

I.S.O.
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I.S.O.

SYNOPSIS

Five women answer a "personals" ad...each thinks that she is to lunch alone with the man who placed the ad.

I.S.O.

(optional opening)

The following is heard during the blackout preceding the play.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(on answering machine tape)

Hi...this is You Know Who. If you don't know who, who are you? Anyway, "your call is important to us" (laughs) so leave your you-know-what. I'm probably home and just avoiding someone I don't like. If I don't call back, it's you. You can leave a message at the beep; however, you do have the right to remain silent. 'Bye.

MAN: (laughs) Very good; love it! You've got a great sense of humor. Anyway, this is Jonathan Kingdon. You answered my Personals ad in the Washingtonian. I hope you'll join me for lunch at the Four Seasons on Tuesday. One o'clock. Just give the matre de my name. See you there. Oh, by the way, I didn't mention it in my I.S.O. but I've just sold a little shopping center so this is by way of being a celebration. See you Tuesday!

LIGHTS COME UP

I.S.O.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

WAITER: male; 35-45

VICKIE: assertive; attorney; 35-40

SANDRA: athletic; bubbly; writer; 25-35

ERIN: typical Irish colleen; nurse; 20-30

GLORIA: a bit of a dim bulb; 25-35

MADGE: grand-dame; 45+

SUGGESTION: It is much more effective to stage this play-let **without** listing the characters in the program. If this is done, when each succeeding woman enters, the audience becomes more amused. Assuming this procedure is followed, credit for appearing in the production can be given to each actor in her or his bio. So, the Cast of Characters can read:

WAITER: a man

GUEST: a woman

Scene

A private dining room in an upscale hotel. There is one door, located anywhere. There is one table, set for two; two chairs. There is also a bar or side-board with ice bucket, etc.

Time

The present

SETTING: The waiter should be played by a man who is, to put it kindly, no one's idea of a catch. He is dressed in typical waiter's garb and should fade into the woodwork until the last few lines of the play. He may, at the director's discretion, adopt a pseudo-French accent.

AT RISE: The waiter is busying himself with a champagne bottle, glasses, etc. as VICKIE enters.

VICKIE

Excuse me; the matre de told me Mr. Kingdon would be in this room. I'm to meet him for lunch.

WAITER

Sorry, miss. He's expected any moment. May I offer you some Veuve Clic²ot? It's Mr. Kindgon's favorite champagne.

VICKIE

Well, I'll take a glass, I guess.

WAITER

I'm certain you will enjoy it.

SANDRA

(enters)

Oh; I didn't know there would be anyone else here. I mean...I'm looking for Jonathan Kingdon. I thought---

WAITER

Mr. Kingdon will be here shortly. May offer you a flute of champagne while you wait?

SANDRA

1A

Well, I guess. Oh; Veuve Clicquot...good taste!

WAITER

I'm sure Mr. Kingdon will be pleased that you are pleased.

VICKIE

Did you say you were here to meet Mr. Kingdon?

SANDRA

Yes. Jonathan Kingdon.

VICKIE

Well; that's odd. When he asked me to lunch, I didn't know there would be three of us.

SANDRA

I didn't know it either. Odd, indeed.

ERIN

(enters)

Oh...and did I get the wrong room? Am I wrong entirely?
I'm to meet a gentleman here at one o'clock.

VICKIE

(mocks ERIN'S accent)

And would that be Mr. Kingdon himself?

ERIN

And it would indeed.

SANDRA

Looks like there'll be four of us for this lunch.

GLORIA

(enters)

I'm sorry; I'm looking for---

ALL

Jonathan Kingdon?

GLORIA

Yes...but how did you know?

ERIN

And aren't we all, love, looking for that gentleman?

VICKIE

By now, I'm ^{NOT} so sure the guy is a gentleman.

SANDRA

We're all waiting for the elusive Mr. Kingdon. Come on in;
the more the merrier, as the ~~music~~ goes.

SAYING

WAITER

Excuse me. For those of you who have just arrived, may I
offer you a flute of champagne?

ERIN

Well...I never turn down the bubbly.

GLORIA

It's a little early in the day...but I guess it's all right.

WAITER

Very good; my pleasure.
(he pours)

GLORIA

(SOTTO voce to SANDRA)

Did he say "flute?" How funny.

VICKIE

What the hell is this? Did each of you think you were having a private lunch with this Jon Kingdon?

ALL

Yes.

VICKE

Well, so did I. I'd never have agreed to---

SANDRA

Oh, come on. It's just lunch. In fact, there's a business here in town with that name.

ERIN

A business called "It's Just Lunch"?

