

# Crooks and Liars

by Kevin Myrick

"You people aren't any better in my estimation than crooks and liars!"

Joseph Wachowski was rightfully angry. The board of electors for the Space Island Homeowners Association had just voted down his request to paint his house Pepto Bismol pink. Having voted unanimously after his presentation on the idea, they shuffled their papers to move onto other items on the agenda, but Wachowski wouldn't let it go.

"Crooks and liars I say! What does a man have to do to get himself heard around here? How much does he have to spend on a lobster dinner Mrs. Callahan? Or how many drinks do I have to pay for Mr. Sanger?"

He was claiming corruption, just the sort of thing Mary Callahan couldn't stand for. As chairperson of the board, she felt it her duty to keep everything on the straight and narrow, so long as it didn't somehow involve her interests. Unfortunately, most everything that came under her gaze had some interest to her. If she didn't like the idea of your house having a privacy fence, you didn't get it. You wanted to put a sun porch on the top of your house? You better believe at least a plate of brownies is going her way, if not more.

But she wouldn't tolerate even the mere claim of corruption staining her minutes, and she brought down the gavel hard on the table and shouted down the old man.

"Mr. Wachowski, if you continue to disturb the work of this board after your issue has been heard and voted upon, we will have to escort you off the premises."

"You're gonna throw me out? I'll sue you to hell and back, you stuck up kurwa!"

"Mr. Wachowski," she continued, bringing the gavel down hard against the tabletop again until it broke in her hand. The sight brought everyone to a sudden stop, and she began again. "Mr. Wachowski, please sit down."

He threw up his hands in disgust and finally sat. Old me like Wachowski wanted everyone to "treat them with respect" yet thought they had the right to yell at every little slight or infraction that someone might have thrown their way. To Wachowski, it wasn't so much the color as it was that he wanted the right to paint his house whatever he wanted, damn the zoning ordinances or the board's bylaws on maintaining their houses up to standards.

So he sat there in the front row, his arms crossed over his chest pouting like a toddler put in timeout. He never thought of budging or saying goodbye to good friends as the crowd dispersed and went on home. No one wanted to miss Jeopardy after all. Mary turned around after speaking to Janice Robinson, who does the island's monthly newsletter, and saw Wachowski still sitting there.

"Mr. Wachowski, it's time to go home."

He didn't move or speak, just sat staring forward. She wondered if maybe he had a stroke and couldn't move, or was he maybe dead? She gave him a few more seconds before she reached out a hand.

"Don't touch me."

"Jesus Mary and Joseph, Mr. Wachowski."

"I'm sorry. I'm not leaving this seat until I've been given the opportunity to hear me out."

Mary had enough of it all tonight. She wanted to go home; Antiques Roadshow was scheduled to come on at 9. "Plead your case."

"What?"

"You heard me. Plead your case."

"Well, I--"

"Well what?"

"I dunno. I guess I just want to have my house stand out a little more from all the others. These rocket ships are fun and all, but they all look the same after a while. I just need some variety, and I thought painting the house a crazy color would help."

"But Pepto Bismol pink? Are you kidding me Joseph? Be reasonable here. Our community has to maintain a certain aesthetic look."

"Well what the hell color can I paint my house then if you're going to dictate terms here."

"We could discuss that over the lobster dinner you said you bought me." She shook her head. "Don't ever do that again Joseph, or next time I'll be cooking you in a giant pot, lobster boy."

"So we can discuss this over supper tonight?"

"No, you will call and schedule with me later in the morning. I'm going home Joseph. You should too."

He finally left, and as she piled into her own car, the last one in the lot and turned out to go home she thought to herself that being a crook and a liar was hard work.

