

**THE GREAT RECIPE RIP-OFF**  
**or...Watch Your Feet When You're Being A Sneak**

A melodrama in one act

by

**Bill Gasper**

**The Great Recipe Rip-Off**

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by

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**Cast: JM/4W**

**Set/Time: Very Simple Set/About 30 minutes**

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

IMA BAKER      Blue ribbon pie maker.  
IVANA MANN    Her unmarried friend.  
WANDA BEA RYDER      Newspaper reporter.  
HUGH DeMANN   Local farmer.  
RIP TILE Slippery villain.  
LILAC A. RUGG   His not too bright accomplice.  
RICH FARMER    Local farmer. Not too bright.

### **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The Crockdip County Fair.

SCENE ONE: The pie booth one summer morning.

SCENE TWO: The same later that afternoon.

### **SETTING**

The setting for this tale is the pie booth at the Crockdip County Fair. It can be easily played on a bare stage with a curtain for a backdrop, or a more elaborate backdrop can be painted with scenes depicting a small-town fair. Centered on stage is a long table covered with a nice tablecloth. On top of the table are a number of pies. A banner is hung on front of the table that simply says "Crockdip County Pie Baking Contest." Actors enter from either STAGE RIGHT or STAGE LEFT.

The Great Recipe Rip-Off was first performed by the Neighborhood Entertainment Company of Hoxie, Kansas at the Sheridan County Fair on July 24-26, 200 and featured the following cast:

IMA BAKER      Jessica Spresser  
IVANA MANN    Shirley Slover  
WANDA BEA RYDER      Emily Heim  
HUGH DeMANN   Karl Pratt  
RIP TILE Jeremy Kruse  
LILAC A. RUGG   Adriane Moss  
RICH FARMER    Dan Sewell

DIRECTOR/PIANO      Sally Cameron

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT      Anne Heskett

### **PRODUCTION NOTES**

## PROPERTIES

### Scene One

#### ON STAGE:

A banquet style folding table, a sign that reads “Crockdip County Pie Baking Contest,” several pies in pie dishes.

#### BROUGHT ON:

Flyswatter, apron (IVANA), a pie dish (IMA), a camera, reporter’s notebook, pencil (WANDA).

### Scene Two

#### ADDED TO STAGE:

Assorted ribbons for the pies. A blue ribbon for Ima’s pie.

#### BROUGHT ON:

Fake recipe card (IMA), the real recipe card (IMA), tattered jacket and pants (RIP).

## COSTUMES

The play takes place in the present-day, so dress the characters as you deem appropriate for your locale. Listed below are suggestions for your consideration.

**Ivana and Ima:** Simple dresses or casual outfits. Ivana is a bit more “dressy” as she has already dressed for the fair. Ima, meanwhile, should appear more casual as she has hurriedly rushed from her kitchen to the fairgrounds with her apple pie entry. She should still be wearing an apron.

**Wanda:** Casual slacks and a blouse or however your local newspaper people dress.

**Hugh:** New coveralls with collared shirt, complete with bowtie, boots and a relatively new baseball-style hat from a local feed dealer or implement dealer.

**Rip and Lilac:** They should definitely stand out amongst the locals. Rip is wearing a dark suit with white shirt and tie. He should be wearing a hat. After the chase, he will need matching clothing that has been ripped up as a result of his untimely meeting with one of the rodeo bulls. Lilac is dressed rather provocatively in a skirt and top or dress. She is wearing open-toed heels.

**Rich:** Old coveralls, t-shirt, dirty boots and a well-worn baseball cap from a local seed dealer or implement dealer.

# THE GREAT RECIPE RIP-OFF

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

**LIGHTS UP:** IVANA MANN, the Crockdip County fair chairperson, is busily preparing a table for the pie entries. She has a flyswatter in one hand, waving it back and forth to keep the flies away. A number of entries are already present. IMA BAKER ENTERS LEFT carrying a pie. She is still wearing an apron and her hair is a bit messy as she has just rushed from her kitchen to the fairgrounds with her entry.

**IMA:** Hi Ivana. Do you have room for one more?

**IVANA:** Ima, there you are. I was worried you wouldn't make the deadline.

**IMA:** I was little concerned myself. I just couldn't get the crust to come out the way I wanted it.

**IVANA:** As if you have anything to worry about. As far as I'm concerned, we might as well put the blue ribbon on that pie right now.

**IMA:** Ivana, please. The contest isn't until this afternoon.

**IVANA:** I know that. But the outcome's all but decided. For heaven's sake Ima, you've won the pie baking contest for the past 10 years.

