

If You Can't Beat 'Em

Annette Tringham





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IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM

CAST

MAVIS DUNCAN
JUDY CRAYON
GRETCHEN TAYLOR
WINNY MASTERS
JOE
BOB

Setting: A meeting room in the clubhouse of Chatterton Country Club. There are a table and two chairs stage right. On the table are a crock pot and several colorful tumblers.

At Rise: JUDY enters from stage right with another chair and a shopping bag over her arm. She sets her bag and chair down left center stage, and then brings the other chairs over as well, singing "Old Man River" in a low key as she works. After a moment, MAVIS enters from stage right carrying a jar of salsa and a bag of chips. Both ladies are wearing Hawaiian outfits)

MAVIS: Hi Judy, where do you want the chips and salsa?

JUDY: Mavis! The theme of this meeting is tropical, dear, not Mexican.

MAVIS: Well what did you bring?

JUDY: Hawaiian meatballs. *(she points to the crock pot)*

MAVIS: What's the difference between Hawaiian meatballs and Italian meatballs or Swedish meatballs or...just MEATBALL meatballs?

JUDY: They have pineapple in them.

MAVIS: *(makes a face)* Eeeww. *(she opens the chips and starts munching)* So what is this 'secret' meeting about anyway? Your e-mail just said you were starting a new club.

JUDY: It also said "Tropical theme--bring an appropriate dish." You bring chips and salsa to every potluck there is because you're cheap. How are they tropical?

MAVIS: (*shows her the label on the salsa*) It's mango salsa and as everyone knows, mangos are a tropical fruit. And I'm NOT cheap, I'm...on a budget.

JUDY: (*exasperated*) Oh never mind.

MAVIS: You still didn't answer my question. What's the meeting about?

JUDY: The obvious need for tighter rule enforcement around here. But hold your horses, I want to wait 'til the others arrive to go into detail.

MAVIS: Who else did you invite?

JUDY: Well, Claire Fitzpatrick, but she can't make it. Club Thespian is having auditions for their production of *12 Angry Women* this afternoon and she's the director. It's too bad they can't get more men in their group.

MAVIS: Did you see their last play? It was called...oh what was the name of it...? Anyway, I liked it a lot, but I heard Sally Fishbeck sent them a letter for saying "damn it" three times. If she was so offended why didn't she leave after the first damn? Dammit, what was the name of that play?

JUDY: She's so close-minded.

MAVIS: No, that wasn't it.

JUDY: I mean Sally Fishbeck.

MAVIS: Oh that's right. I heard she kicked you out of her book club.

JUDY: Who told you that?!

MAVIS: Well, Karen Ames saw LaRue Hines at the spa last week and LaRue told her that Connie Williams said--

JUDY: (*gives her a scathing look*) She did NOT kick me out. I quit.

MAVIS: (*chuckles under her breath*) Right. Who else did you invite to this--'meeting'?

JUDY: Helen Lubcoe, but she's getting a facial this afternoon.

MAVIS: Facial. Is that a code word for 'another procedure?'

JUDY: Oh, I hope not. My goodness, you could bounce a quarter off that woman's face.
(she laughs hard at her own joke)

MAVIS: I don't get it, what do you mean?

JUDY: *(rolls her eyes)* Never mind.

MAVIS: What about those two ladies from stretch-ercise class? Arlene and Margaret.

JUDY: Hell no. Arlene is ok, I know her from glee club. But no one can stand Margaret.

MAVIS: Well, who IS coming today?

JUDY: Winny Masters. And she invited Gretchen Taylor. I don't know her but she lives near you. In the big two story with the koi pond over on Blossom Avenue.

MAVIS: Oh, I pass by there every day on my power walk. I love those pretty fishies. I even named one of them Bernie.

JUDY: Yes, I'm sure you did dear. Do you know Gretchen?

MAVIS: No, but her husband has the cutest golf cart. It's a woody station wagon.

JUDY: He just died you know.

MAVIS: No! What a shame. Ooooo, I wonder if she's going to sell his golf cart.

JUDY: Winny thought it might be good for Gretchen to get out of the house a little. Apparently she doesn't have much of a social circle.

MAVIS: That's too bad. I wonder why.

