

Sponsored By
The Fourth of July

by

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Cast of Characters

Claire Logan: A woman in her fifties.
Steve Logan: Her husband, also in his fifties.
Doug Logan: Their son, 18.
Paul Robertson: Their neighbor, fifties.
Mary Ann Robertson: His wife, also in her fifties.

Time

Present.

Place

A town in Indiana.

SETTING: Afternoon on the Fourth of July. The fenced-in back yard of a Midwestern American home. There are the typical accoutrements; a grill, a picnic bench set festively for dinner with a red white and blue runner, lawn chairs, etc.

AT RISE: As lights go up we hear "Saturday in the Park" by Chicago. Claire is tacking red, white and blue bunting to the fence. She is in her fifties, comfortably plump, in khakis and a blouse. Her husband Steve, also fifties but thinner and full of nervous energy, is unhelpfully arranging and rearranging the lawn chairs. The music fades out.

STEVE

All ready to go Claire? The ribs are marinating, and Doug's picking up the chicken.

CLAIRE

Yes I have the ribs marinating.

STEVE

Got the beers in the cooler?

CLAIRE

Yes I put the beers in the cooler an hour ago. I've never known anyone to get as excited about the Fourth of July as you.

STEVE

What's not to be excited about? In these times *especially* it's so important that as a country we're able to come together on one day and say hey we might disagree, but at the end of the day we're all Americans.

CLAIRE

It is amazing to think that right now some liberal anti-war family in New York might be having the same conversation.

Doug, their 18-year old son, enters through the screen door from the kitchen, stage left. He is clean cut, handsome and muscular, the classic American golden boy.

STEVE

Hey big man.

A playful punch on the Doug's shoulder

STEVE (CONT'D)

Four years ago you were starting lineup for the high school team and here you are on your way to a Heisman Trophy at a Big Ten school.

DOUG

Don't clear a place on the mantle just yet dad.

STEVE

Out there on the gridiron with your army...

CLAIRE

Did you remember to get the chicken?

STEVE

Purdue for the Purdue man?

CLAIRE

I need to season it, they'll be here any minute.

STEVE

You leave it in the kitchen Doug? I'll take care of that. I need to take a little something for my stomach before we start the festivities.

Disappears into the kitchen

CLAIRE

You should ask the Robertson's about Purdue if you have any questions. Mary Ann talks to her daughter a couple times a week. Lindsey just finished her junior year.

DOUG

Yeah maybe mom. Well you know what, lets not talk about that stuff today.

CLAIRE

The Fourth of July is a great time to talk about it. It signifies how far we've come and it's also a time to reflect on the voice of our future. That's you young people honey, living the American dream, you are the voice of the future.

DOUG

Yeah you're right about that mom. That's been on my mind. You guys have made a lot of sacrifices for me. I guess it's time for me to give back.

STEVE

Returning from inside with some fireworks

What's that son?

STEVE (CONT'D)

Patting his stomach
That feels better.

DOUG
I was just saying that you guys have done a lot for me,
working so hard to give me a good life.

STEVE
You can do anything you want son. For a man like you the
sky's the limit. Purdue was lucky to grab you by your tail
feathers.

Laughs at his little (tired) joke

DOUG
You have to cut the Purdue jokes dad.

STEVE
I know, it's not funny anymore.

DOUG
It was never funny. But now it just doesn't make sense. Cause
I'm not going. I'm not going to Purdue.

CLAIRE

looks up from setting the table

What did you say?

STEVE
Quiet for a second Claire. What did you say?

DOUG
I said I'm not going. I'm not going to be a Purdue man.

STEVE
What? With your full football scholarship? You're joking.
It's the family alma mater! Your mother and I met there.
Don't tell me you're considering that Notre Dame nonsense
again. They're not even Big 10!

CLAIRE

And they gave you early admission! Do you know what it will
look like if you back out now!

DOUG
I'm not going to Notre Dame. I mean I'm not starting school
next semester.

STEVE
I don't think taking a year off is a good idea son. What, are
you going to go backpack around Europe with patchouli-eating
hippies? You don't even have a passport.

DOUG

I'm not going to school. I enlisted in the army.

STEVE

What army?

DOUG

The United States Army.