**IMA:** Well, that may be so, but I heard that Neda Wynn has been working day and night on a new recipe. She wants that blue ribbon pretty badly.

**IVANA:** I wouldn't worry about it. She's been trying her darndest the last five years, and every year, we have to feed her leftover pie to the hogs.

**WANDA:** (*ENTERS LEFT. She's wearing a camera around her neck.*) Hello ladies. What'd ya got there, Ima, another prize winning pie? How about I take your picture now so I don't have to come back later?

**IMA:** Oh Wanda, you're just as bad as Ivana.

**WANDA:** Why don't you do us all a favor and just give us that recipe? That'd be the biggest news we've had in the Crockdip Courier since that skunk wandered into

the city council meeting.

**IMA:** Sorry Wanda. Can't do it. My mom made me promise that I wouldn't divulge that recipe to anyone...unless it's my own family. And since I'm not married yet, I'll probably take it to my grave.

**WANDA:** I heard you've been offered a lot of money for that recipe ever since Better Cooks magazine wrote that article on you.

**IMA:** Well, there's more important things than money.

**IVANA:** I can't think of any...unless it's a man who has lots of money.

**IMA:** There you go again Ivana...thinking about men.

**IVANA:** Well, I'm dang near thirty-one years old and...

**WANDA:** Thirty-one? You graduated from high school before I did and I'm...

**IVANA:** Did I say thirty-one? I meant to say to thirty-four. I never was too good at arithmetic. But as I was saying, I'm not getting any younger. My motor's running and I need someone to rev it up before I run out of gas.

**IMA:** Ivana, Ivana, Ivana.

**IVANA:** You can pooh pooh me all you want Ima Baker, but I know you don't want to grow old by yourself anymore than I do. But you don't have much to worry about. I heard that Hugh DeMann has the hots for you.

**WANDA** Hugh DeMann? Really!?

**IMA:** See what you got started, Ivana? Now, it'll probably be printed on the front page of the Courier.

**WANDA:** I wouldn't worry about that Ima. I deal in facts, not gossip.

**IVANA:** Since when? I see you over at the donut shop every morning.

**WANDA:** I didn't say I didn't gossip. I just don't print it.

**IVANA:** Well, well...looky there. You want facts Wanda? Here comes one big handsome fact in the name of Hugh DeMann.

**IMA:** (*Flustered.*) Oh my word. He's coming over here...and my hair...it must be a mess.

**IVANA:** You look just fine, Ima.

**HUGH:** (*ENTERS LEFT.*) Howdy ladies. (*WANDA and IVANA say hello. IMA stays quiet.*) Nice day, isn't it?

**IVANA:** It sure is.

**HUGH:** You're looking very nice today, Ima.

**IVANA:** See? What'd I tell ya?

**HUGH:** Pardon me?

**IMA:** Don't pay her no mind Hugh. She's just blabbing.

**HUGH:** Nice day for a walk, wouldn't you agree, Ima? Would you care to accompany me to the hog barn to view my prize hog?

**IVANA:** *(Sarcastic.)* How romantic.

**IMA:** Oh hush Ivana. I'd love to look, Hugh. Keep an eye on my pie for me, would you Ivana? *(Removes her apron and hands it to Ivana.)*

**IVANA:** Sure thing Ima. You two just go and have a nice time. *(IMA and HUGH EXIT LEFT.)* Lucky woman.

**WANDA:** Sure is. Not many good men like Hugh out there.

**IVANA:** Well...maybe not Wanda, but I happen see one walking across the fairgrounds right now.

**WANDA:** Where?

**IVANA:** Right over there. *(Points offstage LEFT.)*

**WANDA:** Is that Bubba Farmer?

**IVANA:** If you mean Rich Farmer, it most certainly is.

**WANDA:** I heard he moved back after his daddy died, but I haven't seen him around much.

**IVANA:** Well then, I'm just going to have to find out what he's been up to. Mind the stand for me will you Wanda? *(Hands the flyswatter and apron to Wanda.)*

**WANDA:** But I need to talk to you about all the fair activities for the newspaper.

**IVANA:** Don't worry. I won't be long. *(EXITS LEFT.)*

**WANDA:** Great. Just great. Those two are off chasing men while I'm here watching a bunch of pies. *(WANDA begins to look at the entries as RIP TILE and LILAC A. RUGG ENTER RIGHT and move DOWNSTAGE RIGHT. RIP is a smooth talking con man, while LILAC is a gum chewing ditz.)*

**LILAC:** *(Wiping her feet.)* Did we have to take the scenic tour, Rip?

**RIP:** I *told* you to watch your step. Things get kind of messy around the animal barns.

**LILAC:** You sound like you have experience in these matters.

**RIP:** I grew up in a small town. I don't have too many fond memories of it except for the county fair. There's nothing like it...the sights, the sounds...

