

BUZZ BOHANNON'S WORLD FAMOUS WEED WHACKER STRING MUSEUM
AND HALL OF FAME AS SEEN ON THAT'S INCREDIBLE!

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Characters

Buzz, 60s
Dahlia, 60s

Time and Place

Present
A residence in Tennessee

The dingy entry of Buzz Bohannon's World Famous Weed Whacker String Museum and Hall of Fame as Seen on That's Incredible!. Buzz, in a powder blue jumpsuit, dusts picture frames hung on the wall or standing upright on the counter. Each frame encloses a small segment of monofilament -- white, green, orange, blue. Dahlia enters, hesitates. A hat or scarf hides her bald head.

DAHLIA

Hello.

BUZZ

Oh, hello there. Welcome, welcome to Buzz Bohannon's World Famous Weed Whacker String Museum and Hall of Fame as Seen on That's Incredible!. Buzz Bohannon, that's me. Welcome, come on in. Come in.

He goes behind the counter.

DAHLIA

Hi.

BUZZ

You're my first customer of the day.

DAHLIA

Really? It's after five. I wasn't sure you'd still be open.

BUZZ

Oh, we're open, we're open. Sure, it's been slow today. Actually, it's been a slow week. Or month. You're actually the first customer this month. It's the economy. And the time of year. You're in for a treat! How long have you been interested in weed whacker string?

DAHLIA

Interested?

BUZZ

(His standard ballyhoo) You'd be surprised to know just how many important, illustrious, eminent people have stepped inside these hallowed yet humble walls. Twenty-four hundred square feet, four bedrooms, three baths, dining, family, and rumpus rooms, full basement and attic, filled from top to bottom with weed whacker string specimens collected from all forty-eight of the contiguous United States, plus Canada and Mexico. What did you say your name was?

He holds out a hand.

DAHLIA

I didn't. It's Dahlia.

She shakes his hand.

BUZZ

Ah! What a lovely name! An unusual name. In fact, I knew a Dahlia once.

DAHLIA

Yes, you did.

BUZZ

(Ballyhoo) Specimens collected from the gardens, the sidewalks, the alleys and hedges surrounding the homes of statesmen, entertainers, world-class athletes and captains of industry. From Oakland to Graceland, from the White House to the House that Ruth Built, retrieved from the estates of Bill Gates, Kathy Bates and Sharon Tate.

Beat.

Dahlia? I knew a Dahlia. Prettiest girl in six counties. Could have been more, but at the time I'd never been beyond those six. Prettiest girl I ever saw.

DAHLIA

Buzz, it's me, Dahlia.

BUZZ

(Ballyhoo) From sea to shining sea, and purple mountains majesty. From the Dealey Plaza Grassy Knoll to the manicured grounds of Monticell -- o. (Beat) My Dahlia?

She nods. Beat, while a great edifice collapses inside him.

BUZZ

I had no idea you'd be interested in weed whacker string.

DAHLIA

I came --

BUZZ

(Overlapping) Do you want the full tour or to cut straight to the Hall of Fame? Costs the same. What am I saying? For you, for you it's free. Golly, it's good to see you. I don't charge an admission anyway. Strictly by donation. Fifteen

BUZZ (cont'd)

dollars gets you a lifetime membership in Buzz Bohannon's World Famous Weed ... (Trails off) You knew we were on That's Incredible!, didn't you?

DAHLIA

We?

BUZZ

Me ... and the string.

DAHLIA

When was that show on?

BUZZ

(Takes up a picture frame) This here is our latest addition. A thrilling find. Premium .105 gauge star-shaped string with aluminum particles actually bonded into the co-polymer material, recovered from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue the day after the inauguration. Everybody was leaving D.C., but not me. I was on my way in. Reconnaissance --

DAHLIA

Buzz, I'm sorry.

BUZZ

(Laughs weakly) Hah. Hah-hah. Sorry? Oh, hell. This one here? Nothing so spectacular -- .065 gauge round string found among the cigarette butts and candy wrappers in the alley behind Regis Philbin's Hollywood home --

DAHLIA

Did you hear me, Buzz?

BUZZ

This is not the good stuff out here, Dahlia. These are only the teasers. To get people excited, intrigued, engaged.

The last word hangs between them. Dahlia kisses his cheek.

DAHLIA

I came to say I'm sorry.

BUZZ

Sorry? What for?

DAHLIA

It's no excuse, Buzz, but please know that I was very young. We both were.

BUZZ

Were you scared? Is that what it was? Because I was too.

DAHLIA

I wish I could say it was fear. That might be ... forgivable. But no, I was thinking only of myself. I was cruel.

BUZZ

Did you go to California like they said?

DAHLIA

Only for a little while. I ended up in New York.

BUZZ

City? Wow. (Beat) But you're back now? Did you come back?

DAHLIA

No, we're visiting my aunt out in Forrest City. I'm here with my family.

BUZZ

Oh. Are you happy?

DAHLIA

Yes, I am. My husband -- he's an attorney -- and I have two wonderful daughters. One is a musician, an ethno-musicologist actually. The other is still finding herself, but is doing volunteer work in Africa with AIDS children.

BUZZ

That's ... (At a loss) So, what are you doing here? Are you interested in string?

DAHLIA

I came because ... Well, for another selfish reason.

BUZZ

What's that?

DAHLIA

Buzz, I ...

She points to her head covering.

BUZZ

What?

DAHLIA

I haven't been well.

BUZZ

Oh.