STEVE

What do you mean? When did this happen? Just tell me you didn't sign anything.

DOUG

Yeah dad it's all done. I go to basic training at the end of the month.

STEVE

We've discussed this. We have a plan. There's a place waiting for you at the family company. Once you learn the ropes you'll be taking over. It's what we've always talked about.

Clutches his stomach

CLAIRE

Why would you do such a thing. The army is for people who...

DOUG

What mom. What people.

CLAIRE

Well people who, who don't have the options that you have. No one we know...you have a good brain, a company to lead, don't tell me you'd throw that all away.

DOUG

I have those opportunities because people are willing to fight for our way of life. You guys are always talking about how much we owe the defender's of our freedom. I don't want to sit back and not shoulder that responsibility.

STEVE

I respect you honoring your conscience son but we can't afford to have our best and brightest over there. There's work for you to do here. No need to go to the other side of the globe. My God, to know you were over there in the middle of that... Your mother would die of worry.

CLAIRE

Not to mention your father's acid reflux. This is too much to take in. I never thought my son...

DOUG

I know it's a lot to accept all at once. But I hope you'll see the logic in it. If we want to enjoy our freedom we have to make sacrifices.

STEVE

Freedom certainly isn't free Doug, we realize that. But this is nonsense. I won't have my only son playing in the sand over there. Come to your senses. You're a Purdue man and that's all there is to it. Let someone else do the grunt work, do you know how dangerous... everyone knows you're set to take over running the business, talk about shouldering responsibility, you owe that to the family and to the entire company-

He is interrupted by the neighbors, Paul and Mary Ann, popping their heads over the fence.

PAUL

Hey troopers! Happy Fourth! You ready for us?

DOUG

Hi Mr. Robertson.

MARY ANN

We'll be right over!

Paul and Mary Ann disappear behind the fence.

STEVE

For God's sake don't bring this up. We can't have a Board member questioning our family's commitment to the company. Mary Ann may be the next Chairman! We'll talk about this later. Not a word.

Paul comes around the fence from his backyard into the Logan's.

PAUL

Hi neighbors! Mary Ann wanted to fiddle with the shish kebabs. You know how she is!

STEVE

(heartily)

We sure do. Happy Fourth Paul. You catch the parade today?

PAUL

You kidding? There's something about a marching band that really gets the blood pumping. Even got the grizzled old vets moving a little faster.

STEVE

(preoccupied)

How about that. Care for a beer?

PAUL

Helps himself from the cooler

Did you see that '57 Impala? What a beauty. When my stock options vest next year that's my first order of business. A classic piece of Detroit steel baby.

MARY ANN

Coming over with an armful of dishes

What's that about a convertible sweetheart?

PAUL

Nothing, nothing.

Big wink at Steve

MARY ANN

Haven't we been over this already? He's campaigning for another gas guzzler. That's just what Bin Laden wants to hear.

PAUL

That'll be old news once we have that whole region under control.

MARY ANN

And anyway I have my heart set on a Jaguar. Can you see me in a Jaguar Claire?

CLAIRE

Sure can. Anyone for a drink? Mary Ann you're too much, I thought you were just bringing dessert. What is all this?

MARY ANN

Just a couple recipes I've been wanting to try. You know we went to New York last month for Paul's real estate convention. We went to some amazing restaurants and I wanted to try and replicate some of the dishes.

CLAIRE

Moving methodically around the table straightening napkins and setting the silverware

I saw on the news they've been having rat problems in New York restaurants. Very unsanitary.

MARY ANN

I doubt it. We don't go as often as we used to. Too dangerous since the attacks.

PAUL

Not as dangerous as the situation in Iraq. Two of our boys lost their lives over there yesterday.

CLAIRE

(sharply)

I just wish the whole thing was over.

MARY ANN

We have to stay the course. We're responsible for those poor people-

STEVE

(briskly)

Tell us how Lindsey's doing at Purdue. We hear she decided to spend to summer there.

MARY ANN

Exchanges an uncomfortable look with her husband.

Oh Lindsey, she's... you know, she's doing great. Really thriving. Such an intellectual environment... she's so happy there she didn't want to come home to the old folks this summer!

STEVE

You hear that Doug? You're so lucky to have the opportunity to go to such a fine school.