**LILAC:** The smells. (*Sniffs.*)

**RIP:** Don't fret Lilac my dear...you'll get used to it.

**LILAC:** (*Sniffs again.*) I don't see how.

**RIP:** Perhaps you should hold your breath. (*LILAC takes a deep breath and holds it as RIP delivers an ASIDE to audience. During the aside, LILAC can make a series of gestures and facial expressions as she begins to feel the need for air.*) Don't pay no mind to Lilac folks. She's a city slicker through and through. I, on the other hand, was raised on a farm. Rip Tile is my name. Conning people is my game. Hard to believe from an old farm boy right? Sorry about that, but not all of us can grow up to be wholesome All American boys. Lilac and I have been traveling the fair circuit for the past couple of years looking for prize winning recipes. You see...people don't want to cook anymore...they want convenience. They want to take it out of the freezer and pop it in the microwave. And I can tell you that frozen food companies are willing to pay big bucks for a good recipe. In fact, just last year I inherited an exquisite brownie recipe from my wife of two months. She unfortunately met her untimely end in a kitchen accident. Not that I had anything to do with that of course. (*Laughs evilly. Sees LILAC still holding her breath.*) Lilac my dear. I was only kidding about holding your breath. (*LILAC takes big gasp of air. RIP continues his ASIDE.*) Actually, I was only partially kidding. Anyway, where was I? Ah yes...that brownie recipe. I sold that recipe for one hundred thousand big ones. Not bad huh? So....that's why I'm here...at the Crockdip County Fair...looking for that next prize winning recipe.

**LILAC:** (*Points offstage RIGHT.*) Rip...what are those things in those jars over there?

**RIP:** Those are pickles, my little gherkin.

**LILAC:** Pickles!? The pickles I buy at the store don't look anything like that.

**RIP:** Well my dear, these have been home grown and canned by people who live hereabouts.

**LILAC:** I don't understand. Why don't they just go the store and buy them?

**RIP:** Because....oh never mind. I didn't come here to discuss pickles. It's the baked goods I'm after, and I see a table full of delicious looking pies right over there. Let's inquire to see if any of the pies have potential resale value. (*Moves to table*

*where WANDA is inspecting the pies.)* Good morning ma'am. My name is Rip Tile and this is my associate Lilac A. Rugg. I see you have quite a number of entries in your pie contest.

**WANDA:** That we do. Crockdip County is known for its delicious pies.

**LILAC:** This one looks really good. *(Points at a pie.)*

**RIP:** *(Condescending.)* What would you know? The last time you baked anything it came out of an Easy Bake oven.

**WANDA:** Actually, she has a pretty good eye. That pie belongs to Ima Baker. She's won the pie baking contest for 10 years straight, and I can guarantee you she'll win it again this year. Nobody makes an apple pie like Ima. In fact, she's been written up in Better Cooks magazine.

**RIP:** *(Aside.)* Bingo! Just what I've been looking for. *(To Wanda.)* Her pies are that good huh?

**WANDA:** You bet. But she won't tell anybody her recipe...says it's an old family secret. Here she comes now if you want to talk to her about it. *(IMA ENTERS LEFT.)* Hey Ima. This man and his wife...

**RIP:** *(Interrupting.)* I can assure you that Miss Rugg is not my wife. *(To Ima.)* How do you do ma'am. The name is Rip Tile. And this is my associate Lilac A. Rugg.

**IMA:** Nice to meet you, Mr. Reptile.

**RIP:** *(A bit annoyed.)* That's Rip Tile. Rip is my first name. Tile is my second.

**IMA:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**RIP:** *(Pleasant again.)* Perfectly understandable mistake, ma'am.

**LILAC:** *(Aside)* Yeah...perfectly understandable. He may look like a prince but he kisses like a toad.

**RIP:** Well, Miss Baker. It is Miss, isn't it?

**IMA:** I'm afraid so. But call me Ima.

**RIP:** Certainly, Ima. As I was saying, I represent a giant food conglomerate who'd be willing to pay you five thousand dollars for your pie recipe.

