



DYING TO MEET YOU

By James Green

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DYING TO MEET YOU

A COMEDY THRILLER [OR FARCE]

BY

JAMES GREEN

10 RUFFORD AVE., NEWARK ON TRENT, NOTTS. NG24 4BD

List of Characters

Julie, Assistant Floor Manager. (AFM)

Young, inexperienced, keen & enthusiastic. In her first paid job.

Alan, Floor Manager. (FM)

Not young, experienced, disillusioned and fed up.

Genghis Khan (DIR) [or female equivalent] the Show's Director.

Not young, experienced, without illusions but still determined to succeed.

Joe Devine, the Show's Presenter. (JD)

A has-been. A drunk, with no illusions about himself or his future and about ready to give up. Probably his last paid job.

Nicola, Joe's Agent. (N)

Young, experienced, efficient and on her way up.

Gillian Blake [or male equivalent], the Show's Celebrity Guest. (GILL)

A successful contemporary of Joe Divine.

Charlie, the Show's Cook [male or female] CH.

Gifted cook but mentally unbalanced.

Audience, the audience....see note on p.22

THE TIME IS THE NEAR FUTURE. THE BBC HAS LOST
ITS LICENCE FEE AND NOW HAS TO COMPETE ON
EQUAL TERMS WITH ALL THE OTHER TV PROVIDERS.

IT'S NOT DOING WELL.

Act 1

SCENE 1

A tv cookery show set in a shabby studio.

The set consists of a food preparation counter with a hob in front of what, to the tv viewers, seem kitchen units, shelves, etc. With an eye-level oven set into them at the end nearest the audience. The units and oven are, in fact, false. The back of the oven is open and things can be taken out and put in. The kitchen units and counter used in the set are placed towards the back of the stage and offset to one side and lined up just off side-ways so that the audience can see the front of the units but also any action round the back of them. The kitchen units face the wings where, just off-stage, is the tv camera. The floor manager, who is wearing ear-phones with mike, and the assistant floor-manager are getting the set ready by bringing in and laying out knives etc. and ingredients.

AFM: Is two salts right? Why does he want two salts?

FM: Why ask me? I'm just the floor-manager. If it says two salts give him two bloody salts.

The director wearing ear-phones and mike enters from camera – side, stops, looks at his clip board and suddenly kneels down in front of the food preparation counter, then lies on his front and sticks his bottom high up in the air. The afm leaves the stage towards the cameras.

DIR: How's that?

Director lowers his bottom

OK, how about that? Is that better? A bit more?

So that's OK? Good. Julie, you got that?

Looks up for the afm

Where the bloody hell is Julie?

FM: She's getting the two salts.

DIR: The two salts? Why isn't she here? What is the bloody point of me waving my fanny in the air if Julie isn't here to watch me do it?

The afm returns with two salt grinders

For God's sake Julie get rid of those things and watch my bum.

The director reassumes his position on his hands and knees with his bum in the air.

Well?

AFM: Well what?

DIR: Not you, dear, camera 1.

How about that? You're sure that's it? Right.

OK Julie, you got that, any higher and you'll be in shot.

And watch out for Alan's signal when you put any stuff up. I don't want your hands creeping into the shot either.

The director leaves the stage talking to the camera

How low did you have to go? Was the preparation table in good shot...

The fm picks up a big knife from the preparation table and checks its edge and point. He absently keeps it in his hand as he looks at the afm who has gone and picked up the two salts again.

- FM: Well now you've got them put them wherever they're supposed to go.
- AFM: I think they're rock salt and sea salt but they're not labelled so I don't know which is which. Will that be OK?
- FM: Oh, for pity's sake Julie, how many times do you need to be told. They can have cyanide in them for all that it matters. They're just for show, everything on this side is just for show. Remember? Charlie round the back is where the real cooking gets done. Charlie cooks. This side is just for show, there's no cooking done on this side, remember?
- AFM: I do remember, Alan, but I thought we ought to try and be as authentic as we can, it's part of being professional isn't it? I know this is my first job and I'm only the Assistant Floor Manager but I want to make sure I learn so that...
- FM: God help us all. Look around you, we're a third rate outfit working in a fourth rate, hole-in-the-corner, one studio dump. There's a receptionist who barely speaks English, security is a retired bus conductor who brings in his asthmatic Alsatian twice a day for a walk and a wheeze and that's it. I mean it's not Pinewood is it? Everything's crap, look at it. You know why we use this morgue? Because it's cheap but that's OK, because the programme we're making is cheap and we're making it because we're cheap. We've only got this programme because now that the dear old Beeb has lost its License money it can't afford to be a high-minded, free-loader any more, it has to make

