

The Hannigans

By Dave Bush and Tracy Merle

A newly retired American couple pack up and move to a small English village, but they're not getting the peaceful life they hoped for.



The Hannigans

Larry and Joyce Hannigan have inherited property in the fictional English village of Tarslaw, just outside Newcastle. Larry suffered a mild heart attack at the age of 54, which convinced them both to pursue a slower, simpler life. Both recently retired and viewing life differently since the heart attack, they've bravely chosen to leave their life in Rochester, New York behind and create a new pastoral existence, free from the trappings of technology, noise and city bustle. No car, no cell phones, no internet. As Joyce proclaims in the opening episode, "We want a peaceful life. With flowers and bicycles and tea and fish and chips." But instead of that new stress-free English country life, Joyce and Larry begin to feel like the victims of an elaborate practical joke. Life in Tarslaw isn't going smoothly. Everything would be OK except for one small snag - other people.

Upon their arrival, they surprisingly discover they aren't alone on the property. An older, but spry gentleman with an avid love of old British punk bands, "Murph" lives in a tiny cottage on their property. Never told of this cottage or Murph, they're unaware he's been the long-time groundskeeper and handyman for Larry's great aunt, the property's original owner. Murph immediately attempts to make himself useful to The Hannigans - hoping to continue his rent-free existence. Joyce and Larry have other plans. Thus begins a cat and mouse struggle involving amateur detective work, an elusive real estate lawyer, secret messages in arranged flowers, art forgery - and a maddening lack of Pinot Grigio.

Why is Murph there and why weren't they told about him? Who are these odd, frustrating people they keep running into? And seriously, why the hell can't you find decent wine in Tarslaw?

"The Hannigans" is a comedy about adults, for adults. Episodes, and the season story arc, unfold with understated humor. Absurd moments arise randomly - ironically underscoring the simmering frustration of Joyce and Larry, who desperately want the life they've dreamed of, while proving their doubters wrong.

Despite the calming influence of her patient husband, Joyce has a difficult time keeping a lid on her frustration - she's prone to venting via wicked sarcasm and foul-mouthed rants. She's quite endearing.

Despite daily mishaps, misfortunes and absurdities, Joyce and Larry carry on, eventually discovering the history of Murph and his relationship with Larry's great aunt. Ultimately, they embrace him - along with all the eccentric characters and cultural idiosyncrasies of this odd little village of Tarslaw.

Episodes are 30 minutes

Season One consists of 5 episodes

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Joyce Hannigan

Joyce (age 57) has recently retired from her job as a bank teller and is eager to hit the reset button, starting a new life with her husband. She is an art enthusiast who has volunteered at a local museum for years. She has aspirations of seriously pursuing some related back-burner endeavors, most notably watercolor painting. She has a knack for sarcasm and is absolutely not adverse to cursing. More than once, she's been referred to as a "loose cannon."

A rough patch earlier in her marriage resulted in a now semi-legendary two week disappearance, which she referred to as a "soul journey." Despite that bit of historical turmoil, she currently loves her husband deeply. Others in her day to day life...not so much. Those who find her personality abrasive can fuck right off.

Without a doubt, Joyce is the show's comedic core.

Larry Hannigan

Larry (age 56) is an attractive, soft-spoken retired postman who suffered a mild heart attack at the age of 54. His interests reflect his low-key personality - golf, reading and walking. He quietly and lovingly provides emotional stability for Joyce, knowing exactly how to deal with her volatility. Despite his devotion to Joyce, he draws some awkward attention from a few of the town's widows and divorcees.

Murph

Murph (age 73) was the long-time groundskeeper and handyman for Larry's great aunt, the original owner of the property Larry inherited. Quirky Murph has been living rent-free in a small cottage on the property for many years and would very much like that arrangement to continue. Not eager for any sort of formal discussion about this, he instead tries to sneakily endear himself to Joyce and Larry, hoping to become a valuable fixture in their life. Murph's unwelcome presence sets up a comedic chess game that runs through all of the first season episodes, ultimately resulting in acceptance and friendship.

Karen Berger

Karen (age 59) is Joyce's older sister, who we initially see during flashbacks. She shares Joyce's proclivity for sarcasm, which she unleashes after learning of Joyce and Larry's life-changing move to the UK. Despite their advanced ages, the big sister/little sister dynamic is ongoing and still strong. Karen and her husband Martin have more wealth than Joyce and Larry. Although this disparity is never discussed, it does impact the sisters' relationship.

Martin Berger

Martin (age 59) is Karen's husband. Much like his brother in law Larry, he is quiet in social situations, content to let his wife hold court. He is much more intrigued by Joyce and Larry's brave migration than he would ever admit to Karen, who views it as foolish.

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Emmy

Emmy (age 22) is the somewhat dimwitted waitress at The Morton Gate, the nearby pub frequented by Joyce and Larry. Joyce is not a fan of Emmy - she's young, attractive, uncultured and uneducated. What's not to dislike? She's a perfect comedic foil for the sarcastic, refined Joyce.

Colin and Nick

Colin and Nick (both age 71) are good mates of Murph who seem to spend their lives at The Morton Gate, playing darts and socializing. Always together, they're a kind of comedy team with a flaw - neither one of them is funny. Colin is the dominant personality of the duo who never hesitates to offer up his idea of an amusing comment. Be assured, the comment won't be amusing. Obviously, Joyce dislikes them both. Seeing a trend here?

Alva

Alva (age 77) is a completely cliched over the hill bar floozy, who frequents The Morton Gate. Desperate to look and act younger than her age, she is the source of great amusement for Joyce and Larry. Seen only briefly in the pilot episode, but every subsequent pub scene.

Adele Morningstar

Adele (age 65) is the local vicar's wife who is introduced in the third episode. She is an evil woman who's made a hobby out of blackmail, secretly gathering dirt on the locals and using it to her advantage. She is feared, treated with great respect in social situations (she likes to drop into The Morton Gate), but universally despised. She loves to wield power over everyone and if she has her way, that will include the newcomers Joyce and Larry.

The Hannigans | Season One Episodes

Episode One

Joyce and Larry arrive in Tarslaw and discover the property they've inherited includes another resident. During their first visit to the local pub, they get a taste from the menu of frustrations that awaits them.

Episode Two

Attempting to get settled in their new home, Joyce and Larry efficiently focus on organization. Unfortunately, a shipping company, the local post office and a real estate lawyer aren't as focused. Then, on a day trip to a nearby town to purchase bicycles, they end up soaking wet - chance victims of a restaurant's faulty sprinkler system. Ultimately, Murph provides them with a couple second hand bicycles - but unfortunately, Larry and Joyce aren't nine year old girls.

Episode Three

Determined to discuss the issue of his residency with Murph, Joyce and Larry instead spend a day in futile pursuit of him, discovering he might also be...wait for it...an art forger. Appearing and vanishing randomly, Murph is either masterfully evasive or some sort of transportive ghost. Later, stopping by the pub for a drink, they meet the evil town nemesis - the vicar's infamous wife, Adele Morningstar. Also, Joyce can't find any Pinot Grigio.

Episode Four

Fortuitously, Joyce learns about floriography (cryptological communication through the use or arrangement of flowers) and becomes convinced Murph is actually sending messages to them this way. Is he? They also learn that Murph is indeed an accomplished art forger, but without any criminal motives.

Episode Five

Digging through some belongings of the original property owner (Larry's great aunt), Joyce and Larry discover a photo album that gives them a different view of Murph. They realize he belongs in their new life. An unconventional, frustrating but fun friendship is born. Life's like that. Welcome to Tarslaw.

Pilot script available upon request

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