

OCCUPATION: MURDER!

An Audience Participation
Murder Mystery/Comedy

By Billy St. John

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STORY OF THE PLAY

When the rehearsal begins for the TV quiz show *It's a Living!* who would suspect that before the telecast is over, the hardest problem to solve would be "Who killed Tony Fabrizi, the show's sponsor?" And why was he murdered? Was it for the diamond bracelet he had brought for the commercial, or was he shot for personal reasons?

Homicide detective Lt. Jim Slate discovers that most of the TV show's cast had motives to murder the man - or could it have been his Italian wife with the fiery temper? Perhaps she knew about her husband's involvement with Marilyn, a girl with knockout looks and horrible voice?

Rounds of the fictional game show are actually played during the performance using members of the audience on stage as contestants. With the help of Amanda Maxwell, a little old lady amateur sleuth, Lt. Slate solves the murder at the exciting conclusion to *OCCUPATION: MURDER!*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 9 w)

BUZZ LANGSTON: Director of *It's a Living!* in his 20s, a bundle of nervous energy.

FRAN RAWLINS: Assistant director of the show, in her early 20s.

TONY FABRIZI: Sponsor of the show, a big man with a forceful personality.

MARILYN McBRIDE: The *It's a Living!* Girl, a knockout.

EDWARD ST. JAMES: The announcer, an older man, usually very jovial, who has a well-trained speaking voice.

JULIA WARREN: A Broadway star and regular panelist.

DENNIS CLARK: The moderator.

PAUL IRWIN: A publisher and regular panelist.

VIRGINIA SINGLETON: A recording artist and regular panelist.

LOIS BENNETT: Julia's agent, middle aged.

ALLENE CLARK: Dennis' wife. A well dressed, proper and matronly woman who seems quite vague.

MARIA FABRIZI: Tony's wife, an attractive Italian woman with a fiery temper.

LT. JIM SLATE: A homicide detective who's gruff, smart, and good at his job.

AMANDA MAXWELL: An amateur sleuth, a feisty, clever, elderly lady.

GUEST PANELISTS and CONTESTANTS: Chosen from the audience.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A television studio in New York.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I - Today. A rehearsal of *It's a Living!*

ACT II - Tonight. The live performance of *It's a Living!*

SETTING

The setting is the television studio set for *It's a Living!* It is composed of colorful flats and stage curtains. SR is a wide desk with 4 chairs behind it, set at an angle from DSR to URC so that the 4 players who sit behind it are all visible to the audience. A section of flats is behind it. Another flat angles off it at the DSR corner and extends to off DSR. A matching desk with 3 chairs is SL opposite the first one, with flats behind. It also has a flat at the DSL corner which extends to off DSL. Written in large, glittery letters on the SR flats are the words "GUEST PANELISTS" and lots of glittery stars. Written on the SL flats are the words "STAR PANELISTS" and lots of glittery stars. USC is a smaller desk with 2 chairs behind it. On a flat behind the desk are the words *It's a Living!* and glittery stars. The fronts of all the desks are covered with glittery question marks.

Stage curtains surround the set and are visible behind and between the sections of flats. If you wish, you can lower the light battens so that the stage lights are visible above the set, adding to the illusion of a TV studio. Microphones, real or fake, can be on the desks in front of each seat, but they are not absolutely essential. Entrances are URC and ULC between the panelists' desks and the moderator's desk; entrances can also be made DSR and DSL. A set of steps leads down into the audience.

In each act, rounds of a fictional TV game show, *It's a Living!*, will be played. See the Production Notes at the end of the script for information about playing the game and selecting volunteers from the audience.

See props list and additional production notes at end.

ACT I

(AT RISE: The house LIGHTS fade, the CURTAIN opens in the dark, then the stage LIGHTS come up (lower intensity than they would during real performance). After a beat, BUZZ LANGSTON enters URC. He carries a clipboard, pen and stopwatch, and is constantly making notes, checking the set, and bustling about. He has a headset with a wire that leads to a battery pack clipped to his belt. The headset hangs around his neck when the show isn't being rehearsed or performed, at which times he pulls it onto his head.)

BUZZ: Good grief! Where is everybody? We've got a show to rehearse! Fran!

(FRAN RAWLINS enters DSL also carrying a clipboard and a stopwatch. She also has a headset. She is calm and efficient.)

FRAN: Yes, boss?

BUZZ: *(Hurrying to HER, DSL)* Where's Dennis? Where's Edward? Where's the panel? Everybody's late!

