

~~FRANK. But no matter what I do, Phillip Saxon doesn't have to contend with a disheveled wire fence.~~

~~TANIA. Well if you are okay about us cutting away your ivy, we could get rid of the wire fence.~~

~~PABLO. And replace it with a tall, stately wood one.~~

~~FRANK. A Christmas miracle in September.~~

~~PABLO. I'm so relieved you are "on board" with this.~~

~~(Laughter.)~~

~~FRANK. I'm surprised how elated I am. I hate that fence.~~

~~PABLO. So do we.~~

~~FRANK. I hate losing to Phillip Saxon too!~~

**VIRGINIA.** Frank, calm down. The point of gardening is for you to relieve your chronic stress.

**FRANK.** It's not that bad.

**VIRGINIA.** Yeah, right.

*(Beat.)*

Anyway, it's so much better since he discovered he has a green thumb.

**FRANK.** It started with a bulb. I put it in the ground, and a tulip came up. And I was amazed by what I had done! It was like...childbirth.

**VIRGINIA.** *(To TANIA.)* Tulips are nothing like childbirth.

**FRANK.** Everything you see here, I planted with my own hands -

**VIRGINIA.** On his knees. Meticulously.

**TANIA.** Wow. Is it me or does your yard look bigger than our yard?

**VIRGINIA.** Bigger? No. More organized, perhaps.

**PABLO.** It's so neat. So pristine...

**FRANK.** *(Laughs.)* Every day, I rake. I trim. I mow. I fertilize. I mulch. I de-grub. I spray for bugs.

**TANIA.** You use pesticides?

**FRANK.** Constantly!

**VIRGINIA.** And he constantly weeds. He sees something that's out of place and he grabs it by the roots and pulls

Virginia  
Frank  
Tania  
Pablo

Start

it out. Immediately. It's a little OCD, but the results are impressive.

**PABLO.** Tania is an avid gardener too!

**TANIA.** My grandparents owned a small farm and I've always loved playing in the dirt. I'm so excited about owning a yard.

**FRANK.** I'm happy to help you become a serious garden contender.

**TANIA.** Oh, thank you, but your gardening might be too... ambitious for me.

**VIRGINIA.** She has a lot of work and a little baby on the way.

**FRANK.** Well, gardener to gardener, the one thing you should get rid of is that tree...

**PABLO.** You mean, our oak?

**VIRGINIA.** You mean your future disaster!

*(Laughs.)*

**TANIA.** Disaster?

**FRANK.** It's so dangerous.

**TANIA.** But. We. Love. The Tree.

**PABLO.** We do.

**VIRGINIA.** Really?

**TANIA.** Really.

**FRANK.** We used to have the sister oak in our backyard... but we decided to get rid of it. To safeguard our roof and give us a canvas on which to plant. One life for so many.

**PABLO.** You had an oak tree like ours here?

**FRANK.** And it completely overwhelmed our yard. Just like yours. Those heavy craggy branches up there need to be cut back which is expensive. I suggest just chopping the whole thing down as soon as possible.

**VIRGINIA.** How about right now? We have a chainsaw. And an axe!

**FRANK.** Oh Ginny. You will need a professional tree guy, of course. Posthaste.

TANIA. It's a healthy tree. We had that inspected before we bought the house.

FRANK. But the tree is why your lawn looks so messy. All the leaves and acorns. Everywhere.

VIRGINIA. And we get your leaves and acorns. All over our lot.

TANIA. The tree is the centerpiece of our plan for a Native Garden.

FRANK. Native Garden? That sounds very exotic.

TANIA. Actually, it's very traditional. We want to go back to the basics, get rid of foreign plants like Bermuda grass, and English ivy, and nurture a native Mid-Atlantic forest bed.

PABLO. Which is better for the environment.

TANIA. Native plants feed the right bees and bugs, the right bugs feed the birds, and so on. We, the Individual Gardeners of America have the opportunity, or dare I say, the responsibility in helping ensure biodiversity in our gardens. We can help save the planet.

VIRGINIA. My. That's a patriotic call to action.

TANIA. I have some books. Written by brilliant entomologists. I can bring them to you.

FRANK. So...you are suggesting: No azalea? No peonies? No hydrangeas?

TANIA. No Japanese honeysuckle, no Asian azalea, no kudzu, no Bradford pear, no autumn olive.

FRANK. Blasphemy!

TANIA. But there are beautiful ferns, mulberry, Virginia creeper, Carolina silverbell. Low-maintenance greenery that's high-output and low-impact.

FRANK. You mean, weeds? You are planting weeds, on purpose?

TANIA. A lot of plants we think of as weeds are actually native plants and they have a purpose.

VIRGINIA. Isn't it their purpose to be ugly?

*(Everyone laughs.)*

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