



**Bryan Starchman**

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**  
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*To Mr. Keller—*

*Thanks for always believing in me  
through my dark, brooding teenage years  
to young adulthood  
to now...  
wherever that is.*

*Your constant support and encouragement  
has always kept me writing.*

## **ORIGINAL CAST**

**IT WAS...THE BUTLER!** premiered at Mariposa County High School, Mariposa, CA, on August 8-10, 2003: Bryan Starchman, director; Noel Morrison, producer.

**TV ANNOUNCER:** Marcus Holland  
**TELEVISION VOICE 1:** Evan Lowery  
**TELEVISION VOICE 2:** Ashley Stoffan  
**PETER PIPER:** Logan Roe  
**WATSONVILLE:** John Smith  
**JEEVES:** Bret Silva  
**LADY SHAW:** Ashley Stoffan  
**MAJOR:** Marcus Holland  
**CURTIS SHAW:** Evan Lowery  
**REPORTER/BUGSY BOUCHET:** Devon Paddock  
**MISS MUFFET :** Tara Fouch  
**R.I.:** Craig Tierney  
**TEX:** Evan Lowery  
**CHI CHI:** Jesse Wilcoxon  
**GORDON BLEU:** Alan Brazzel  
**CHIP:** Bret Silva  
**CHET:** Marcus Holland  
**CHICK:** Bryan Starchman  
**CHUCK:** Chris Duarte  
**BRUNETTE:** Rosie Fluharty  
**BLONDE:** Elaine Takash  
**REDHEAD:** Teena Starchman  
**BLACK-HAIRED BEAUTY:** Monica Hawkins  
**FX-GUY:** Bryan Starchman  
**POLICE OFFICER:** Isaboe Hollis  
**YOUNG MAN:** Marcus Holland

## **IT WAS...THE BUTLER!**

### **IT WAS...THE BUTLER!**

**FARCE/MYSTERY.** A murder-mystery series premiered on TV and would go down in history as the worst murder-mystery series of all time. It was entitled “It Was...The Butler!” And after an hour of murder, mystery, and mayhem, it turned out that, yes, the Butler *had* done it. Peter Piper vowed to grow up to be just like that detective on TV and rid the world of evil butlers. When a butler is murdered at the National Association of Butlers convention, Peter comes to one conclusion: The butler did it! Madcap missteps, quirky suspects, and pure hilarity abound as Peter investigates with the help of his trusty American sidekick, Watsonville.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75 minutes.

## **CHARACTERS**

(9 M, 7 F, 12 flexible)

(With doubling: 9 M, 5 F, 7 flexible. Tripling possible.)

**PETER PIPER:** Nephew of the Queen of England who thinks he is a great detective but is really an ignoramus; male.

**WATSONVILLE:** A real detective assigned to watch over Peter as he solves "murders"; he is the true brains of the operation but allows Peter Piper to solve the crime; male.

**JEEVES:** Actor who plays a crippled butler; male.

**LADY SHAW:** Actress who plays a grieving widow; female.

**MAJOR SHAW:** Actor who plays a dead WWII major; sick of always having to play the corpse; male.

**CURTIS/CURTISE SHAW:** Actor who plays Major Shaw's son/daughter; flexible.

**REPORTER/BUGSY "THE BUTCHER" BOUCHET** [Boo shay]: A con man masquerading as a reporter; one of the most-wanted killers and masters of disguise in the world; wears a fake mustache and fedora; male.

**MISS MUFFET:** Head maid at the Rathbone Hotel; wears a maid's uniform; female.

**R.I.:** Butler from Rhode Island attending the National Association of Butlers meeting; flexible. (Note: May be played by a female dressed as a butler.)

**TEX:** Butler from Texas attending the National Association of Butlers meeting; wears butler attire; flexible. (Note: May be played by a female dressed as a butler.)

**CHI CHI:** Butler from Morocco attending the National Association of Butlers meeting; wears butler attire; flexible. (Note: May be played by a female dressed as a butler.)

**GORDON BLEU:** Butler from France attending the National Association of Butlers meeting; wears butler attire; flexible. (Note: May be played by a female dressed as a butler.)