DAHLIA

It's all right. It's in remission.

BUZZ

I'm so sorry. I ...

DAHLIA

It's okay, Buzz. Really. The outlook is very positive. But the whole episode has given me an opportunity to think.

BUZZ

About what?

DAHLIA

About my life, where I came from. You.

BUZZ

Me?

DAHLIA

About all the fun we had. How wild and full of antics you were. I remember that time, that time we rode your motorcycle through the carnival, right through all those rides and people, and the carneys were screaming at us and chasing us. And then we snuck into the pool at your daddy's club and we skinny-dipped. Together. Under the moon. I just had to come and see you.

Buzz doesn't dare remember.

BUZZ

Did you see us on That's Incredible?

DAHLIA

No. I saw you on the Internet, though.

BUZZ

People say we're on the Internet. I don't have a computer.

DAHLIA

I want to help, Buzz. Is there anything I can do? To get you out of this, this ...

BUZZ

Get me out of what?

DAHLIA

This place. I don't know how to say it gracefully, Buzz. But I see what your life has become, and I can't help but wonder if my actions were in some way responsible. I'm hoping I can do something to help.

BUZZ

You mean charity?

DAHLIA

No, not --

BUZZ

What's wrong with this place?

DAHLIA

It's ... string, Buzz. You've surrounded yourself with weed whacker string.

BUZZ

Yeah?

DAHLIA

It's not ... normal.

BUZZ

I know it's unusual. That's why people come.

DAHLIA

No, Buzz. They come to see you.

Her meaning sinks in.

BUZZ

Well, this is my life, Dahlia. I'm sorry if you don't like it. You think I need to get out of this place?

DAHLIA

I didn't mean --

BUZZ

No, I know what you mean. You feel sorry for me, don't you. You think, I'm cracked. That you walked out of my life, left me on the altar --

DAHLIA

(Overlapping) I didn't do that --

BUZZ

Close enough! And so I went nutso or something? Who the hell are you to pass judgment? Maybe weed whacker string is beneath you and your New York City husband attorney and your volunteer daughters, but this is everything I have. How dare you, Dahlia. How dare you!

DAHLIA

Buzz, listen to me. I'm a psychologist.

BUZZ

Oh, that takes all!

DAHLIA

I can't help you myself, but I have the names and numbers of some very reputable people in town here.

BUZZ

I don't need a shrink! I am perfectly happy with my life! With myself! I love string, so why shouldn't I surround myself with it? My first piece, you know where it came from? I'll tell you, even though you haven't made a donation, by the way. It was thirty-four years, five months, and three days ago ... today. Every morning when I wake up, I think about it, and I mark the day. It was after you left me. A year or two after. The mill had shut down and I had lots of time on my hands -- didn't need to work anyway since Daddy passed. One day I was out walking around, just wandering. My life didn't seem to be going anywhere. And I came to the Congregational Church, and looked up at the steeple, and I didn't feel anything. I was empty. There was no love there, no hope, no faith. And then I looked down at the ground, and what did I see. In amongst the wild strawberry vines, a little piece of nylon string, bright orange, in the shape of a question mark. No longer than a little slip of fingernail off your pinkie. A perfect little question mark. It was a wake-up call. A revelation. And from that day on I've been collecting these little miracles. These castoffs. Broken, discarded bits of wonder. Beautiful because of their brokenness. Maybe that's horseshit to you --

DAHLIA

It's not horseshit, Buzz. It's beautiful.

BUZZ

Beautiful? Or crazy?

DAHLIA

I think it's beautiful. And I think you should tell someone.

BUZZ

And I said no!

DAHLIA

Did you ever marry? Do you ever go out? Do you have any friends?

BUZZ

I do not have friends! I don't need friends. I'm happy, Dahlia. I was happy, until you stepped through that door. And you tell me you're in remission? This is worse than when you left before. Now you get out!

DAHLIA

Buzz, please.

BUZZ

No, you get out or you lay down your donation!

Long pause. Dahlia reaches into her purse and pulls out a tissue to wipe her eyes and nose. She reaches in again and pulls out a twenty dollar bill, lays it on the counter.

DAHLIA

I'd like a lifetime membership, please.

Beat.

BUZZ

Can't you understand?

DAHLIA

I want to, Buzz. I'd really like to. Can you show me? What can you show me that will make me understand?

Beat.

BUZZ

I have something. Something very rare. I've never shown it to the public. Nobody knows I have it except the man who sold it to me, and he didn't even know what it was.

DAHLIA

What?

BUZZ

The Weed Eater was invented in 1972. Did you know that?

DAHLIA

No, I didn't.

BUZZ

By George Ballas of Houston, Texas. In the first production year, eight thousand, four hundred, thirty-seven coils of round, white, .065 gauge string were packaged and sold. Only seven of those packages are known to exist today. They are very, very rare.

DAHLIA

Buzz. Do you have one?

BUZZ

Shhh.

DAHLIA

Show me.

BUZZ

(Bashful) I would.

DAHLIA

But?

BUZZ

It's sealed in an airtight glass case. Bolted to the floor.
(Beat) In Momma and Daddy's bedroom.

DAHLIA

And no one knows?

BUZZ

Just you, Dahlia.

DAHLIA

Thank you. (Beat) Buzz, what was the question?

BUZZ

The question?

She draws a question mark in the air.

Oh, that. I guess ... same question everybody asks. You know.

Beat.

DAHLIA

I do.

Long pause. He turns and exits deeper into the museum. She follows.

End