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\$\$\$ale (!!!)

By Mindy Curtis

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRICH COLSON writes...Yard Sale by Mindy Curtis is one of those feel-good plays that actually feels good. It's about what it means to be a good neighbor or just a decent human being – although in my mind you don't get extra points for being neighborly when you're running a yard sale without permits 24/7, but then most neighbors aren't as cool as RAINBOW and LYRIC. Even with a somewhat hostile business acumen, these particular neighbors manage to spread good vibes in their community – along with the cursed (and uncursed) objects they're buying and selling. You know how we all love getting those incredible deals (this goes along with my theory that every play has a Faustian or "TJMaxx" element – where there's a hope of getting the maximum for the minimum) and this garage sale's no exception. And there's full disclosure with the cursed objects sitting on their own table, so it's not like some random curse is going to bite you in the ass when you least expect it, is it? Acceptance is key to survival in the quirky world of Mindy Curtis' play, whether anyone buys the cursed PEZ containers or not. Live and unfiltered it's time to bring your cash and get your Yard Sale on.*

QUIN: Yes, got it. Lyric. Unique. Since we are new neighbors now I thought we should stop by since you guys have been out here, well, every day since we moved in. I keep thinking that one day you will pack it up and we will have missed the opportunity to see and buy some of your cool (*looking at and referring to things on the table*) . . . um . . . cool items out here.

RAINBOW: Oh, no. We won't pack up.

QUIN: Huh?

LYRIC: We sell every day.

QUIN: Every day? You have a yard sale?

LYRIC: Well, we have to call it a yard sale. Since we don't officially have a business license.

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Characters

LYRIC - A seller.

RAINBOW - A seller. Lives with Lyric.

QUIN - A buyer.

SAM- A buyer. Lives with Quin.

OTHER BUYER - Yet another buyer. Doesn't live with anyone that we know.

Setting

Lyric and Rainbow's yard sale.

LYRIC and RAINBOW are sitting in lawn chairs at a yard sale. They both wear gloves. There is a "yard sale" sign prominently placed for advertising. There are two tables with various, random, household items for sale on each table. One of the tables has caution tape around it as well as posters doning skulls and crossbones and that say things like "cursed," "beware," and "buy with caution." The other table is normal. No signage. SAM and QUIN walk into the yard sale and begin looking at the items. They enter on the side of the non-cautioned table and begin looking at those items first. LYRIC and RAINBOW greet them.

LYRIC: Hello.

SAM: Hey.

QUIN: Hi there.

RAINBOW: Welcome to our yard sale.

SAM: Oh, thanks. We are just looking around.

LYRIC: Of course.

SAM looks around at the items and hangs back while QUIN talks to the sellers.

QUIN: We are new to the neighborhood. We just moved in around the corner and thought we would drop by. I'm Quin. This is Sam.

LYRIC: I'm Lyric.

RAINBOW: Rainbow. It's very nice to meet you both. Welcome to the neighborhood.

QUIN: Nice to meet you too, Rainbow and . . .

LYRIC: Lyric. As in songs.

QUIN: Yes, got it. Lyric. Unique. Since we are new neighbors now I thought we should stop by since you guys have been out here, well, every day since we moved in. I keep thinking that one day you will pack it up and we will have missed the opportunity to see and buy some of your cool (*looking at and referring to things on the table*) . . . um . . . cool items out here.

RAINBOW: Oh, no. We won't pack up.

QUIN: Huh?

LYRIC: We sell every day.

QUIN: Every day? You have a yard sale?

LYRIC: Well, we have to call it a yard sale. Since we don't officially have a business license.

QUIN: Okay. Well, you do have some interesting things. (*Looking around at the non-cautioned table*). Neat lightsaber toy.

LYRIC: Yep. That's a good item.

QUIN looks a bit longer at the items on the non-cautioned table. He then turns to the cursed table. He notices the signs, warnings, and caution tape.

QUIN: Hey, why is this table roped off? What's with the signs?

LYRIC: The items on that table are cursed.

QUIN: Cursed?

RAINBOW: Yes. Cursed.

QUIN: Like, magically cursed?

LYRIC: Exactly.

SAM hears the conversation and moves over to the table with QUIN as she listens. QUIN and SAM examine the items on the cursed table.

QUIN: Oh, okay. So . . . these things that are . . .