CLAIRE

Maybe Paul and Mary Ann could give you Lindsey's number sweetheart, maybe you could arrange a little visit sometime during the summer, see the campus...

PAUL

(quickly)

Well I don't know if that's the best idea. She didn't stay for fun and games you know, she's doing a lot of extra coursework, got a job...

CLAIRE

I see. Well she was never the type to sit spinning her wheels.

MARY ANN

It's just that she's built up so much momentum academically, we don't want her to get distracted.

STEVE

That's right Mary Ann, you don't want to drop the ball once you're in the game. I was just telling Doug here the same thing.

DOUG

I was saying that we have to follow through on our responsibilities. Just like you always taught me.

STEVE

And part of that is realizing where our responsibilities lie. Not running off after some half baked idea and recklessly putting yourself in danger.

DOUG

Part of being responsible is having the courage to sacrifice for what you believe in.

STEVE

Seeing Paul and Mary Ann's bewildered expressions
Which is why it's so great that Lindsey is willing to give up her summer to hit the books.

CLAIRE

Can I offer anyone some chips and dip? We have spinach artichoke-

MARY ANN

Spinach artichoke! What an interesting combination.

CLAIRE

It's a favorite of ours, we always have it at the country club.

MARY ANN

I see. You're so adventurous Claire.

CLAIRE

Speaking of adventurous, I made a pitcher of margarita. I'm going to go fix you one. Anyone else feeling adventurous?

PAUL

I think I'll stick with beer. Oh what the hey, we don't have to drive home.

Claire disappears inside.

MARY ANN

Steve I want to thank you for all the help you gave me developing my proposal for the Board.

STEVE

(evasively)

Right... your proposal... I'm sure the Board will give it a fair shake.

MARY ANN

(concerned)

But with your approval why wouldn't they-

DOUG

Dad I'm gonna grab the charcoal from the trunk.

STEVE

Lemme help you out with that.

DOUG

It's only two bags.

STEVE

No sense risking a hernia. No sense in risking anything son.

Doug shrugs and is followed out by his dad

PAUL

(quietly)

This dip is disgusting. I hope her margaritas are better. I told you not to bring up Lindsey.

MARY ANN

I didn't bring her up, they did.

PAUL

Now we've told an outright lie.

MARY ANN

It's only a lie if she doesn't go back. And that remains to be seen.

PAUL

It's so awkward having to avoid the topic. We shouldn't have come over.

MARY ANN

We had to, I couldn't keep making excuses. We live next door and I'm about to be made Chair. How long can we put off coming over for some drinks before we look like assholes?

(pause)

Do you think they're suspicious?

PAUL

Of course they are. What kid doesn't come home for the Fourth of July?

MARY ANN

I felt so unfriendly, not giving her phone number.

PAUL

Well what could we say, go ahead and call her, she's not even there anymore, she's running all over the state working for some goddamn liberal senatorial candidate?

MARY ANN

They'd tell the neighborhood Lindsey's a *dropout*. They think they're so perfect, Claire with her country club, their football scholarship 4.0 son on his way to taking over the family business. We'd look like bad parents who have no control over their daughter. And that is not the kind of person that they promote to chairman.

PAUL

Lindsey will probably be knocking on their door next petitioning for votes.

MARY ANN

Okay this is our opportunity to show them how in line we are with their politics, so they don't think Lindsey's current embarrassment is any reflection of *our* values. Let's impress that on them before they hear about Lindsey from someone else. Show them where we stand so that if it comes down to me and someone with the same qualifications but whose daughter didn't become a *socialist* I'll still have a fighting chance to-

Steve and Doug appear, each carrying a bag of charcoal. They are finishing up a heated conversation.

DOUG

-only be for eight years, I can pick up right where I left off. And the leadership skills I'll learn...

STEVE

It doesn't help your cause as a new boss that you didn't make the *company* a priority. If you're not made into mince meat over there...

STEVE (CONT'D)

Realizes Mary Ann and Paul are listening.

Got the charcoal! You folks must be starving. Is Claire still working on the margaritas? Such a perfectionist. Anyhoo we'll get the grill going.