**WANDA:** Wow! Five thousand dollars!

**IMA:** That is a lot of money, but I'm afraid it's not for sale.

**RIP:** You drive a hard bargain, Ima. How about ten thousand? But that's my final offer.

**IMA:** It's not for sale at any price. I promised my mother I'd never divulge that recipe.

**RIP:** (*Pleasantly.*) I see. (*Aside.*) What's wrong with this person? Ten thousand clams is a lot of money. I hate people who refuse to be corrupted. (*To IMA. Pleasantly again.*) Okay then. I certainly understand your reluctance and I won't press you any further. I will, however, be in town for a couple of days and would love the pleasure of your company. Perhaps, you would take a stroll with me on the fairgrounds or join me for dinner later this evening.

**IMA:** That is kind of you to ask, sir, but I have promised dinner with another gentleman.

**RIP:** (*Aside.*) Curses! Incorruptible AND faithful. I hate small town values. (*To IMA.*) I'm sorry to hear that. Who's the lucky man, and why would he leave you all alone on such a beautiful day?

**IMA:** That would be Hugh DeMann and he's busy right now getting his hog ready for the swine show.

**WANDA:** Hugh and Ima make a great pair. Ima wins the blue ribbon every year for her pies, and Hugh wins it every year for his hog. I guess you could say they're a blue ribbon couple.

**LILAC:** (*Rolls her eyes. Sarcastic.*) Well, la tee da.

**RIP:** Well then, I'll bid you two lovely ladies a good day. Come Lilac. (*He leads her away from the two women. WANDA, meanwhile, puts flyswatter down, pulls out a reporter's notebook and pretends to be interviewing IMA as the following conversation takes place.*)

**LILAC:** Looks like you struck out Rip. Should we move on to the next town?

**RIP:** Are you kidding? That pie recipe is worth a lot of money. I'm not about to give up yet.

**LILAC:** What're you going to do?

**RIP:** Be quiet. I want to collect my thoughts.

**LILAC:** (*ASIDE*) Collect his thoughts? That won't take long.

**RIP:** Let's see...she's not interested in money...she's not interested in good looking men...

**LILAC:** How do you know that?

**RIP:** Know what?

**LILAC:** That's she not interested in good looking men.

**RIP:** You heard her. She turned me down flat.

**LILAC:** Ohhhh...you were talking about you. You kind of threw me off when you said good looking.

**RIP:** *(To the audience.)* You thought that was funny huh? Well, I hope you all checked your seats before you sat down. I deposited a wad of gum on one of them before the show. Now who's laughing? *(Laughs evilly. To Lilac.)* You're just a barrel of laughs today, aren't you Lilac? *(Thinking aloud.)* Let's see...there must be something we can do. This Ima seemed very interested in some guy...uh...his name was...uh...

**LILAC:** Hugh DeMann.

**RIP:** Thanks for noticing Lilac, but right now, I'm trying to think of Ima's boyfriend's name.

**LILAC:** No Einstein...his name is Hugh.

**RIP:** Hugh. Yeah...that's it. And if I recall, he's very fond of his prize porker. *(Pause a beat.)* Of course! Why didn't I think of that sooner? Come with me Lilac. We have work to do. *(THEY EXIT RIGHT.)*

**WANDA:** I think that'll do it, Ima. You have anything to add?

**IMA:** Nothing I can think of.

**WANDA:** Thanks for visiting with me. Now, I just have to find Ivana and interview her. *(Looks offstage LEFT.)* Speaking of the devil, here she comes.

**IMA:** While you're talking with her, I going to go see how Hugh is doing. *(SHE EXITS LEFT. A beat later IVANA ENTERS LEFT with RICH FARMER.)*

**IVANA:** Thanks for watching things for me, Wanda. You remember, Rich, don't you?

**WANDA:** Yeah. How ya doing Bubba? Long time no see.

**IVANA:** Uh...Rich doesn't like being called Bubba anymore, do you Rich?

**RICH:** Nope.

**WANDA:** Sorry about that. I've known you so long by that name, it'll be kind of hard to get used to calling you by you're real name.

**RICH:** Don't worry 'bout it none.

**WANDA:** So what've you been up to the last five years?

**RICH:** Not much.

**WANDA:** Sorry to hear about your dad.

**RICH:** Uh huh.

**WANDA:** So...you plan on running the family farm.

**RICH:** Yup.

**WANDA:** Still as talkative as ever, huh Rich?

**RICH:** Yup.

**IVANA:** Rich and I were just catching up on the old days. You know, it's funny, but I don't remember seeing him around much when we were in high school.