**CHIP:** A former Rolls Royce mechanic whose life was ruined by a ravishing redhead and is now a barfly; male.

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**CHET:** A former playwright from San Francisco whose life was ruined by a black-haired bombshell and is now a barfly; male.  
**CHICK:** Had a rich 90-year-old widow lined up until a beautiful brunette ruined his life; male.  
**CHUCK:** A former bookie and gambler who lost his money to a platinum blonde and is now a barfly; male.  
**TV ANNOUNCER:** Announcer from the old TV show, "It Was...the Butler!"; voiceover; flexible.  
**TELEVISION VOICE 1, 2:** Voiceover; flexible.  
**POLICE OFFICER:** Wears a police uniform; flexible.  
**YOUNG MAN/WOMAN:** Dead lawyer; flexible.  
**FX-GUY/GAL:** Wears all black with a black T-shirt that reads, "FX"; non-speaking; flexible.  
**QUEEN OF ENGLAND:** Voiceover; female.  
**BRUNETTE:** Non-speaking; female.  
**BLONDE:** Non-speaking; female.  
**REDHEAD:** Non-speaking; female.  
**BLACK-HAIRED BEAUTY:** Non-speaking; female.  
**DEAD BUTLER:** Non-speaking; wears butler attire; flexible.  
(Note: May be played by a female dressed as a butler.)

**OPTIONS FOR DOUBLING**

**DEAD BUTLER/MAJOR SHAW** (flexible)  
**BLACK-HAIRED BEAUTY/LADY SHAW** (female)  
**REDHEAD/QUEEN OF ENGLAND** (female)  
**BLONDE/TV VOICE 1** (flexible)  
**BRUNETTE/TV VOICE 2** (flexible)  
**FX/DEAD LAWYER** (flexible)  
**POLICE OFFICER/TV ANNOUNCER** (flexible)

## SETTING

London, England and Florida.

## SETS

The sets may be as simple or as elaborate as your budget allows.

**Peter's childhood home.** There is a TV set.

**Shaw's drawing room.** Set in the fashion of a respectable English manor. There is a couch, chairs, end tables, and a fireplace with a sword mounted over it.

**Rathbone Hotel lobby.** There is a front desk with a phone on it, a couch, and chairs.

**Lonely Hearts Club Bar.** There is a bar, four swiveling barstools, glassware, and a large sign over the bar that reads, "The Lonely Hearts Club Bar."

**Broom closet.** Cleaning supplies are strewn about on a long table. There are a few chairs. Maids' uniforms are hung on a garment rack with a privacy screen for changing.

**Afterlife waiting room.** There is a table, chairs, and a sign that reads, "Now Serving Number 58."



## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

**Scene 1:** In front of the curtain. Peter Piper's childhood home, England.

**Scene 2:** The Shaws' drawing room, London.

### **ACT II**

**Scene 1:** Rathbone Hotel lobby, Florida.

**Scene 2:** Rathbone Hotel lobby, later that day.

**Scene 3:** Lonely Hearts Club Bar.

### **Intermission**

### **ACT III**

**Scene 1:** Lonely Hearts Club Bar, a few seconds later.

**Scene 2:** Broom closet.

**Scene 3:** Broom closet, a few seconds later.

**Scene 4:** Broom closet, a few seconds later.

**Scene 5:** Rathbone Hotel lobby, later that night.

**Scene 6:** The afterlife's waiting room.

## **PROPS**

TV set	Fez
2 Swords	Beret
Coffee cup	Beanie hat
2 Garbage-can lids	Maid uniforms
Spoon	Teacups
Men's bathrobe, "bloody" with a hole in it	Tray
Newspaper, with several articles cut out of it	Desk telephone
5 Scripts	White fluffy dress for Miss Muffet
2 Knives, plastic	Purse
3 Toy guns	Vial
Wheelchair	Cardboard cutout of Miss Muffet
Cigarettes	Blow-dart gun (or paper tube)
Ashtray	Dart
Camera with flash	Brooms
Tape recorder	Mops
Teakettle	Cleaning supplies
Reporter's notebook	Dark blanket or drape to cover table
Towel	Rope
Cell phone	Rubber mask
Bed sheet	Wig
Sign that reads, "Welcome NAOB"	Fake mustache
Hat, for Peter	Fedora
Luggage	Magazine
Trunk	
Cowboy hat	

## **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

First few bars of "Hail Britannia" (for when Watsonville's cell  
phone rings)  
Answering machine "beep"  
Clap of thunder  
Sound of wind gusts  
Desk telephone ringing  
Fake snow  
Romantic music  
Piercing screams  
Smoke  
Gunshots  
String with hook on the end (for flying gun special effect)  
Ripping sounds

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**"THERE IS NOTHING MORE TREACHEROUS  
THAN A BUTLER.  
THE BUTLER ALWAYS DOES IT."**