PAUL

I heard on the radio today, it's just disgusting, why are the liberals in government getting in the way of the President? Trying to limit the money and the amount of time and the number of troops he wants to send over there. I say give him what he needs to finish the job.

STEVE

We need to keep the best minds at home. Folks like us... I mean, well you know... not expendable... it would be unpatriotic to send our best people over there.

DOUG

I agree with Mr. Robertson. It doesn't seem right that no one in government is willing to send their own kids to fight the war they support. Seems hypocritical.

STEVE

We need some good minds left to run the country, we can't afford to send everyone over there. Heck, one could even argue that we're just adding fuel to the fire and doing more harm than good.

MARY ANN

That sounds like liberal excuse making to me and there are certainly no liberals around here. We're all in agreement about the war on terror. We support our commander in chief!

STEVE

Well, when a war is open-ended I get nervous. When are our guys coming home? Seems like maybe we've over-committed ourselves.

(pause)

How's the beer?

PAUL

It's a little warm.

STEVE

It was only in the cooler for an hour. Claire was in charge of that.

Seats himself expansively in a lawn chair and stretches

STEVE (CONT'D)

Ahhh, if only every day was like this. You build a business your whole life, you never have any time to rest.

PAUL

Doug will be taking over for you soon.

STEVE

(pensively)

Sure, sure. Younger generation, don't understand what it's like to apply themselves, stay on task, see a job through from start to finish.

MARY ANN

Or they go off on some rebellious tangent. One that ends up ruining their future.

STEVE

Couldn't agree more Mary Ann. No sense in upsetting the apple cart. No child of mine would make that mistake, don't you worry!

MARY ANN

(defensively)

Not with their parent's knowledge anyway. Sometimes they make misguided choices but if their parent's are consulted beforehand they have a chance to intervene!

CLAIRE

(hopefully)

We all make mistakes. If we can admit our mistakes, and get back on track nothing has been lost.

MARY ANN

(grimly)

I sure hope so.

A pause while Doug noisily pours the charcoal into the grill

CLAIRE

I've been hearing about that liberal senatorial candidate, what's his name?

PAUL

(nervously)

Not sure...

CLAIRE

Davies, that's his name. Can you believe that he wants to give illegal immigrants the right to healthcare? On *our* tax dollars?

Mary Ann looks at Paul uncomfortably

MARY ANN

Yes, I've read about that. Horrible. Who are these misguided people who would even think of voting for him. You know he supports a time table for a complete pullout of the troops? Why not just tell the terrorists the best time to start bombing.

CLAIRE

(bristling)

Well, still, we have to get out sometime, right?

MARY ANN

Yes. When the job is done. It would be completely irresponsible and counterproductive to leave things unfinished. Imagine if we ran the company like that Steve.

STEVE

Um, that's right. Irresponsible.

MARY ANN

The President would never move forward without a strategy in place for the future. Just like Steve with the company, always thinking five steps ahead. And look what you've accomplished; built a business from scratch, took it public, established a plan that will keep it growing for the next 50 years at least.

STEVE

But you know, *adaptability* is an important part of managing too. If on occasion things don't work out as planned you need to be able to improvise. Time tables change, unforeseen developments...

PAUL

Exactly. Unforeseen developments, erratic behavior even. Loony toon behavior, from people you thought you knew.

STEVE

(defensively)

Loony toon, that's a strong sentiment. Oftentimes people are just taking something that you've said to heart, their heart's in the right place, but they're taking it to an unhealthy extreme. That's different from someone who does a complete 360 and goes against everything you stand for. A person like that clearly doesn't have any principles or values.

PAUL

(argumentatively)

That's a very interesting point Steve. I think you're wrong.

PAUL (CONT'D)

A person who does that is merely showing that they were raised to be an independent thinker. I mean if everybody just toed the line there would never be any advancement.

MARY ANN

(a meaningful look at Paul)

Steve's right Paul. I think we're all in agreement here. Now how about some potato salad.

She begins to serve the salad
It's German potato salad, with bacon!

CLAIRE

How's the housing market these days Paul? I saw your face on
a bench downtown the other day.

PAUL

Yeah down on Oak and Main. I got four clients off that ad.
Which is good because it's been a little slow.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's stressful. Lately I've been getting clammy feet. I wake
up at night because my feet are so cold. Do you ever sweat
from your feet?