FRAN: Calm down, boss. They're all in the green room, waiting to be called to the set.

BUZZ: They are? You're sure?

FRAN: I'm sure. Buzz, you have to learn to relax.

BUZZ: I know...

FRAN: You do a great job directing the show, but you're going to get an ulcer if you let the pressure get to you. Every week you work yourself up into a frenzy, and every week *It's a Living!* comes off fine.

BUZZ: It wouldn't if I didn't have you as my assistant director. If only Mr. Fabrizi didn't insist we televise the show live, it wouldn't be so bad. We could edit out any mistakes if it were on tape. But this way...

FRAN: Wonder why he won't let us tape it?

BUZZ: He says doing it live makes the show more exciting. *(Clutching HIS stomach)* He's going to end up with an exciting live show and an extremely dead director!

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FRAN: Get a grip, boss. Would you like me to bring out the others?

BUZZ: Yes...please. Thanks, Fran.

FRAN: Anytime.

(SHE exits DSL. TONY FABRIZI enters DSR with his arm around MARILYN McBRIDE. He wears an expensive suit and flashy rings, but his accent is that of a New York thug. Marilyn picked her stage name in honor of Marilyn Monroe whom she tries to look like.)

TONY: Hey, Langston, I need ta talk to yuh.

BUZZ: Certainly, Mr. Fabrizi. Is there a problem?

TONY: No, no problem - not yet, anyways. I need a little favor.

BUZZ: Just name it, Mr. Fabrizi.

TONY: It's about duh commercial. Dis week we're gonna feature a diamond bracelet. Show 'im, Marilyn.

(MARILYN holds out an arm, a stunning diamond bracelet on her wrist. She moves her hand around, modeling it.)

BUZZ: It's gorgeous. Whatever you say, Mr. Fabrizi - you're the sponsor.

TONY: Exactly - whatever I say, and I say it's time yuh gave Marilyn more ta do on duh show.

BUZZ: *(A little anxious)* More? But Marilyn displays the contestants' occupation cards, and she models the jewelry for your commercials.

TONY: Yeah, but yuh always have duh announcer guy do duh talkin'. Marilyn never says a woid. Well, dat's gonna change - startin' tonight she's gonna do duh sales pitch for Fabrizi Jewelers, too.

BUZZ: *(Extremely nervous)* Marilyn's going to talk...?

TONY: Dat's duh way I want it.

BUZZ: *(To MARILYN)* You're going to...talk?

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(MARILYN's voice is horrible. She has a thick Brooklyn accents and is squeaky or raspy or something equally awful to hear.)

MARILYN: Why shouldn't I talk? I can talk as good as duh next poi-sun. Tony paid for me to take some diction lessons, didn't you, Tony?

TONY: Yeah, dollface. *(HE gives HER a squeeze.)*

BUZZ: Diction lessons? How many did you take?

MARILYN: Just a couple, den duh ol' geezer who was teaching me threw hisself out a winda...landed on his head and killed him dead. I dunno why...

BUZZ: *(Under HIS breath)* I can guess...*(Out loud)* Look, Marilyn, are you sure you want to do this...?

MARILYN: Shoo-ah? Shoo-ah, I'm shoo-ah! Tony done give me a copy of what I'm supposed to say. I memorized all duh woids already, all by myself. Wanna hear 'em?

BUZZ: No. *(TONY steps closer to BUZZ, glowering.)*

TONY: So Marilyn's gonna do duh commercial, right?

BUZZ: I...uh...*(FRAN enters ULC followed by DENNIS, EDWARD, JULIA, PAUL and VIRGINIA. They will mill UPS and ad-lib quietly among themselves, praising and critiquing a current Broadway play.)* Gee, Mr. Fabrizi, we'd better start the rehearsal.

TONY: So who's stoppin' yuh? *(To MARILYN)* Yuh better let me hold dat bracelet till time for yuh to do duh commercial, sweet-cheeks. It's woith ten grand. I wouldn't want nobody ta steal it from yuh, people get bumped off in dis town for a lot less.

MARILYN: Shoo-ah, Tony. *(SHE takes off the bracelet and gives it to HIM. He drops it into his coat pocket.)* You know what I like best about dis bra-ca-let?

TONY: What's dat, babe?

MARILYN: It don't toin your wrist green like mine do.

(THEY cross DSL and exit as FRAN crosses DS to BUZZ.)

FRAN: You look like somebody slugged you with a baseball bat. What's the matter, boss?

End of Freeview

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