trash for the masses like everyone else and we're the best the poor sods can afford, and this is the best we can afford so God help us all. We're the sweepings of the shit house in this business, Julie. We're the Morlocks of the media, we work at the arse-end of the universe, has-beens and never-wases doing the sort of day-time TV that's only on air so the old folks have something to sleep through. We're the lepers of production companies and on those rare occasions we might find ourselves in the presence of real programme makers we should all ring bells and shout unclean, unclean. It doesn't get any worse than this. I sometimes think that one day I'll...

Oh, Christ...

AFM: Are you OK Alan? Can I get you something, a drink of water maybe?

FM: Water? She wants me to drink water for God's sake!

AFM: Well, there's some bottles of wine, for the show, I saw them over there. What about a glass of wine?

FM: No. No wine Julie, but thanks for asking. Thanks for being concerned.

AFM: It's just that you seemed, well you were a bit, you seemed sort of stressed if you know what I mean.

FM: Julie, I know you're not bright, but then, that's never stopped anyone getting on in this game, but if you don't want to finish up like me then get out of this kind of crap as soon as you can. Do voice-overs for American commercials, do look-alike talent shows, cover the bloody Eurovision Song Contest if you have to, even do a bloody revival of Top of the Pops. Anything would be better than

spending your life in this bloody graveyard. You see, being professional in an outfit like this just means turning up and trying to remember which day of the week it is, and if our glorious front-man can manage either I'll be amazed.

AFM: So, you're OK now Alan?

FM: Sure, Julie, why shouldn't I be OK?

AFM: Oh, you know, you didn't sound as if you were...

FM: Were what?

AFM: Well, very upbeat about the show.

FM: Julie I'm just a floor manager, I sometimes feel I've never ever been anything else but a floor manager. I dare say I'll die as a bloody floor manager. But sometimes working on a really crumby day-time show like this gets to me a little bit. I had ambition once, just like you, but I mislaid it somewhere along the way and settled for what I could get. And now, if I let myself think about how I was when I started and where I am now well, I sometimes get a bit excited, but it doesn't mean anything, just forget it.

AFM: But working with Joe Devine is good, isn't it,? I know he's not done anything much recently but Joe was really big once, wasn't he?

FM: Pleasantly plump in his heyday I'd have said, but never seriously overweight.

AFM: No, you know what I mean, he was good, wasn't he?

FM: Good? Good? I don't know about that. Joe's morals, if he ever had any...

AFM: Oh, Alan, you know what I mean, he did the big-time didn't he? I could pick up something from him couldn't I? I mean an old pro like Joe, couldn't I?

FM: How very well you phrase things, Julie. I just hope I don't get you one day as a director.

AFM: Do you think so, Alan, really?

FM: What? Do I think what?

AFM: That I might really be a director one day.

FM: Just do like Ghengis Khan says and make sure you keep your bum and your hands out of shot when the cameras are rolling and I'm sure you will, Julie, I'm sure you will. Now, where's the spring onions? Why are there no bloody spring onions?

AFM: Oh, God, sorry, I'll get them.

Julie hurries off stage. Alan makes more checks and then leaves the stage.

Enter the presenter of the cookery show, Joe Devine, and his agent, Nicola. They walk onto the set and look around. Joe has on a blue apron with white stripes. Nicola walks to the front of the stage and looks out.

N: There's supposed to be a audience at the recording although by the looks of the seating it will consist of about six people and a dog. If they resdpond at all they're going to have to work bloody hard just to be heard.