LYRIC: . . . cursed.

QUIN: Right, cursed. What do they do? Like, what type of curses do they have?

RAINBOW: That's a good question. Each item has a specific misfortune that will befall it's new owner. And each curse affects different people, well, differently.

LYRIC: And with different intensity.

RAINBOW: Right.

QUIN: Okay, so, what about this one . . . the Captain America Figure? *(He reaches toward the figure).*

LYRIC: I wouldn't touch that if I were you. You could potentially be ripped apart by wild animals. If you touch it.

RAINBOW: *Or* it could just make dogs follow you around closely. Like you have a hot dog in your pocket. Depending on how intensely the curse affects you.

QUIN: Okay . . . well . . . both of those sound . . . undesirable.

LYRIC: Yes. These are cursed items.

QUIN: Right. You said that.

RAINBOW: You will be cursed regardless. As soon as you touch it.

SAM: *(Pointing to a bin of Pez dispensers).* What do these do? The Pez dispensers?

RAINBOW: Let me remember . . . they could cause a very destructive and deadly fire. Maybe a large forest fire near your home.

LYRIC: Right. Or a house fire.

QUIN: Oh, God!

LYRIC: But . . . maybe you could just get a burn. Say, on a hot pan.

RAINBOW: Or get a sunburn.

SAM: Hm. . . these are really rare.

QUIN: What? Burns?

SAM: No, the pez dispensers.

QUIN: Okay, right. (*To RAINBOW*) But they are cursed? Correct?

RAINBOW: Yes.

QUIN: And you are sure the curse is real.

LYRIC: Yes, we are quite certain. We have seen some very tragic things happen to people who purchase those items.

Both LYRIC and RAINBOW pause in seriousness and reverence for a moment, remembering these tragic events.

QUIN: Okay. And the things on this table over here (*indicating the not cursed table*) are fine? They are just normal, not cursed things?

LYRIC: That's right.

QUIN: So, wait. Why are you selling cursed things?

LYRIC: Because they are nice items.

RAINBOW: Someone might want them.

LYRIC: People can buy what they want.

RAINBOW: It's a free country.

LYRIC: Exactly. We aren't going to tell people what they can and can't buy. And we sell our stuff for a really good deal.

SAM: Yeah. I really like the Pez dispensers. I had a small collection when I was a kid.

RAINBOW: Oh, that's fun.

The OTHER BUYER walks into the yard sale and looks around as they talk.

QUIN: But it could put a curse on you that ends with dying in a house fire.

SAM: Or it could not. Didn't you hear them? I could just get a sunburn.

QUIN: Sure . . . yeah . . . but it *could* curse you to burn down our new house. Or even the neighborhood, right?

LYRIC: Yes, it could.

The OTHER BUYER starts examining items on the cursed table. After a moment he reaches for a mug.

QUIN: *(To the OTHER BUYER, stopping him from touching the mug.)* Hey, just so you know, the items on this table are cursed. *(Indicating RAINBOW and LYRIC.)*

OTHER BUYER: Yeah. I know. I can read the signs.

QUIN: Oh, okay. But, I mean, some of the curses could potentially kill you. According to what they told us.

OTHER BUYER: Yeah. I get it. *(Rolling his eyes and QUIN.)* Thanks for the warning.

The OTHER BUYER grabs the mug and takes it up to RAINBOW and LYRIC to buy.

OTHER BUYER: How much for the mug?

LYRIC: How about a dollar?

OTHER BUYER: Sold.

QUIN: Wait, what is the curse on the mug?

RAINBOW: (*Thinking*) You could lose your one true love.

LYRIC: Or just have a little spat.

OTHER BUYER: Good to know. Thanks for the heads up, guys!

LYRIC: Of course.

RAINBOW: Thanks for your business.

The OTHER BUYER begins to leave.

QUIN: You are potentially willing to lose your one true love? Over that mug?

OTHER BUYER: It's a nice mug. And I need a new one for my coffee.

LYRIC: You could just have a little spat . . .

QUIN: Or you could lose your one true love! Forever!

LYRIC: Well, I never said forever.

OTHER BUYER: Yeah. They never said forever. Sheesh! Are you always this bossy and involved in strangers' purchases? People are free to buy whatever they want.

QUIN: Yeah. I know but . . .

