

This Is How It Goes

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**EXT. BACKYARD - DAY**

CODY, black, 30s, grills food while his wife WOMAN, white, 30s, sits and watches.

Their tenant, MAN, 30s walks up to them smiling. Cody turns back to his grill. Woman stands to greet Man. They hug; Cody catches it.

MAN

Hello!

WOMAN

Oh! Hi there!

MAN

Hey.

(looking around)

Where are the kids?

WOMAN

Oh, you know. Cody Jr. is on a play date. Baby's asleep.

MAN

Great. That's nice.

(they hug again)

Hi.

CODY

Shit. Don't mind me.

Man and Woman laugh at this. They break their hug and she starts setting up drink cups for them. Man tries to help out.

MAN

Sorry. It's just...

CODY

What?

MAN

I dunno. Great to see you guys...I mean, both of you.

CODY

Yeah? Well, then, you better get over here and gimme a big cuddle too while you're at it. I don't wanna be left out of the lovefest.

Man chuckles and decides to call Cody's bluff. He moves toward the grill but Cody holds up his grilling tools in a makeshift cross.

MAN

I love you, man.

CODY

Get the fuck outta here!

The men pretend to hug then back away from each other. Woman smiles at this as she starts on the plastic cutlery.

CODY (CONT'D)

...and you didn't bring your cards,  
I see.

MAN

Oh, damn! Sorry. You want me to run  
back over and...?

CODY

Nah. We can do it later. What took  
you so long?

(he checks his watch)

It's already ten after...

MAN

Oh, yeah, sorry. I was finishing up  
this movie. On tv. Had to wrap it  
up...that's the best part.

CODY

What, the end?

MAN

Uh-huh.

WOMAN

Why, to see what happens?

MAN

Well, sure, yeah...but to see who  
ends up with whom. How they all get  
paired off. The characters, I  
mean...

WOMAN

Oh, right.

CODY

...ok...

MAN

No, seriously...I love that. Trying  
to discuss who will end up  
together. Or, if they will.

(MORE)

MAN (CONT'D)

As a writer, I find it really interesting...

CODY

Cool. You want steak or some chicken? I got burgers, too.

MAN

Ummm...maybe a little of each. That all right?

CODY

Yep. Same thing I'm doing. High on the protein. No carbs.

MAN

Great.

Cody turns to a covered plate and begins taking off the foil to get at the meat. Man decides to return and help Woman. He picks up a pitcher and starts pouring drinks.

WOMAN

So what was on? The TV, I mean.

MAN

Oh, it was this Hitchcock thing...

WOMAN

Nice. Which one?

MAN

No, it was like, some tribute or something.

WOMAN

Oh.

MAN

All weekend. They're playing a ton of his films. One right after the other. It's pretty great.

WOMAN

I like Hitchcock. I think Cody does too. Don't you, honey?

CODY

What's that?

WOMAN

Like Hitchcock movies...

CODY

Not much. They're alright. The Birds was good...Anyways, I thought you were some playwright, so why the hell you spend all day in front of the movies?

WOMAN

...anyway...  
(to the man)  
Let's

MAN

(interrupts)  
You liked The Birds, huh, Cody?  
That sounds suspiciously like you having fun...

CODY

Yeah, time 'a my life.

Cody slaps some meat on the grill, seasons it and puts down the lid. Opens the little steam valve.

WOMAN

And what were you watching? I mean, before you came over...

MAN

Oh, right, yeah. I was finishing Strangers on a Train. Tonight is Vertigo, and this morning was that one with, ummm...Shadow of a Doubt. Plus, there's one of the lesser ones later, at midnight.

WOMAN

Really? Which one...I like him, maybe I'll watch it.

CODY

You already said that. Said you liked Hitchcock already.

WOMAN

I know, I was just--

CODY

...just so you do. Know.

MAN

It's ummm, Marnie, I think.

WOMAN

Oh. Good.

CODY

The one about the liar...I'm gonna go get the veggies.

WOMAN

Check on the baby, would ya?

Cody nods and heads off toward the kitchen--any of the exits will do. Man stops him.

MAN

...you mean "thief".

CODY

What?

MAN

She's a thief, in the film, Marnie. Or, Tippi Hedron is, the actress. She's a thief in that one.

CODY

Oh, I thought she was both. Anyway, same difference...philosophically speaking.

MAN

Really? How's that?

CODY

She steals shit, right?

MAN

Yeah...

CODY

Well, liars just steal the truth. 'S the same thing. It's all theft.

And with that, Cody exits. Man and Woman are left looking at each other. They don't mind. An easy smile between them.

MAN

...man's got a point.

WOMAN

He always does--he is happy to tell you. And it usually has to do with his mother.

MAN

Ahhh, right. Well, too bad they didn't offer a "philosophy" course at school. He might've aced it.

WOMAN

Probably. He does always get what he wants.

MAN

Yeah?

WOMAN

Oh yeah. Always.

MAN

Even you, I mean?

The woman looks hard at the man, unsure how to respond. She looks back at the house, then moves over toward him.

WOMAN

No. He got me because I wanted him to. That's how.

MAN

Really?

WOMAN

Yes. From that first time that I saw Cody...on the bus. The activity bus home one night. Right from then.

MAN

...wow.

WOMAN

Uh-huh.

MAN

That's so...great. Really.

WOMAN

Why? Why is that great?

MAN

Oh, you know, because...it's true love and all that. Right?

WOMAN

...you sure it's not just because I like a nice, thick black cock? Hmmm? Maybe that's why...

