

# **Burglars, Bunglers and Neighborhood Thieves**

By Daniel Munson

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## **DEDICATION**

*This play is dedicated to Rebecca, Jeremiah, and Aaron, who  
still enjoying acting out their favorite scenes from the  
production.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

When two big-time bunglers like John and Darlene attempt to burglarize an apartment, they get a coat hanger stuck in the door lock and then manage to accidentally ring the doorbell. When they do finally break in, Darlene's nervous bladder forces her to make an emergency bathroom visit. All this ruckus wakes up the bunny-slipper wearing homeowner, Erica, who discovers she is being burgled by her own husband. And if this wasn't weird enough, Darlene claims she is really a "cat burner" instead of a "cat burglar." All this, and the show has just begun! Is John really trying to steal his own Picasso painting to collect on the insurance? Or is he after the neighbor's jewels? Do the two old neighbor ladies really have valuable jewelry, or are they just trying to steal the Picasso for themselves? Will the police officer stop these crimes in time? But who is the real police officer? All of these bunglers may not be great burglars, but they're certainly the funniest!

**Performance time: 25 minutes.**

### **ORIGINAL CAST AND CREW**

"Burglars, Bunglers, and Neighborhood Thieves" was first presented by the Rushford-Peterson (MN) High School Drama Club under the title "Criminal Roulette" on January 22, 2004.

John: Casey Howe  
Darlene Wash: Regina Dolan  
Erica: Jessica Bergan  
Police Officer Betty Ware: Beth Loven  
Agatha: Bethany Courier  
Christie: Mariah Ciangiola  
Director: Theresa Luther-Dolan  
Assistant Director/Understudy/Stage Manager: Brittany Schick  
Set Design: Isaac Sawle  
Light Design: Emily Deering  
Costumes/Props: Bethany Courier; Lindsey Frick; Carissa Gady  
"Picasso" Painting: Donna Ciangiola  
Production Crew: Elmira Bakhteeva; Kyle Benter; Emily Deering; Lindsey Frick; Carissa Gady; Casey Howe; Danielle Johnson; Beth Loven; Isaac Sawle

**Author's Note:** The author gratefully acknowledges support from the Rushford-Peterson High School for giving the play its first production; the R-P drama club for offering encouragement and suggesting changes along the way (it's hard to believe that this play ever existed without the delightful characters of Agatha and Christie); and Theresa and the kids for letting me go out and play.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(1 m, 5 w)*

**JOHN:** A man of indeterminate age. Married to Erica? Not quite who he appears to be.

**DARLENE WASH:** A woman about the same age as John and Erica. Not quite what she appears to be.

**ERICA:** A woman of indeterminate age. Married to John? Not quite who she appears to be.

**POLICE OFFICER/BETTY:** A typical police officer type. Not quite who she appears to be.

**AGATHA:** An older woman who lives across the street from John and Erica. Lives with Christie, wears glasses. Not quite who she appears to be.

**CHRISTIE:** An older woman who lives across the street from John and Erica. Lives with Agatha, wears glasses. Not quite who she appears to be.

***Casting Note:*** *This play is designed so that the parts are not gender specific. The listing here reflects the cast as first performed. The script was originally intended for the part of John to be female (as Joan), and that Joan and Erica were roommates. They could also be male roommates, "John" and "Eric." The Policeman/Betty could just as easily be played by a male actor and the name would then be changed to "Bert." If it is desired to make both neighbors from across the street male, their names should be changed to "Dick" and "Francis." If only one is male, the name would be "Dick" and the female's name should become "Frances."*

## **SETTING**

The living room of an urban ground-floor apartment belonging to John and Erica. The living room should have a window, couch, chairs, end table, metal wastebasket, a bookshelf, lamps, and a Picasso-like painting on the wall.

## **Burglars, Bunglers and Neighborhood Thieves**

*(AT RISE: The LIGHTS come up dimly to reveal a living room. It is night, and only moonlight comes through the windows. The entrance is SL. A hallway leads off SR. Two figures, dressed in black and wearing ski masks, cross upstage of the windows. One figure, DARLENE, stops and looks in the window. She lifts her mask and peers in. The other figure, JOHN, quickly pulls her mask back down and pulls her toward the door. After a moment, we hear a scuffle at the SL door, and the door handle rattles vigorously. We hear voices.)*

JOHN: Rats!

DARLENE: I thought you said this was going to be easy.

JOHN: Shhh.

DARLENE: Easy. You said, "Easy."

JOHN: Give me that coat hanger.

*(We see a coat hanger come through the crack between the door and the frame. It moves up and down and back and forth for a bit.)*

JOHN: I can't believe it.

DARLENE: What?

JOHN: It's stuck.

DARLENE: What?

JOHN: It's stuck. The coat hanger is stuck.

DARLENE: I can't believe I agreed to this.

*(The doorbell RINGS.)*

JOHN: What was that?

DARLENE: What?

*(The doorbell RINGS.)*

JOHN: That. What is it?

*(The doorbell RINGS many times.)*

JOHN: It's you! You idiot! You're leaning on the doorbell!  
Come on.

*(There is a pause as we hear the DUO leave the door. After a moment, we see two figures outside the window again. John lifts the window open and motions for Darlene to climb through. As she climbs through, she knocks over everything that was sitting on the bookshelf beneath the window, including a modern art sculpture made from soda pop cans. It clatters and makes as much noise as possible.)*

JOHN: What are you doing?!

DARLENE: I didn't put this bookshelf here. *(SHE holds up the odd-looking sculpture.)* Who collects ugly sculpture and puts it under a window?

JOHN: *(Climbing through the window.)* Put it down. We'd never get more than five cents a can for that at the recycling center.

*(DARLENE tosses it aside, and it clatters quite loudly.)*

JOHN: What are you doing?

DARLENE: Whoops.

JOHN: I thought you said you'd done this before.

DARLENE: And I thought you said this would be easy.

JOHN: Just get busy now.

DARLENE: What are we looking for?

JOHN: We're wearing black clothes, ski masks, and we came in through the window in the dead of night. We must be looking for dance partners! Good grief. Jewels! Money! Anything valuable! That's what we're looking for.

DARLENE: Okay.

JOHN: I can't believe you've done this before. When we met you told me that you were a professional cat burglar. I said I had a job for you.

DARLENE: Cat burglar? I said I was a cat burner. I work in the crematorium destroying dead animals!

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