

Start

MRS STOCKMAN

Oh, Peter, come on have something to eat. I have burgundy beans fresh from our garden... when you cook um, they turn green.

MAYOR

No, thank you. I just had one of those new power grab bars. With the price of meat, protein bars are a good invention.

HOVSTAD

*(Teasingly)* Oh, have you seen the commercial? "Don't wilt like a flower just grab some power. Power Grabs!"

MAYOR

*(Dismissively)* No, I haven't seen it.

MRS STOCKMAN

Oh, Peter, how about some Cabernet for your arteries? It's so crazy how they make you buy to get a deal. I only want one bottle, but I have to buy six to get the sale.

MAYOR

I'm fine. So ... where's Tom?

MRS STOCKMAN

He took Eilif down to the park to practice. He has a game on Saturday. These two were supposed to be here earlier for dinner but ... no big deal ... we ate earlier. He is on his way home now. Let me get you something to drink. What would you like? Water, iced tea, coffee or some herb tea maybe? We have strawberry shortcake for dessert!

MAYOR

*(Ignores Mrs Stockman and stares at HOVSTAD)* So, has Tom written another article for you?

HOVSTAD

Yes, our readers really like his contributions. He's very passionate about nature, but unfortunately right now he's just fixated on the science magnet academy.

MAYOR

Oh ... well, it's nice to see that his fancy education is being put to good use and it's nice that your paper hasn't become extinct. It's such a shame that so many local community papers have died.

MRS STOCKMAN

Oh, not the *People's Pinecone*! It's so nice for schools to have a place to showcase their students and I love to read stories about our community members. Who's going to search those things online? I think people still like to pick up a paper off their doorstep. I still like to read the paper and ...

HOVSTAD

So, Mayor, do you think this magnet academy will help our economy and impact real estate values?

MAYOR

Am I being interviewed?

HOVSTAD

No, no ... just curious ... off the record.

MAYOR

Um, well, yes. Yes, of course, and it will help your paper too. A public school that is just as good as a private one is very attractive for young families and teachers. And, hopefully, there will be no more articles suggesting I'm using my position in a nefarious way to attract students to God's Way Christian. Personally, I'd rather children learn with the Bible in hand, but regardless of religious beliefs, all children need to learn stewardship and learn to be responsible for God's planet. That's for the public good. Tom and I certainly agree on that.

MRS STOCKMAN

And a STEAM school instead of a STEM school. After all artists are scientists too. Thanks to Leonardo and all the Naturalists. STEM is so one-dimensional. It's missing the flower! STEAM is dynamic and it fits more with children learning how to make (*She uses air quotes*) "connections." We see it in the morning in the winter ... steam keeps our forests alive ... steam rises ... steam is powerful ... the result of two opposite forces. Woo-hoo! Full steam ahead! We Connect at Pinus Contortas' Connections STEAM Academy ... a place where creativity, the environment and the wonders of nature are valued.

HOVSTAD

You're a good cheerleader.

MRS STOCKMAN

Oh, but I wish they would relax about having a strict uniform dress code. It's really just for prestige. Such mandates fly in the face of ideals of individualism and diversity.

— Stop