

GRANDEST CANYON

By **Burton Bumgarner**

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This is the story of what may be one of the most unusual -but certainly the funniest - journeys ever taken! Miss Ida Ingram's dying wish was to have her ashes scattered over the Grand Canyon - no small request for the two remaining sisters, Isabelle and Imogene, to carry out as they are elderly and have never before ventured out of South Carolina. Into the picture comes a long-lost nephew, Brandon, who agrees to drive his maiden aunts to Arizona to give himself time to think through his own mid-life crisis. Leigh Ann, a young neighbor woman who was practically raised by the elderly triplets, soon catches up and joins them on this incredible trip where they meet everyone from a crooked mechanic to a cross-dresser named Barbie who saves the day in New Orleans. The elderly women also learn about converter boxes, margaritas, and how much trouble an urn of ashes can be. Hilarious at times, it's a poignant journey, a discovery of the soul. At the rim of the Grand Canyon, they realize Ida's final wish was really a blessing.

Grandest Canyon

- 3 -

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Flexible cast)

ISABELLE INGRAM: One of the Ingram triplets; 79-years-old.

IMOGENE INGRAM: Another Ingram triplet.

BRANDON TAROZZI: Their nephew; mid-30s to early 40s.

LEIGH ANN: Neighbor who was reared by the triplets; early 30s.

THE COMPANY

(parts may be doubled and tripled among actors)

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Preacher | 3 Dancing Cowboys |
| Funeral Director | Young Thug |
| Policeman | Waitress/Antique Dealer |
| TV Announcer | Street Person |
| Salesman (Native American) | Mechanic |
| Drunk (Native American) | Junior |
| Tourist 1 and 2 | Bartender |
| Barbie | Detective |
| Grand Canyon Visitors (entire company) | |

SETTING

GRANDEST CANYON takes place on a cross-country journey that begins in the small South Carolina town of Chowan, and ends up on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Each scene is a different city or town along the way. The action takes place in restaurants, motel rooms, a gas station, a jail, a market, two National Parks, etc. A bare stage with props and furniture may be used. A backdrop of the Grand Canyon, or rocky cliffs, or forest may be used in the last scene. The time is the present in the late spring.

Grandest Canyon

- 4 -

PROPS

IMOGENE and ISABELLE: Urn, plates and bowls of food, dinner roll, bed warmer, TV guide, napkins, 2-liter bottle of Coke, menu, purse, vase, rock, pillows.

BRANDON: Fork, wallet with money, credit card, suitcases, telephone, glass, stack of receipts, 4 soft drinks.

LEIGH ANN: Telephone, glass.

WAITRESS: Apron, order pad and pencil, 3 glasses of water, cup of coffee with spoon, bowl of soup, sandwich on plate, cigarette and lighter, portable phone.

RUBY: Table of antiques, box, trash can, white chip of stone, pen, sales tag.

STREET PERSON: Bag of birdseed.

BARTENDER: Margarita's, highball, telephone.

BARBIE: Cigarettes and lighter.

COWBOY: Cigar.

YOUNG THUG: Plastic bag.

WAITER: Lighter, three drinks, plate of tamales.

BUSBOY: Cloth.

NATIVE AMERICAN: Table of crafts.

DRUNKEN NATIVE AMERICAN: Bottle in a paper bag.

TOURISTS: Tamale, soft drink.

CANYON TOURISTS: cameras and camcorders.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

Gospel hymn

X-rated TV movie music

Opening music from "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"

Slow country dance music such as "Waltz Across Texas"

Grofè's "Grand Canyon Suite"

ACT I

Scene 1: Chowan, South Carolina

(AT RISE: An old GOSPEL HYMN is heard. LIGHTS up on CS. It is the funeral service of Ida Ingram and benches are placed front center and a table with an urn to the side. ISABELLE, IMOGENE and LEIGH ANN are the only mourners at the funeral. PREACHER is reading scripture. He finishes and begins his brief eulogy. Toward the end of his talk BRANDON enters and sits in the back pew.)

PREACHER: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me; Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We are gathered here this afternoon to honor the memory of Miss Ida Ingram, who was a loyal servant of our Lord and Savior, and a life-long member of the River Bottom Baptist Church. Today she joins her parents, Melvin and Delilah, sister Lucinda, and brother Bailey at the heavenly banquet table, along side our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, Miss Ida had a lot of distinctive characteristics, not the least of which was being one of the famous Ingram Triplets - the first set of triplets born in Harrington County and, until five years ago, the only set of triplets in Harrington County.

ISABELLE: *(Snorting and huffing.)* If that Jones woman hadn't taken those stupid fertility drugs we'd still be the only triplets in Harrington County ... minus one triplet, of course!

PREACHER: *(Clearing throat.)* Miss Ida, Miss Imogene and Miss Isabelle were born 79 years ago in the very farm house built by their great-grandfather back before the war ... that's the War of Northern Aggression, of course. That very house was occupied by the triplets' great-grand-parents, their grandparents, their parents and them.

Now, as I said, Miss Ida had some distinctive characteristics. She also had some unusual ideas, one of which was this business about being cremated.

Grandest Canyon

- 6 -

PREACHER: *(Cont'd.)* As a minister of the River Bottom Baptist Church, where I have served faithfully for 27 years, I have never been a part of a funeral where the deceased was cremated. In fact, Mr. Childress, our esteemed local undertaker, had to ship Miss Ida's remains all the way up to Rockingham across the state line to one of those big fancy cremating places where they do that sort of thing.

ISABELLE: You don't need to give us all the gory details of my sister's cremation!

PREACHER: Well, I'm sorry, Miss Isabelle, but I just want it understood that I had no part of this heathen practice.

IMOGENE: Just where in the Bible does it say a person can't have herself cremated if that's what she wants ... provided she's dead, of course.

ISABELLE: Imogene, we've been through all this already. *(To PREACHER.)* Just go on and say what you're supposed to say. I mean, what in blazes do we pay you for anyway?

PREACHER: *(Clears throat.)* Miss Ida was a fine woman ...

ISABELLE: Of course she was a fine woman! South Carolina is full of fine women! Isn't there something unique you could say about our sister?

IMOGENE: Isabelle, this IS our sister's funeral. I think we should let the preacher have his say without interrupting him.

ISABELLE: *(Angrily.)* Well, excuse me for even showing up!

IMOGENE: Go on, Preacher.

PREACHER: Uh, right. Miss Ida was ... well, a kind person who stayed at home and nursed her parents through their senior years.

ISABELLE: We all stayed home and nursed our parents through their senior years! There's nothing unique about that. *(IMOGENE shushes ISABELLE. PREACHER is flustered.)*

PREACHER: *(Clears throat.)* She helped with the bookkeeping on the farm.

ISABELLE: And she couldn't subtract worth a hoot!

IMOGENE: Isabelle!

ISABELLE: Well, she couldn't. Who do you think was always going over the figures after her? God only knows how much money I saved the family over the years because of Ida's poor math skills.

PREACHER: She volunteered at the hospital in town ...

ISABELLE: She went to the hospital so she could look at Dr. Carver in his scrub suit!

IMOGENE: Oh, I don't think so!

End of Freeview

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