

Bed, Breakfast, and Broadway

By Arlen Daleske and Dennis Reece

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DEDICATION

With humble thanks for helping to make our dream come true, we dedicate this play to the members of the Roundhouse Players.

STORY OF THE PLAY

A wacky cast of actors is rehearsing for its big community theatre production of "You Only Die Twice." Marge Cunningham, the author of this "spell-binding murder mystery," runs the Enchanting Dreams Bed-and-Breakfast, which doubles as the community theatre. When she receives word that a top Broadway producer is coming to town to hopefully "discover" some fresh acting talent, she notifies the cast, and they go into high gear to perfect the show before opening night. They decide to stay in character and run their lines as much as possible before the performance.

But it's not easy. Fred Atkins plays the cat burglar who can never quite make it through the window without getting his panty hose caught. And then there's Sally Hendrickson who can transform herself into a butler-chasing bimbo with lightning speed. In the meantime, a vacationing couple appears about a possible vacancy at the bed and breakfast. The local actors assume the visiting couple is the producer and his wife, but in reality the man is an overwrought air traffic controller who desperately needs a break before he has a breakdown! And then there's the bed-and-breakfast permanent guest who can't keep anything straight, including important phone messages.

The cast may be small-time, but they have one big dream: to go to Broadway! Let the mayhem begin!

ORIGINAL CAST

Marge Cunningham: Marlene Reece
John Cunningham: Lyle Steiner
Sally Hendrickson: Annette Baker
Jack Hudson: Alan McDonald
Fred Atkins: Arlen Daleske
Olivia O'Brian: Julie Burkett
Pat O'Brian: Denny Reece
Patrick Olivier Bryant: K. D. Burkett
Bobbie Oliver: Dorothy Weichmann
Bob Oliver: Vince Chorne

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 3 w, 1 flexible)

MARGE CUNNINGHAM: Owner and operator of the bed-and-breakfast and community theater. Sometimes her exuberance can be just a little more than most can handle.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM: Marge's husband; plays the part of the butler in the performance. He always does what his wife tells him to do but dreams of what could have been.

JACK HUDSON: Actor who plays the part of a cat burglar in the performance. Late 20s, early 30s, wants to strike it big and get out of this one-horse town.

FRED ATKINS: Actor who plays the part of a policeman in the performance. Middle-aged. Has played in many regional theaters around the country. Once had a part on a television soap opera that lasted for two episodes. Will tell anyone who listens.

SALLY HENDRICKSON: Actress who plays the part of a bimbo attracted to the butler. Late 20s. Currently a pre-med student, but her dream is to be an actress. Looking for that sign to tell her which career to pursue. Can become the "dumb blonde" with lightning speed when she needs to.

PAT O'BRIAN: Unsuspecting tourist. Late 50s. Following his wife on a much needed weekend getaway. Has no way of knowing that everyone thinks he is a famous Broadway producer, let alone what a Broadway producer is.

OLIVIA O'BRIAN: Unsuspecting tourist. Late 50s. On a mission for a weekend of shopping and theater. Get out of her way.

PATRICK OLIVIER BRYANT: Broadway producer, mistaken as handyman. Middle-aged. Tired of the aloof acting talent of the big cities, is searching the heartland for some "real" acting talent, but wants to do it incognito.

BOB (OR BOBBIE) OLIVER: Temporary custodial help. (Minor role. See Directors' Notes.)

SETTING

The common area of the Enchanting Dreams Bed-and-Breakfast. The set requires a room key holder, window, coffee table, couch, desk with phone, chair, and a wall shelf displaying knickknacks. There is a main staircase to the rooms above. There is a front door center stage. An office door is behind the main desk. The patio exit is a curtain opening stage right near the window. The kitchen/dining room exit is a curtain opening stage left. A small hook of some kind should hang from a wall.