OTHER BUYER: Thanks for your concern. I have places to be.

RAINBOW: (*To the OTHER BUYER.*) Thanks for stopping by.

OTHER BUYER: Of course. Thanks so much!

The OTHER BUYER leaves with his mug. QUIN stops and stands, flummoxed, trying to make sense of the situation in his head.

QUIN: Okay, so . . . I'm not really sure how . . . maybe I should back up, I guess. Can I ask you guys, how did these things become cursed?

RAINBOW: Sure, you can ask that. Fair question.

LYRIC: Except we don't know. Not exactly. Our source for the items gives us a warning when items are cursed. And . . . well . . . we don't ask as many questions as you do.

QUIN: Wait, your *source* for these items? What or who is your source for acquiring cursed toys and home goods?

LYRIC: Well, now you really are asking a lot of very specific questions.

RAINBOW: Yeah, should I be worried you are getting insider information to set up a sale in your yard and compete with us?

QUIN: No, not at all. I just . . .

RAINBOW: Or should we be concerned you are going to report us? For not having a business license? We are being as ethical and forthright as possible.

LYRIC: Absolutely. We are very diligent in warning our customers about every cursed item they buy. Hence the signage. And the verbal warnings. We believe that providing all the information possible is the honest and ethical thing to do.

RAINBOW: We would never let people buy cursed items without knowing the potential risks.

LYRIC: Like I said, we've seen the devastating consequences to some of these curses.

RAINBOW: You aren't trying to shut us down are you? You did just try to stop a customer from buying from us.

QUIN: No! I just . . . that's not what I . . . I would never . . . I mean . . . I just feel like . . .

SAM: (*Pulling QUIN aside.*) Quin. Please. These are our new neighbors. It's a little embarrassing.

RAINBOW and LYRIC give them some space to talk by busying themselves with some yard sale business. They begin organizing the tables or counting money, etc.

QUIN: What's embarrassing?

SAM: How you are acting. It's a little embarrassing. Well, it's more than a little embarrassing. These people are clearly just trying to make a little extra cash with this side hustle. Can you give them the benefit of the doubt without questioning them about everything they are doing here?

QUIN: Sure, sure. I'm . . . I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be embarrassing, it's just a little weird, don't you think?

SAM: Yes. It's different. Sure. But we are new here. And we wanted to meet new people and experience new things, right? That's why we moved to this part of town, right? And now you won't even give our neighbors a chance when something you perceive as "weird" or "freaky" even slightly challenges your world view?

QUIN: (*Considering for a moment*) I didn't mean to . . . I mean, when you put it like that. I guess I am acting a little silly about it.

SAM: Yeah, I'm glad you see that. We are both trying things that are out of our comfort zone. Right?

QUIN: Yes, you are right. We are.

SAM: Okay. So keep an open mind, please?

QUIN: Yes. I will. I will try.

SAM: Thank you. Can we keep looking around now? And be kind and supportive of our new neighbors?

QUIN: Sure, of course.

SAM: Thanks. It means a lot to me. (*Turning attention to LYRIC and RAINBOW*) Hey, Lyric, Rainbow, how much do you want for the Pez dispensers?

RAINBOW: Five bucks for the bin?

SAM: That's a good deal.

QUIN: What? Really? You are actually going to buy them?

SAM: (*Taken aback*) Yeah. I am. We literally just talked about this. You said you would be cool.

QUIN: I said I would stop asking about where all this weird, freaky, cursed stuff came from.

SAM: Right. And also that you would stop seeing things that are different to you as “weird,” and “freaky” -- literally my exact words -- and that you would stop being rude to our new neighbors.

QUIN: Yes. I did. And I am really, *really* trying to do that. Though I want to point out that I in no way indicated I was okay with you buying something cursed to cause a massive house fire and bringing it into our home.

SAM: Well . . . I didn't think I needed to ask your permission because you can't tell me what to buy.

QUIN: I'm not telling you what to buy.

SAM: Really? You're not? Because it sounds like that's exactly what you are doing. Telling me I can't buy Pez dispensers. Really? You want to double down and make this a fight over five-dollar Pez dispensers?

QUIN: I'm not trying to make this a fight. What I am trying to do is keep us safe. You heard Rainbow and Moonbeam, right?

LYRIC: My name is Lyric.

