

Miss Ida's Man-in-the-Moon Yard Sale

Joseph Alan Johnson





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MISS IDA'S MAN-IN-THE-MOON YARD SALE

By Joseph Alan Johnson

Author's Note:

This production may be mounted lavishly or bare bones-depending on the size of the stage and the scale of the production. A folding table with a large thermos on it, a lawn chair and a clothing rack are the basic set pieces. The goods being sold and their relationship to the dialogue will be the challenge that the director and the actor in the title role must unravel during the rehearsal period to create the most effective performance.

Miss Ida is a woman on a mission with limited time to tell her story, so she must constantly be in motion. This may be useless information (with a touch of backseat directing) because I know that the right actor and director will find the way to create the proper flow to illuminate both Miss Ida and the story she has to tell. Although a work of fiction, this play is loosely based on the life of my great-aunt Ester, a grand lady who lived in Hollywood, Florida in a house filled with knickknacks that she bought at yard sales.

CAST

Place

At a yard sale

Time

Before the yard sale

MISS IDA'S MAN-IN-THE-MOON YARD SALE

(At opening, the lights are low, suggesting the sun has not fully risen. The scene is a front yard where a yard sale is about to take place. There is a long table, a lawn chair, a clothing rack and perhaps other yard sale props. Miss Ida enters, carrying some merchandise. She is a robust woman, verging on the tail end of middle age. Her sparkly attire is perhaps more suitable for a trailer park cocktail party than a yard sale, yet it is apparent that she was once quite a beauty. The lights gradually come up to full daylight. She continues to haul things out for a while until she realizes that there is an audience. She studies them and finally says:)

IDA. Well, what are y'all lookin' at? Yain't never seen an old lady have a yard sale before? Well, then, you're in for a treat. It's all about display and marketing. Woohoo! It's not supposed to start until eight, which is why I'm out here at the crack of hell to set up. Maybe I'm just havin' one of my spells. I know I'm a little overdressed for the occasion, but this is a special day! *(She puts out the sign that says Miss Ida's Man in the Moon Yard Sale!)*

Oh ho! That's why you're sittin' there! You're here to watch the moonwalk! Ain't it just the most excitin' thing ever? I never thought in my lifetime I would live to see such a thing! Imagine—a man walkin' on the moon! I s'pose it should say "Man On the Moon"—but what the hell. You always think of the Man in the Moon! Today—July 20th, 1969 will go down in history. And I'm part of it! We're all part of it! That's why I gotta get this yard sale out of the way. It's not supposed to happen till sometime later today. I have a date with my boyfriend, Walter Cronkite, on the TV and I made special snacks to eat while we watch in the air-conditioned comfort of my bungalow. Sausage balls, Oysters Rockefeller- oh, and I made my special Key lime pie! I'll give you the recipe - it's so easy.

But I gotta get moving! It's pleasant now, but by noon it'll be hotter than the Hinges of Hades! I have this funny feeling that you don't know where you are, so I'll fill you in while I set up *(She continues to set up as she speaks)*. I'm Miss Ida—Miss Ida Lemmie and

this is my house in Hollywood, Florida. Cape Canaveral ain't too far away and I watched the rocket take off the other day, heading for the moon. That was pretty excitin' too, but nothing like this! I usually have a yard sale twice a year and I planned this one special. I got a whole section of stuff to commemorate the day. I dug these rocks out of the back yard and painted them as "Moon rocks." I got plenty of flags they gave out free for 4th of July for sale and I'm sellin' Moon Juice for five cents with a shot of Moonshine for five cents extra! Ha!

People always ask me where my accent is from. My father was from Arkansas and my mother was from Kentucky and we lived in Mt. Pleasant, Missouri, so it's a little bit all over the place. I've lived in Florida for years and years, but I never seemed to be able to shake this twang. And I even took speech lessons 'cause someone once told me I sounded like a hick! But it became a good conversation starter and I use it to my advantage. I enjoy talkin' to people and I've learned over the years that a southern accent puts people at ease. Not like the New York and New England ones. I also saw enough movies that I could talk classy if I needed to. *(she demonstrates)* Hello, darlings. It's so good to see all of you.

You probably can't tell by lookin' at this old tabby cat that I was once considered a great beauty. Well, it's true. My whole life it's been a blessing and a curse. Gotten me into and out of some pretty dangerous scrapes during the course of my life. But I think life takes you where you're supposed to go if you pay attention to the signs and I'm glad that I ended up here in Hollywood. Hollywood, Florida, that is. It's a sweet little town with some really nice people. But I didn't start out here...Mt. Pleasant, Missouri was a sweet little town, too. That's where I was born and grew up. My family wasn't rich, but we weren't exactly poor either. But they didn't call it the Depression for nothin' and if my

parents were having problems, they never let on about it. I was an only child and like I said- I was pretty, but not very smart.

Boys started coming around, to the great consternation of my parents, and before I knew it, I was "in trouble." This part I don't want to talk about and I had no decision in the matter- let it just be said that I was hustled off to The Good Shepherd Home for Wayward Women. It wasn't a bad place. And they didn't just let you sit around a cry cuz you wuz knocked up—they put you to work. I was sent to the kitchen and in a short time became quite a good cook. That skill has served me well the rest of my life. I could already run up a sewing machine pretty good and made a few extra dollars making maternity clothes for my "sisters in sin." They were, for the most part, a bunch of ignorant crybabies, but they somehow gave me strength to get through it and move on with my life. When I had the baby, a little girl, they never let me hold her or see her. She had been adopted. My folks came and got me and took me home.

(Ida pours some Moon Juice and spikes it. She sits.)

I wondered for years what happened to that baby, my little girl. The Good Shepherd people assured me that she was going to a loving home, but you just never know. I always wondered if I'd been allowed to see her and hold her that I would have let her go, but as I said, it was out of my control. I read later in movie magazines that Hollywood stars like Joan Crawford and Loretta Young had adopted children. People like them are rich and have everything to offer. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Joan Crawford was my baby's mother!

I went back to Mt. Pleasant, but things were not the same. I got a job and tried to fit in, but word had somehow gotten out that I was "damaged goods" and was called "Ida-

ho" behind my back. I couldn't stay there. I wracked my brain trying to come up with an escape plan. I had some photos taken and entered a magazine contest It was a beauty contest with an all-expenses paid trip to Miami Florida! I tell ya, I prayed so hard to God for them to pick me, that I think he made them do it just to get me off his back! I made the contest! Hah! I don't think my folks were too thrilled, but I think even they were a little relieved that I was leaving town. I got on that Trailways bus and never looked back.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!