**RICH:** That's because you ignored me.

**IVANA:** (*Laughs nervously.*) Well, things have changed a lot around here since then. And you certainly have changed, Rich. Don't you think he's changed a lot, Wanda?

**WANDA:** Whatever you say Ivana. (*ASIDE.*) The only thing that's changed is that Bubba just inherited a pile of money and five thousand acres of the richest cropland this side of the Mississippi.

**IVANA:** Yes siree bob. You certainly have turned into a handsome man.

**RICH:** (*Confused.*) My name's Rich. Bob's my brother.

**IVANA:** I know that. It's just an expression.

**RICH:** (*Still confused.*) Huh?

**IVANA:** Never mind.

**RICH:** I gotta be goin'.

**IVANA:** Okay Rich. We'll see you later okay?

**RICH:** Sure. (*Ambles off.*)

**WANDA:** Bubba's just like I remember him — dumb as a box of rocks and conversational as a fence post. I sure hope he doesn't screw up his daddy's farming operation. He worked awfully hard to build up that place.

**IVANA:** I don't think you have to worry about that. I'm not going to let him.

**WANDA:** Don't tell me you're interested in Bubba?

**IVANA:** Why not?

**WANDA:** Because you don't have anything in common, that's what.

**IVANA:** I don't know about that. He has lots of money, and after we get married, I'll have lots of money. What more do you need?

**WANDA:** I'm not even going to try to answer that one, Ivana. Anyway...I don't have time right now. I'm on deadline. I need to get some information about this year's fair.

**IVANA:** Not much has changed since last year. Today, we'll judge the baked goods and Ima will win like always. And tomorrow, we'll have the hog judging and Hugh will win like always.

**WANDA:** What about the parade? Any improvements there? Last year, all we had was three tractors, a golf cart and a goat.

**IVANA:** I'm glad you brought that up. The parade will be on August tenth and we have a great line-up for this year. *(Delivers the next line without much rhythm as she is recalling the parade entries from memory.)* Let's see...so far we have 10 green tractors...nine golf carts...uh...eight red combines, seven old trucks, six horse and buggys...five blue corvettes...four white goats, three red wagons, two flatbeds and a clown on a little pony.

**WANDA:** *(Who has been writing everything down in her pad. Delivers line with just enough rhythm to allow the audience to recognize it as a take-off of the "12 Days of Christmas" but it should not be sung.)* Okay, let me see if I got this right. On the tenth day of August, we'll have 10 green tractors, nine golf carts, eight combines, seven old trucks, six horse and buggys...Five Blue Corvettes...four white goats, three red wagons, two flatbeds and a clown on a little pony.

**IVANA:** You got it. Has a nice ring to it, don't it? Somebody oughta write a song.

**WANDA:** I don't know about that, but I have to write a story. See you later. *(SHE EXITS LEFT.)*

**IVANA:** See ya. *(Starts singing to the tune of "The 12 Days of Christmas.")* Four white goats, three red wagons, two flatbeds and a...*(She's interrupted by IMA, HUGH and RICH who come rushing in LEFT.)*

**IMA:** Ivana! You're not going to believe it. Somebody stole Hugh's hog!

**IVANA:** They did what? You're kidding me!

**HUGH:** Afraid not, Ivana. Ima came over the hog barn to see me...

**IVANA:** Uh huh...

**HUGH:** ...and I was scrubbing her up all nice and pretty...

**IVANA:** (*Shocked.*) Who!? Ima?

**HUGH:** No! My hog Betsy. Anyway...we decided to step behind the building.

**IVANA:** You and Betsy?

**HUGH:** No! Me and Ima. Anyway...when I came back. There she was...gone!

**IVANA:** Wait a minute. Who was gone? Ima or Betsy?

**HUGH:** Betsy! Who do you think?

**IVANA:** Unbelievable. This has never happened at the Crockdip County Fair.

**RICH:** What's that? A hog gettin' stolen or two people kissin' behind the fair building.

**IMA:** Oh my goodness! You saw us?

**RICH:** Yup. And so did Sadie Word. It's probably all over town by now.

**IMA:** Oh dear. I'm so embarrassed.

**HUGH:** (*Sweetly and syrupy as he leans toward IMA.*) Don't be Ima. I'm not ashamed of my love for you.

**IMA:** (*Equally as syrupy as she leans into HUGH.*) Or mine for you.

**IVANA:** Good grief. You're making me sick.

**RICH:** Uh... Maybe we oughta go look for the hog.

**IVANA:** Good thinking Rich. Let's go. (*All EXIT LEFT as lights fade.*)

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