VICKIE

Yes; another way to meet people. But this is a bit much---

MADGE

(enters)

Excuse me...who are you? I was told this private dining room had been reserved for Mr. Kingdon and me.

VICKE

That's a laugh. Today, it looks like it's for the ladies who lunch.

SANDRA

Oh, Sondheim. Do you like his stuff?

GLORIA

Sondheim? Who's Sondheim?

VICKIE

He plays half-back for the Wizards, kid.

WAITER

And may I offer madam a flute of Veuve Clicquot?

MADGE

Yes; I think I very much need a bit of refreshment at this point?

VICKIE

(to SANDRA)

Oh, did you get that? She's "madam."

MADGE

(overhears VICKIE)

My dear young friend, some people have a sense of what's proper...and some don't.

ERIN

Faith, I'm sure I don't understand what this is all about. Did you all...did you see...did you read---

SANDRA

Yes, babe. We did see...we did read...the same ad.

GLORIA

Oh, this is so embarrassing---

ERIN

It is entirely.

MADGE

I don't know what you're going on about. I have an exclusive engagement for luncheon with Mr. Kingdon. I know him very well.

VICKIE

Oh, you do? Tell us, then, madam, what does this Mr. Kingdon do for a living? Where was he born? Where did he go to college?

MADGE

Well....in truth....I haven't known him for very long---

SANDRA

Face it, ladies. We're all here for the same reason. We read an ad in the Washingtonian; we liked what we saw; we took a chance and answered it. We got a charming phone message from one Jon Kingdon and here we are. Now it looks like all we'll get is some superb champagne. And maybe lunch.

VICKE

What the hell; maybe champagne is all we'll get today. Waiter! Pour me another glass.

OTHERS

Right, sure. •
Just a bit more.
If you don't mind---

SANDRA

But, I must say, if this is some kind of joke, it's going to cost somebody a few bucks. This fizzy is around \$100 a bottle in a place like this.

GLORIA

Oh, my God!

OTHERS

Keep it coming.
I'll have a spot more.
Right!

SANDRA

Well, as long as we're here...let's pass the time. Tell me, what part of the ad did you think most interesting?

MADGE

I refuse to discuss the matter.

ERIN

Ach, come along with you. If himself never shows up, at least we can have a good laugh or two.

(everyone is feeling the wine a bit by now)

VICKIE

OK; I'll go first. The guy said he was successful...both in his profession and as an investor.

ERIN

He said he has a yacht. I've always liked the water. But, come to think of it, he does favor the cliché. He said he likes "walks on the beach and loves evenings by the fire." Sure, the average dog likes those things. What about you?

GLORIA

Oh...I don't know. I guess I liked the "six foot tall, good dancer" part. This is the first time I've answered an ad...I just didn't know what to expect.

MADGE

Well, just between us...I've answered a few in days gone by and I'll tell you one thing---

ALL

What's that?

MADGE

The men...they all lie. They lie about how tall they are and how young they are and how rich they are. There!

SANDRA

Oh, I don't know. Sure, I agree that almost all add an inch or two---

(VICKIE snorts)

in the height department. But, I've met a couple of pretty nice guys thru the ISOs.

GLORIA

ISO. What's that mean?

ERIN

Even I know that...In Search Of. Any one who puts an ad in the Personals is in search of...somebody.

WAITER

Excuse me; a bit more champagne?

(they all agree)

SANDRA

(to VICKIE)

I'll bet you've answered a few ISOs, right? What was the worst you ever came across?

VICKIE

Well, this guy said he was six feet, three inches. Turned out he was five feet, three inches. Said it was a typo and what difference did height make?

GLORIA

It shouldn't, you know.

SANDRA

Shouldn't. But does. Same with weight. I made the mistake of answering an ad where the guy said he was a "teddy bear." Ha! Walrus was more like it. The thought of all that flab lying on me some night...ugh.

VICKIE

Speaking of weight, my friend Judi answered an ISO one time. The guy sounded OK on the phone. So...she was sitting in Starbucks and was half-way thru her mocca latte when this guy walks up.

GLORIA

Was he nice?

VICKIE

He was about half drunk and had a gut the size of New Jersey.

MADGE

HA!

VICKIE

He said, "Is your name Judi?"

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SANDRA

And she said---

VICKIE

She said, "Not anymore, it's not."

MADGE

Height? Weight? My dears, you'll reach an age when the only thing that matters is the size of the bank-roll.

SANDRA

Maybe; but I doubt it. What matters to you?

ERIN

I know it's old fashioned...but anyone I get serious about has to be of the faith. A Roman Catholic.

VICKIE

Funny; when you think of having kids...I guess that religion does matter. To some---

SANDRA

I'd draw the line at any religion where I had to wear something over my head. Or walk behind the man.