STEVE

Can't say I do. Getting old does weird things to your body. I
read somewhere that the average life span of a human cell is
seven years. So every seven years you have this massive die-
off of cells and while they do regenerate the result is a
weaker version of yourself.

MARY ANN

That's so morose.

CLAIRE

Oh, but it's interesting. Being recreated every seven years.
In a way it's like having a chance to be a new person.

PAUL

Yeah, an old feeble person. It's a betrayal. Your own body
turning against you.

MARY ANN

Well at least we'll be financially secure in our old age. No
thanks to welfare loving liberals.

CLAIRE

Can you imagine if we had to rely on social security for
retirement?

STEVE

That was always a flawed concept. They should just get rid of
it. But guys like this Davies just want to throw more money
at it. You could never retire on social security.

CLAIRE

I've seen people try.

STEVE

It's a tragedy.

CLAIRE

You know, those old women. I used to volunteer.

MARY ANN

They should cut the whole program. Encourage investment.

CLAIRE

Those cat women.

MARY ANN

Yes.

CLAIRE

And the house always piled high with newspapers.

MARY ANN

Really.

CLAIRE

I always wonder, why newspapers?

STEVE

What I'd like to know is, where are the kids through all of this.

PAUL

Hmmm.

Doug lights the grill and a small trail of smoke begins to rise

STEVE

(so that Doug can hear)

Spoiled. A whole generation of spoiled kids is being set loose on this country. Ungrateful kids you know?

Holds his stomach

PAUL

Well...

STEVE

And if you're banking on them to take care of you in your twilight years you'd have better odds pissing up a flagpole.

PAUL

Sometimes kids just need to go their own way.

CLAIRE

But then there are good ones, like your Lindsey.

PAUL

Hmmm.

STEVE

If half of them were like her there would maybe be some hope.

MARY ANN

Or like Doug of course.

STEVE

Hmmm.

CLAIRE

Hmmm.

MARY ANN

Hard to believe that the little boy who used to trample my flowers to get his football is going to be running the company in four years.

STEVE

Heh... yeah... but we can definitely find a place for Lindsey in the company when she graduates. She's majoring in business is that right?

PAUL

Double major actually. Business and political science.

CLAIRE

Oh my.

STEVE

Hear that Doug? Double major.

CLAIRE

Political science?

Mary Ann looks sharply at her husband, who realizes his mistake

PAUL

Well, yeah, business is the priority.

CLAIRE

I bet she has a lot to say about things, the war for instance. Does she have a good sense of when it'll be over?

PAUL

Uh, well...

MARY ANN

(interrupting)

As a matter of fact I was talking with her about that recently. She said that the war on terror might actually never end.

PAUL

That is true, she did say that.

MARY ANN

And that to fight it we might find ourselves in any number of countries waging war on any number of people.

CLAIRE

There must be some end in sight.

PAUL

Well, in a sense.

Claire looks relieved

PAUL

When an American-style democracy is firmly established that will eventually cause a ripple effect bringing the entire region into compliance.

CLAIRE

That doesn't sound like soon.

PAUL

And then of course there's the rogue states and the wackos who work alone. Basically as long as anyone who dislikes us is out there Americans will always have reason to fear.

CLAIRE

She said that?

PAUL

Well I'm paraphrasing.

MARY ANN

What *I* said was, that's all the more reason not to undermine our commander in chief. If the press can't even let the president do his work without questioning his every move what hope to do we have? Sometimes I just think he should throw these cut and run cowards in jail and send as many soldiers over there as he pleases.

CLAIRE

Don't you think that's a bit excessive? A lot of our kids are dying over there.

MARY ANN

It's terrible but that *is* what the military is for after all. If that's what it takes to silence our enemies...

CLAIRE

(upset)

Excuse me I have to go check on the, the, something in the oven.

Exits quickly

STEVE

I better go give her a hand.

Following her into the house

All I can say is if I ran my company the way they're running this war I would have a lot to answer for.

PAUL

I hope she doesn't expect us to eat whatever she's burning in there. I'm starting to feel like we've overdone it. Steve isn't really the hard line conservative you made him out to be. I don't know. Maybe he won't hold Lindsey's conversion against us.