She tries to smile, but looks away blushing. Man stops for a moment, as if stunned by this. He then moves center toward camera and talks directly into it.

MAN

...ok, obviously, she didn't say it like that.

I mean, it's obvious, right? She's not that way, would never say a thing like that . . . God, can you picture her saying that?! Anything like that?

(laughs)

No way, not at all. Or any girl, really. Not any that I know. Maybe, like, in a movie or something, but real people? Uh-uh. But, see...it is what I'm thinking right now. Or then. I mean, what I've had in my head since the first time I heard about her and Cody. Or anytime you see a white girl and a...well, you know. And it is a cliché, I'm aware of that, but it's hard not to...I mean, most everybody knows those jokes, or stories, or whatever you wanna call 'em. And so I can't help it if that's what I'm imagining right now...I can't! And anyhow, a cliché is just a thing that's true, usually. Some true thing that gets said over and over...(Beat.) But no, she never said that. Or will. Or will ever. Not her. Not Belinda Rivers. That was her maiden name...Rivers. I bet she's never said that before. "Cock." Not even lying in bed, with him, or...Jesus, he may be the only guy she's ever laid in bed with! I mean, it's possible. Shit, that's...whoah. Could you imagine? Damn. (Beat.) Anyway, we need to be careful here, be as true to this as we can, so, no...she'd never say that. About Cody's, you know...thing. That was all me. Not that I was thinking about his-- you know-- just that...o-kay, let's drop it...

Man shrugs and returns to the table, back there next to Woman, who is turned and lost in thought. Like we left her. How convenient.



MAN (CONT'D)

That's so...great. Really.

WOMAN

Why? Why is that great?

MAN

Oh, you know, because...it's true love and all that. Right?

WOMAN

...people don't really use those words anymore, do they? I mean, not in a long time.

MAN

No. I s'pose not. But it's a nice thought all the same...

Woman stands and goes to check the grill. She lifts the lid and turns the pieces of meat one by one. Man rises to stand near her.

WOMAN

I wanted to be noticed. That's what it was.

MAN

Hmmm?

WOMAN

The reason I first...oh, nothing.

MAN

No, go ahead. Please.

WOMAN

When I said yes to Cody, the time he asked me out-- bowling or to the skating rink, I don't remember now. I said okay because I thought it would make me stand out.

MAN

Really?

WOMAN

Sure. That's the problem with high school-- one of the many problems, anyway. You're so desperate to fit in, and at the same time totally needing to stand out...

MAN

Exactly. Yeah, I mean...yes.

WOMAN

You know? And for me, well...I guess I never really stopped. Doing this, I mean, marrying Cody and staying here-- if you could've seen my dad's face! It's sad, really. Not sad, I suppose, but, pathetic, almost. That I need people to be aware of me that badly. Doesn't matter what you look like or how smart you are. No. It's really how you feel about yourself. Who you are. And I was raised with the total sense that I wasn't good enough...or that I wouldn't make the right choices. That's it. My parents were always nervous that I'd make some mistake along the way, even in preschool! And so, at some point ... that is what I decided to do. Prove 'em right. I made a "mistake" they'd never forget. (Beat.) But I was in love, too. I shouldn't sound--well, actually I shouldn't be saying any of this, but-- I loved him. Cody. When we got married. I really think I did...but, then, it didn't hurt that he was rich and black and different. Especially the last one. Rich, I don't care so much about. I mean, it's okay...and black, well, that wasn't such a bad thing, either. But different? Now, that's a good one...I like different. Or at least thought I did.

Woman looks at Man to gauge his reaction. He nods and looks back toward the house. They both do-- they're not stupid.

MAN

Oh.

WOMAN

Yeah. "Oh." As in, uh-oh.

MAN

That's funny. I mean, interesting.

WOMAN

Not really.

MAN

But it's...is that true?

WOMAN

Yes. Mostly. Because doing that, marrying him, it made me different, too. And I still get some kind of thrill from it...walking into an Arby's or through Wal-Mart with these two brown children in tow. My little pickaninnies. That's what my parents call them- with their light-colored eyes. I do. I mean, it might be old hat in a place like New York or wherever, but around here it's still a pretty big deal. (Beat.) These faces turning round to get a look at us, the whispering, and me with this fat checkbook and my head all held up. Defiant. I don't even know why I like it so much. I just do.

MAN

Wow.

WOMAN

Yeah. "Wow." Scary.

MAN

No, it's...why? Why "scary"?

WOMAN

...scary that I'm that needy.

She looks at the MAN, and he trails off. Tries to smile.

MAN

No, not at all. (Beat.) Listen, this is going to sound lame, so I'm preparing you now, but...see, I always thought you stood out. Completely. I mean, so much.

WOMAN

Huh. Well...

MAN

Wow, that was even worse than I thought! I mean, seriously sad. Forgive me.

WOMAN

No way. I'm keeping that...it's all mine.

MAN

What?

WOMAN

Just that, you know, little tidbit. You put it out there, so I get to have it...and thank you.

MAN

"Pleasure" he says, glancing around to see if the husband is about to plunge a steak knife into his back

They both laugh at this and it's nice. Just like before.

WOMAN

I think you're in the clear. For a minute, anyway.

MAN

That's all I need. A minute. I'm much faster than I used to be.

WOMAN

Yeah, but he'll kill ya out in the open. It's in the flats, that's the problem.

MAN

Damn that Flyin' Cody Phipps!

They laugh again. Cody comes back outside. At the last moment, they both notice.

**FADE TO BLACK**