VICKIE

Or had to have a clitorrectomy!

GLORIA

What was that? A clit-or-what-amy?

SANDRA

Honey, this may spoil your lunch. Think of the most tender...sensitive...part of your anatomy. Now, think of it being, ah, removed.

(pause)

GLORIA

Ohmygawd. NO!

VICKIE

Oh, yes. And it's still standard procedure in some countries.

ERIN

Yikes, is all I can say. Ducks, you haven't told us what part of the ad caught your eye.

SANDRA

He said: Life is a banquet and most poor bastards are staving to death. But, come to think of it, he didn't put it in quotes. I wonder if he even knew where it came from?

MADGE

Ah, yes...Auntie Mame. Or, as I heard one misguided soul call it, Aunt Mamie.

GLORIA

I don't know half of what you're talkin' about.

VICKIE

Well, li'l friend, what do you talk about...when you're talkin' about somethin'?

MEL ROSE MACE.

GLORIA

Oh! ...I just love those re-runs. And Gameboy...I'm right good at that.

VICKIE

I'm thinking...Jessica?

SANDRA

No, no...more Homer. But, it's close.

GLORIA

What? What are you to goin' on about?

Two

VICKIE

Oh, we're just talking about some people we know....

SANDRA

Named Simpson?

GLORIA

Oh, ha ha ha. Very funny. Well, I may not know fancy stuff like that Aunt Mamie stuff but I do know the damn Wizards don't have half-backs.

ANY

VICKIE

Sorry; it was a bad joke.

WAITER

Please allow me to fill your flutes, ladies.

VICKIE

(grabs bottle)

Hey, waitron...let me pour that stuff.

SANDRA

Easy; he's just doing his job.

VICKIE

But he's not doing it very damn well.

(WAITER retreats behind bar; watches the women; arms crossed.

VICKIE sloshes champagne in any available glass and takes a swig from the bottle.)

MADGE

Please, girls...a little decorum.

ERIN

Easy, lass, easy...we're all in the same boat here.

VICKIE

You're right about that, sister. And it's a boat I'm sick and freakin' tired of. Here I am, pushing 40. And I'm competing with you...and you...and

(points to GLORIA)

well, not you. And here's good old "madam"; ten years older

than I am! Still trying; still hoping! Still willing to put it on the line, hoping.

SANDRA

Hey, babe, it's not that bad.

VICKIE

Bad? Ha! I used to have a friend; she'd get dumped by some guy and she'd say, "What am I, chopped liver?" Well, kids, that's what I feel like sometimes...chopped friggin' liver.

ERIN

Would you maybe like some coffee?

VICKIE

No; damn it; I just want out of here.

(exits)

SANDRA

Wow. She's in a bad way. But at least she's still trying. Well, we're all still trying, aren't we?

MADGE

My daddy used to say, "If you're not tryin', you're dyin'." But it does get harder---

SANDRA

Every once in a while, I think of a girl I knew in college. Even then, she wondered if the effort were worth it. She had a little poem. I've forgotten most of it but the ending was "I just want to lie in my chrysalis and squirm. I don't want to be a butterfly; I just want to be a worm."

ERIN

Oh, God; that's awful. Just awful. I think...I think...maybe this isn't such a good idea.
(exits)

Uh, oh. I'm not feeling so good. Champagne always goes to my head. My husband always tells me...

(realizes what she's just said)

Well. Well! We're having some difficulties...I thought I might answer an ad...oh, I really am feeling bad---

MADGE

Let's get out of here. Mr. Jon Kingdon can take his lunch and... I've had more fun getting a root canal.

(MADGE and GLORIA exit)

(while this is going on, the WAITER has been actively taking off his white jacket, glasses, wig...anything which he has used to create the image of a wait-person.)

SANDRA

(she delivers the following without look around and thus is not aware of what the WAITER is doing. She raises her glass in a toast.)

Farewell, my sisters. I hope that you find your Mr. Right one day...or maybe learn to accept Mr. Almost-Right.

(addresses WAITER but still doesn't look at him)

I say...if there's any of that champagne left, you might as well give me one for the road. And, if it wouldn't get you fired, why not pour one for yourself.

(by this time, WAITER has slipped into a suit jacket. He comes to the table, champagne bottle in hand, and sits. He pours the wine into SANDRA'S glass, takes a flower from the arrangement on the table and puts it into the button-hole of his jacket.)

WAITER

Thank you for asking me. Hi; I'm Jonathan Kingdon.

SANDRA

(stands)

You? You are Jon Kingdon?

(throws champagne in his face and exits)

BLACKOUT