MARY ANN

(forcefully)

He *should* hold it against us! If a Board member's kid decides to become a goddamn socialist no president should take that lying down. He needs to be putting the bottom line first. That means supporting the war whether he believes in it or not.

PAUL

Clearly not a decisive individual.

MARY ANN

This isn't the way he is normally. I've always known him to be a party line Republican.

PAUL

Clearly a flip-flopper. At best.

MARY ANN

(pacing)

His guard is down. He's at home, comfortable. He's slipping. He's getting old. In the office he puts up a good front, but he's getting soft. Today it's just soft on terrorism.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

But tomorrow it'll be soft on fighting our competition, soft on the unions, soft on maximizing corporate earnings.

PAUL

Just 'cause the man is a pansy about the war doesn't mean...

DOUG

calling above the sound of the grill

I'm about to throw the corn on. How many are you guys good for?

MARY ANN

(sweetly)

Two's fine for us.

(resuming her previous tone)

It doesn't matter how he actually *feels* about the war. All that matters is that he be able to maintain the *appearance* of supporting it. If he can't even keep that up how can he be expected to be the strong dominant voice of the company?

PAUL

What if you brought your misgivings to the Board's attention?

MARY ANN

Who knows, he might be forced to retire.

PAUL

(significantly)

And then a strong, decisive leader could take over as chairman *and* president. Then you can have your jaguar.

They pause. Mary Ann glances over at Doug to be sure he's not listening

MARY ANN

Before I can go to the Board I have to be absolutely sure.

PAUL

All we have to do is keep him talking. Dig his own grave.

Steve and Claire enter.

MARY ANN

Just follow my lead. Let's see how far we can push him.

STEVE

Okay I think we're about ready to get this chicken on the grill.

PAUL

Got some Purdue there?

STEVE

No, no I don't think it's Purdue. It's free range.

PAUL

Back when Lindsey was getting ready to go off to Purdue I would make these Purdue jokes... it was hilarious.

Mary Ann rolls her eyes

STEVE

I never made the connection.

He sets the dish by the grill and
fussily turns the chicken in the
marinade

CLAIRE

Dropping wearily into a lawn chair with
her now watered-down margarita. Stares
into her glass

The first time I had a margarita was on our honeymoon in
Acapulco. I've always wanted to go back. There was never
really any time after that. Steve was getting the business
off the ground, then Doug came along...

MARY ANN

With Doug off at college you'll have one less thing to worry
about. It wasn't until Lindsey left for college that I
started climbing up the ranks at the company.

PAUL

I have a feeling you and Steve will have a lot more time to
spend together pretty soon.

CLAIRE

That would be nice. I want him to take a salsa dancing class
with me at the country club.

Steve arrives back at the table

MARY ANN

Your wife was saying how much she'd enjoy some one on one
time with you. Maybe after my proposal goes through you could
afford to take some time off.

CLAIRE

I know so little about what's going on with the company these
days. What's this proposal all about?

STEVE

(uncomfortably)

Oh, well it's fairly complicated honey. Not something you'd
really be interested in.

MARY ANN

Oh come on, I think she'd appreciate it.

CLAIRE

If it means Steve might be able to spend a little more time
at home of course I'd be interested in hearing about it.

MARY ANN

Well, with all the growth in the defense sector and all the holdings we have in under-producing manufacturing plants in the rust belt I was thinking maybe we could convert some of those plants into munitions factories.

CLAIRE

(shocked)

You're getting into weapons manufacturing Steve?

STEVE

It's just a proposal on the table, there's still a lot of things to be considered.

MARY ANN

I thought you were a big proponent. Hell you helped me develop it! Are you having misgivings?

STEVE

It's certainly an intriguing idea. But don't you think defense is a little outside our business model?

MARY ANN

That's exactly my point Steve. There's millions to be made in government defense contracts.

STEVE

Yes, well, that's true, but there's only money to be made if there's a war and, well, this one is getting pretty unpopular. Could be over before we get our foot in the door.

PAUL

Isn't that what political influence is for? I mean with the clout you have with our senator and congressmen you could really encourage them to keep this thing going.

STEVE

That, um, seems a little unethical doesn't it?