**—PETER PIPER**

**ACT I**  
**SCENE 1**

*(AT RISE: In front of the curtain. Peter Piper's childhood home. Spotlight on Peter Piper, who is dressed as a young boy, watching a television set on the apron of the stage.)*

TV ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* In the year nineteen hundred and eighty-seven a murder-mystery series premiered on the BBC television network. It would go down in history as the worst murder-mystery series of all time. It was entitled... *(Always said very dramatically.)* ..."It Was...The Butler!" and as you can probably tell, the title alone didn't leave much to the imagination. Nevertheless, two million viewers tuned in to the world premiere of... *(Dramatic.)* ..."It Was...The Butler!" and after an hour of murder, mystery, and mayhem, it turned out that, yes, the Butler *had* done it. The show ran for a total of 12 episodes, and by the time the network decided to pull the plug, nobody was watching. Nobody, that is, except for this young boy. His name is Peter Piper, and he loved... *(Dramatic.)* ..."It Was...The Butler!"

PETER: My name is Peter Piper and I love this show.

TV ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* I just said that.

*(Peter looks around.)*

PETER: Oh...sorry...

TV ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* This boy would tune in every week and watch with great anticipation, sitting on the edge of his seat... *(Peter moves to the edge of his seat.)* ...until the end of the hour when the detective would finally reveal who had committed this week's murder.

TELEVISION VOICE 1: *(Voiceover.)* I won't keep you guessing any longer. I know who the killer is.

TELEVISION VOICE 2: *(Voiceover.)* Well, come on, tell us.

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TELEVISION VOICE 1: *(Voiceover.)* It was none other than...the butler!

TELEVISION VOICE 1, 2: *(Voiceover.)* Gasp!

PETER: I knew it! I just knew it was the butler!

TV ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this young boy was a complete idiot.

PETER: Someday I'm going to grow up and be just like that detective on TV, and I'm going to rid the world of evil butlers!

TV ANNOUNCER: *(Voiceover.)* And, unfortunately, that is exactly what he did. *(Pause.)* This is his story...

*(Blackout.)*

**SCENE 2**

(AT RISE: *The drawing room at the estate of Major Shaw. Two swords usually hang over the mantle of the fireplace, but now one sword is missing. The players are gathered around looking down at the corpse of Major Theodore Shaw. He has the large missing sword sticking out of his back. Sitting on a couch are the Major's wife, Lady Shaw, and the Major's son, Curtis Shaw. Sitting in a wheelchair is the butler, Jeeves. Peter Piper is surveying the scene. His American partner, Watsonville, is close by his side.*)

PETER: *(To Watsonville.)* Any idea about the cause of death?

WATSONVILLE: Well, Peter, it appears that he has a sword sticking out of his back.

PETER: Oh, right. I guess that would do it. "Suicide," did you say?

WATSONVILLE: No...I never said it was a suicide. I don't really see how he could possibly shove a 3-foot sword into his own back.

PETER: Right. This is puzzling, isn't it? Maybe...he fell on it?

WATSONVILLE: Not likely. Perhaps you should question his family a little more?

PETER: Very good, young Watsonville! At times like this, a clever detective always decides to question the family. I've taught you well. *(Turns toward the family.)* So tell me again, Lady Shaw, what was the Major's morning routine?

LADY SHAW: Well, detective...Piper, is it?

PETER: Yes, Peter Piper.

LADY SHAW: Picked a peck of pickled peppers?

PETER: *(With disgust.)* Yeah, never heard that one before. Quite original.

LADY SHAW: I'm sorry, it's just such an unusual name.

PETER: Yes, my mother thought she was quite funny. *(Looks at the ceiling.)* Not laughing now though, are you, Mother?

LADY SHAW: *(To Watsonville.)* Oh my, is she dead?

WATSONVILLE: No, she lives in Liverpool. He had her put in a home. Sad thing is...she's only 45.

PETER: (*Annoyed.*) Let's get back to the case, shall we?

LADY SHAW: Right. Well, every morning the Major woke up at 4:30. I would usually stay in bed while he got dressed and went downstairs to make himself a cup of coffee.

WATSONVILLE: Sugar?

LADY SHAW: No.

WATSONVILLE: Cream?

LADY SHAW: Yes, a small splash.

WATSONVILLE: Continue.

LADY SHAW: After his coffee was ready, he would go outside to collect the morning paper, and he would begin to cut out his articles.

WATSONVILLE: What do you mean by "his articles"?

PETER: (*To Lady Shaw.*) Yes, what do you mean by "his articles"?

