be someone local. She doesn't have a car.

WALT

What a racket. Maybe you better call 911.

MAVIS

Shh, Walter. (Pause) You just finished telling me I blow things out of proportion.

WALT

I'm just thinking of you, dear. That alarm clock is going to ring awfully early. Why don't you sleep in the guest room where it's quiet? Come on, I'll rub your back for you. It's been a long night.

MAVIS

Shh, you old fool. I can't hear what the Hick is saying.

WALT

I'll make you a cup of cocoa smothered in whipped cream. Remember what we did with whipped cream when we were young? Coming, Mavis?

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MAVIS

I'll bet he has a shotgun in that pickup of his. Mrs. Marconi said somebody was taking pock shots at the squirrels in her yard.

WALT

(Tries to lead her away
from the wall.)

Mavis, dear, I'm starving. Let's go downstairs and have a snack. That leftover chicken. Um. Um. My mouth is watering. When was the last time we had a picnic in the middle of the night? I might even build a fire.

MAVIS

Did you ever hear such screaming and carrying on? He's just like a fox with a rabbit, not about to let go until he's good and ready. Wouldn't want to be on the wrong side of that Hick.

(He takes Mavis in his
arms and waltzes her
around the room toward
the door.)

MAVIS

Walter, what's gotten into you? I'm missing the best part.

WALTER

(He takes off his pajama
top and starts making
love to her.)

You used to think I was the best part, dear. If I recall, you especially fancied a spot just below my right ear and I your lovely feet--

MAVIS

Walter, I can't hear what he's saying.

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(Mavis returns to the wall.)

WALTER

(To himself)

That's right. Blow me off. It wouldn't be the first time or the-

MAVIS

Why, that's preposterous. With two young children, how could she get away? Between naps? Obviously the Hick knows nothing about what it's like being a mother.

WALTER

Last. (Pause) Talking to plants. By God, I am an old fool.

(Raising his voice)

Mavis, what-what do you-you take me for? A wooden Indian?

MAVIS

(In a loud whisper)

Walter, will you pipe down? Can't you see that I'm listening?

WALTER

To whom?

(She ignores him.)

What do I have to do? Stand on my head?

MAVIS

If you have a headache, dear, take two aspirin. Bottom shelf. Medicine cabinet.

WALTER

MAVIS, WILL YOU PAY SOME ATTENTION TO ME?

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MAVIS

Walter, what are you babbling about? It's the middle of the night.

WALTER

I-I. Busy. You're always so busy. And tired. Your job. Melanie and the baby. Knitting. Your soap operas. Always something.

MAVIS

Walter, you're shouting. What will the neighbors think?

WALTER

It's the only thing you pay attention to. What shall we call our soap opera, Mavis? "The Old and the Restless" or something less pathetic?

(He steps toward her.)

Maybe I ought to pull you around by the hair like the guy next door. Just enough to make you sit up and take notice, eh, Mavis?

(She moves away from him and back to the wall.)

MAVIS

I told you you should have gone to that retirement seminar, Walter. You have too much time on your hands.

WALTER

(He picks up a plant and throws it at the wall above her head.)

I wanted to spend it with you.

(Offstage a woman is crying. More shouting.)

MAVIS

Walter, the Hick just said your name. What--

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(A shotgun goes off.
Walter runs to the wall.)

WALTER

Sandra!

THE END