DIRECTORS' NOTES

This play was written to give the actors an opportunity to push their performances as far over the top as they desire. There are lines to be delivered poorly, and from our experience, the more amateurish the better. Our "Sally" added so much with funny laughs, dumb looks, gum chewing and "B-movie" acting. Jack can bring down the house, figuratively and literally, with the window scene. Our "Jack" used panty hose inside out in his burglar scenes. We rigged the window to look as if it shut on his hand, but he took turns getting his hand, leg, head and even a leg of the panty hose caught. Picking up a plant to hide behind and falling back and forth over the couch were also part of Jack's enhancement of the part. Pat O'Brian was "Mr. Nerves," and his costume put "Revenge of the Nerds" to shame. The role of Bob (or Bobbie) Oliver, the temporary help, was extra fun for us, as we had a different local celebrity act the part each night. Above all, let the play have fun with you. Enjoy.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: MARGE is working with papers in the common area of the bed-and-breakfast when the telephone RINGS.)

MARGE: Good morning! Enchanting Dreams Bed-and-Breakfast ... *(Self-servingly.)* proud sponsors of this year's community production, "You Only Die Twice," a spell-binding murder mystery written by yours truly. *(Pause, then surprise.)* Yes, oh my, yes. Of course, I have heard of you. Anyone in theater, I mean the theatre, knows who you are. *(Pause.)* You ... you are! Of course, we can find room for you. We would be delighted to ... Yes? *(Pause.)* Oh, quite right, I won't breathe a word to anyone. It will be our little secret. *(Gushing.)* THANK YOU Goodbye I promise I won't tell anyone. *(Hangs up the telephone, talking to HERSELF.)* I can't wait to tell everyone! Patrick Olivier Bryant, the famous Broadway producer, staying right here at our little bed-and-breakfast. I can't believe it!

(JOHN ENTERS the room backwards, carrying groceries. Doesn't see his WIFE behind him, startled, groceries go flying about.)

MARGE: JOHN! GUESS WHAT?!

JOHN: *(Looking at the groceries.)* I'm going to have to buy more eggs?

MARGE: Don't worry about little things like that. I'm talking about my big break, easy street.

JOHN: *(Feigning a heart attack.)* Let me guess. You just made your first premium payment on the million-dollar life insurance policy you took out on me?

MARGE: *(With a slap across HIS back.)* Don't be silly. *(Teasingly.)* That doesn't go into effect until next month.

JOHN: *(As HE collects himself, and the groceries.)* What was I thinking?

MARGE: *(Excitedly, slowly at first, finishing strong and rapidly, walking, talking and dreaming as SHE goes.)* Now, seriously, who would be the perfect, most-desired person we could see? *(Before JOHN can answer.)* That's right, Patrick Olivier Bryant, the world-famous Broadway producer. He is coming to stay at our bed-and-breakfast. And when, I ask you, would be the best time? *(Again, as JOHN starts for the groceries, unable to get in.)* Exactly, he will be passing through this weekend and wants to stay here tonight. And why is that the best time? *(JOHN gives a half-hearted attempt to answer.)* Because this evening is my opus magnum, the opening of "You Only Die Twice." John, he will be here for the opening of my play. A chance to discover fresh talent.

JOHN: Is the old talent stale?

MARGE: *(Ignoring HIM.)* To think, Patrick Olivier Bryant, will discover me. What do you think of that?

JOHN: *(Staring at the floor, and then HER.)* I think you're up to your shoe tops in deep-dish.

MARGE: *(Not hearing HIM correctly.)* What?

JOHN: The frozen pizza, it's deep-dish.

MARGE: Why didn't you tell me?

JOHN: *(Wryly.)* I didn't want to shatter the serendipity of the moment.

MARGE: *(Back to reality.)* Oh, dear, and we don't have anyone to help clean up, do we?

JOHN: No, I can get it for now. Old Clarence will be gone for another week on his vacation, but I called the temporary work force and they said they could have someone to do kitchen and custodial work over here by the afternoon.

MARGE: *(Startled to a new reality, but losing HER vertical hold.)* But that's when Mr. Bryant will be here. Everything must be spotless. The bathrooms need attention. What will we have for supper? He's from the East Coast. Do you suppose he's a vegetarian? Maybe he has a skin condition and will be allergic to our soap? What if he --

End of Freeview

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