MARY ANN

It's not unethical if you believe in what you're pushing for. And I don't think anybody here would say they're against fighting a just war against terrorists and rogue states. Right?

CLAIRE

Well, of course not. But war is just such a dirty business isn't it. There's so much money to be made in other industries.

MARY ANN

Profits are profits. If we don't fill the needs of the military some other company will.

And what's to stop such a company from noticing that we are perfectly set up to get into the arms industry and then mounting a hostile takeover? In the end we'd still wind up making weapons only we'd have lost our independence. And maybe our jobs.

STEVE

I think that's a little alarmist Mary Ann. No one is ever going to take over the company. Not on my watch.

PAUL

History demonstrates that naive wishing for peace is the surest way to encourage an aggressor.

STEVE

Are you suggesting I'm naïve?

PAUL

Not at all. I'm just saying there's no defense like a good offense.

MARY ANN

Of course you're not naïve. Don't be silly. It's just surprising to hear that you wouldn't want to give consideration to a business plan that could bring significant profits to the company *and* have the added perk of directly supporting the troops. You do support the troops don't you, Steve?

STEVE

What kind of question is that? Of course I do. You don't see me out demonstrating with lazy liberals do you?

MARY ANN

Well if I did I certainly wouldn't hold it against your family.

STEVE

Huh? Why would you hold it against my family?

CLAIRE

I just don't see why supporting the troops has to mean making weapons. Honey, couldn't you refit those old plants to produce armor or helmets?

STEVE

Just hold on a second honey I'm talking here. Now if you came up with a plan to really protect our boys over there like producing armor for instance, or helmets, well that's a plan we could consider.

MARY ANN

But armor isn't as lucrative as weaponry Steve. Remember- we have a responsibility to the stockholders.

PAUL

And to our great nation. Those boys need guns.

MARY ANN

I can't imagine how the Board would react to the knowledge that the man at the helm of our company wasn't doing everything he could to maximize revenue. And protect his country.

STEVE

I see what this is. I see what's going on.

Hold's his stomach

Now you listen here: if you think you're gonna strong arm Steve Logan you have another think coming missy. I built this company with the sweat of my brow. Just because you're favored for chairman doesn't mean you'll be deciding how my company is run.

MARY ANN

I'm just saying that you don't cut a very patriotic figure at a time when it can make us a lot of money. And I think that when I present my proposal to the Board you're going to have very little clout.

STEVE

The Board is loyal to me. You go head to head with me you're going to fall. Hard.

MARY ANN

Loyalty only carries you so far Steve. And when it comes to corporations it lasts exactly as long as the coffers are filled. You lack the will to do all that's necessary to win this war *and* to increase profits.

STEVE

The hell I do.

MARY ANN

Well I doubt the Board will see it that way when I tell them what I've learned today. I can't see them wanting to keep around a president who shirks his duty to the stockholders. And to his country. And I can't see them wanting someone brought up with such loose *values* taking over either.

CLAIRE

You're crazy! My husband loves his country! And my boy has great values!

PAUL

Well it won't look that way to the Board.

MARY ANN

You don't have the balls to make decisive moves.

STEVE

The hell I don't!

MARY ANN

I think it's time for us to go Paul.

CLAIRE

Yes. Please do!

MARY ANN

I'll see you in the office on Monday.

STEVE

You bet your ass you will!

PAUL

Make sure you bring a box. It'll be moving day for unpatriotic cowards.

CLAIRE

And don't forget your potato salad! Who the hell makes German potato salad on the Fourth of July you Nazi!

Mary Ann picks up her dishes and stalks off with Paul.

STEVE

(calling after them)

Coward my ass! Would a coward make his son join the army?!

He turns to Doug

Doug! You're joining the army and that's that!

DOUG

Okay.

Steve clutches his stomach and sits in a lawn chair.

You know dad, Lindsey's working for a liberal candidate.

STEVE

Looks at his son in confusion

Who the hell cares! That's her right. This is *America*!

Heaves himself up and storms inside

CLAIRE

(tearfully)

Thank you very much Doug. You and your patriotism have ruined the Fourth of July.

Claire exits

Doug takes the corn off the grill,
closes the lid and walks inside

A portion of the red, white and blue
bunting comes unattached from the fence
and swings limply.

CURTAIN