(GRETCHEN TAYLOR and WINNY MASTERS enter from stage right. GRETCHEN carries a large plate covered in foil. An extremely odd duck, she is way overdone in Hawaiian clothes. She is also wearing a huge flowery headdress, and knee-high combat style boots. Her makeup is mostly very black eye shadow or liner and two perfect circles of dark pink blush with matching overdrawn lipstick. WINNY carries a thermos and a brown paper bag containing a bottle of vodka. She wears sweats or jeans, anything decidedly NOT Hawaiian. She's a little tipsy)

WINNY: Hello ladies. Sorry we're late, there was no place to park.

JUDY: Hello, you must be Gretchen. I'm Judy Crayton, this is Mavis Duncan.

MAVIS: *(taking the plate from her)* Mmm, that smells delicious, Gretchen. What is it?

GRETCHEN: Barbequed koi.

MAVIS: Bernie? *(distressed, she drops the plate on the table and backs away)*

JUDY: Winny! Oh doesn't anyone read their e-mail? It's a tropical theme dear, you're supposed to dress accordingly.

WINNY: Well excuse me, my grass skirt was at the cleaners. And who the hell does theme parties anymore? *(holds up the thermos)* Where do you want me to put this?

JUDY: Oh that is so tempting...

MAVIS: I'll take it. *(takes the thermos and places it on the table)* What's in here?

WINNY: Hawaiian PUNCH. *(She winks)*

JUDY: We need one more chair.

MAVIS: I'll get it.

*(She exits stage right. JUDY begins to arrange the food, again singing "Old Man River."
WINNY pulls the vodka out of her bag and mixes it in two of the tumblers along with a
mysterious red liquid from the thermos. When she is done she takes a long swig from the vodka.
GRETCHEN stands meekly by, just looking lost. MAVIS enters from stage right with another
chair, placing it with the others. WINNY hands MAVIS and GRETCHEN each a drink)*

JUDY: Let's get started. I thought we could meet first and eat later if that's OK with you.

(in unison)

MAVIS: Fine

WINNY: Sure.

GRETCHEN: I guess so.

(MAVIS and GRETCHEN sit. WINNY remains at the table preparing her own beverage-- mostly vodka. JUDY paces while she delivers her 'speech.')

JUDY: Thank you for coming. I'm sure I speak for all of us when I say that we share a deep concern for the continued welfare of Chatterton Retirement Community.

MAVIS: *(takes a sip of her drink)* Oh this is good Winny. What is it?

WINNY: Tropical Thunder! *(she chugs half of it down)*

JUDY: We all moved to Chatterton because it's safe, it's clean and we enjoy the amenities of country club living, am I right?

(in unison)

MAVIS: Absolutely!

GRETCHEN: I guess so.

WINNY: Here here! *(she raises her glass in a toast, then chugs some more)*

JUDY: But lately I feel that our so-called Board of Administration has become bored of administering the laws of this community. They seem to have turned a blind eye to people who think the rules don't apply to them. Hypocrites! Rules exist for the common good of all. I follow them to the letter and so should everyone else.

(in unison)

MAVIS: Me too!

GRETCHEN: So do I!

WINNY: I'll drink to that.

(WINNY finishes her drink, pours more vodka into her glass, then sits with the others. She gradually starts nodding off)

JUDY: For example, the Gleasons down the street from me have a shrub in their front yard that is three inches taller than the maximum allowed, AND last Christmas they left their lawn decorations out until January FIFTH. The association covenants CLEARLY state that they must be removed by the second. It's not right and I want to do something about it.

MAVIS: Me too! I'm tired of people who park in a red zone for half an hour and put their flashers on so it looks like they'll be right back.

JUDY: Or people who leave their trash cans in the street for three days after pickup.

MAVIS: Or drive their golf carts over the speed limit, and blow through the stop signs.

GRETCHEN: *(very animated for the first time)* Or have a hundred little garden statues that sneak over and stare in your window at night and make the bad dreams start all over again. *(she clutches her head and stares into space)*

JUDY: What?!!

GRETCHEN: *(snapping out of it)* Nothing.

(WINNY, now asleep, starts to snore loudly. During the next while, she falls over onto MAVIS, who pushes her back. Then she falls over onto GRETCHEN, who tries in vain to prop her upright)

JUDY: Anyway, I am FURIOUS that the Housing Code Committee isn't issuing citations to these people. That's their job.

MAVIS: Well in all fairness, there are only three of them. They can't police the entire community.

JUDY: Exactly. That's where we come in. They apparently need some help. We need to show every scofflaw in this community that their disobedience will not be tolerated. Am I right?

MAVIS: Absolutely.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!