LADY SHAW: Ever since the Great War ended in 1945, the Major has cut out every story in the "London Times" that makes reference to it. Even 50-some odd years later, there's always some little snippet about the 42<sup>nd</sup> Airborne this or the 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry that. He likes to cut them out and place them in a scrapbook. He always said that it was a way to help him to remember his youth, a way to hold onto the past and not slip into old age.

*(Peter holds up a rolled newspaper.)*

PETER: So he retrieved the paper at approximately 4:40 a.m. and had yet to open it. And what time did you come downstairs?

LADY SHAW: 6:30. And I found him...lying there...just lying there. (*Begins to sob.*)

PETER: It's all right, Lady Shaw. We'll find out who did this. I promise you that.



*(Watsonville pulls Peter to one side.)*

WATSONVILLE: So, Peter, do you think it was the old bag?  
*(Curtis, Jeeves, Watsonville, and Lady Shaw all frantically shake their heads "no.")*

PETER: Watsonville! Have some heart! It couldn't have been her. I know crocodile tears when I see them, and she is definitely *not* acting.

WATSONVILLE: Well, what about the son? Spent his life in a boarding school. Went off to join a rock 'n' roll band when he turned 18 and then suddenly shows up last night. What about that? Pretty suspicious, don't you think?

*(Peter turns to Curtis.)*

PETER: Curtis Shaw! Why the sudden interest in your daddy?

CURTIS: It was the Major's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I thought even if the old man *had* been pushing me out of his life ever since the day I was born, I should at least give our relationship one last shot.

WATSONVILLE: *(To Curtis, venomous.)* A shot? Don't you mean a *stab*? You stay away for 50 years and then just happen to appear on the eve of his death?

PETER: Let me handle this, Watsonville.

CURTIS: *(Appalled.)* I could never murder anyone, especially a helpless old man.

LADY SHAW: It's true. The Major and Curtis were getting along like old friends last night. Curtis even bought that brand-new shirt the Major's wearing.

WATSONVILLE: *(To Peter, casually.)* I wonder if anything was maybe stolen?

PETER: Is anything missing from the house? Any reason someone from the outside would want to break in here?

Maybe there was a burglar and the Major caught the thief in the act?

LADY SHAW: Now that you mention it, the Major's silver sword pendant is missing. He was awarded that pendant by Winston Churchill after beating up two dozen Germans with his bare hands in a Berlin street brawl. Every morning he pins that silver sword to his shirt. I'm sure it was worth something to someone.

PETER: (*Coyly.*) It appears that it was worth a man's life.

LADY SHAW: And the front door...it was unlocked. Someone must have come in from the outside.

WATSONVILLE: Well, any one of you could have unlocked the door.

LADY SHAW: Oh, no. Only the Major has the key to the *inside* lock. He was always severely paranoid, ever since he returned home from the war. He didn't want anyone coming in or going out without him knowing about it. We found the key still strung around his neck.

WATSONVILLE: (*To Peter, casually.*) The butler has been very quiet...

PETER: And what about you, Jeeves? Where were you when all this was happening?

JEEVES: I was sound asleep, sir, dreaming about how marvelous life would be if only I had the use of my crippled legs.

LADY SHAW: (*To Peter.*) Jeeves can't feel anything from the waist down. There is no possible way he could have attacked the Major.

WATSONVILLE: Pretty worthless...keeping a crippled servant around, isn't it, Lady Shaw?

LADY SHAW: Well, yes. You would think so, but the Major felt so guilty about the whole accident...

PETER: What accident?

LADY SHAW: Jeeves was upstairs serving the Major his afternoon tea when all of a sudden...

*(Jeeves slowly wheels up to the edge of the stage.)*

JEEVES: I know he didn't mean it. He must not have, but he wasn't always the kindest man. He gave me a slap. I'd forgotten the orange marmalade. He began to call me worthless, and as I cowered away from his blows, I found myself falling backward. I tumbled down the stairs—the disks in my vertebrae snapping, one by one—and by the time I reached the landing, I was half the man I used to be.  
*(Begins to sob.)*

WATSONVILLE: You poor, poor man!

*(Peter grabs Watsonville roughly and pulls him to one side.)*

PETER: Watsonville! Don't let him suck you in! Can't you see that's what he wants?

WATSONVILLE: Are you insane? You think the cripple did it?

*(Everyone, including Jeeves, begins to nod their heads "yes" frantically.)*

PETER: There is nothing more treacherous than a butler. The butler always does it.

WATSONVILLE: But look at his neglected son. Those beady, shifty eyes...that pasty complexion...those fierce, gnashing teeth...

**[END OF FREEVIEW]**