QUIN: Sure, whatever. (*Trying to be cordial to LYRIC*) It's a very nice name. (*To SAM*) The Pez are *cursed!* They could cause a massive fire. They could burn down this entire neighborhood with a wild fire. You are putting other people here at risk too.

SAM: Okay. Maybe I am taking a risk. But chances are I will just burn my finger on my flat iron then run it under some cool water and be fine. Or I'll just get a mild sunburn and rub some aloe on it. You don't know. And you don't get to decide for me. It's my choice. These Pez are *really* cool. Simpson characters are hard to find. Even on Ebay. Look, I have my own money. I'm getting them. I'm not going to let you hold me back from what I want to do anymore.

QUIN: (*Struggling to respond to this logic.*) I really don't see how I'm the oppressive “bad guy” here.

SAM: Well, regardless of whether you see it or not, you are. You are wrong. I'm getting the Pez dispensers.

SAM reaches toward the bin of Pez dispensers on the curse table. QUIN yelps out and moves to stop her from touching the bin as SAM picks it up.

QUIN: No! Don't!

SAM: It's done. I touched them. (*Sarcastically spooky and scary*). Ooooooh! Scary!

SAM reaches into her pocket and pulls out five dollars. She gives it to LYRIC and RAINBOW. QUIN stops attempting to stop her from buying the Pez dispensers.

SAM: Thanks! I'm excited about these!

LYRIC: Pleasure doing business with you.

RAINBOW: Enjoy.

LYRIC: So nice to meet you!

SAM: Nice to meet you too! (*To QUIN.*) Look, I'm going home. If you want to follow me, maybe think about apologizing first?

QUIN: Apologizing for what? For being concerned about burning to death in my sleep so you can get a deal on used candy toys from the 90s?

SAM: You can apologize for being critical and controlling. And rude. Though I don't know why I'm surprised, I guess.

SAM leaves the yard sale with her newly acquired PEZ dispensers. QUIN stands there, unsure of his next move.

LYRIC: So, are you planning on buying something?

RAINBOW: Do you still like the light saber? Or Captain America?

QUIN: Um, I don't think so, no. I think I'm good.

RAINBOW: Well, you can always come back any time. If you are actually interested in buying something.

LYRIC: We are always here.

QUIN: Of course you are. Selling cursed items around the corner from my new home. Every. Single. Day.

RAINBOW: Yep.

QUIN: Good to know.

QUIN starts to leave in the direction of his home when LYRIC stops him.

LYRIC: You know, since we are going to be neighbors, mostly likely for a while, and because the fire has the potential to threaten the entire neighborhood, I feel like I should tell you about the counter-curse.

QUIN: What?

LYRIC: A counter-curse. To the fire curse. Attached to the Pez dispensers.

QUIN: There is? There's a counter-curse? Why didn't you share that bit of information before?

LYRIC: Well, you didn't ask. And you kept repeatedly, low-key insulting us.

QUIN: Yes. I guess that's true. Look, I really am sorry. We have had a lot of stress with the move and everything else.

RAINBOW: We get it. No need to apologize. We recognize what we are doing is a little different for some people.

LYRIC: It's not everyone's cup of tea.

QUIN: Right. I just, I know I came off a little strong. To each their own, right?

LYRIC: Exactly.

RAINBOW: Live and let live.

QUIN: Sure. Thanks for being understanding. So, how much is the counter-curse? Which item do I need to buy to get it?

RAINBOW: Oh, it's free. There isn't an item for the counter curse. All you have to do is complete five random acts of kindness for strangers before the end of the day.

LYRIC: Then the fire curse will be lifted. Gone.

QUIN: Oh. Five acts of kindness? In one day? For strangers?

LYRIC: Yes.

QUIN: Do I have to do them? Or does she? Since she touched them?

LYRIC: Either of you. Anyone who lives in the home.

QUIN: Okay, well, that doesn't seem too bad. I mean, what kinds of acts of kindness?

RAINBOW: Just something small like pay for someone's cup of coffee, or write a kind note and put it in a neighbor's mailbox.

LYRIC: You could just give a dollar to someone who needs it. Or pick up some trash along the road.

QUIN: Okay, well, that seems easy enough.

LYRIC: Yep.

QUIN: Though . . . I mean . . . I was planning on seeing the new Marvel movie tonight. I think my showing starts at eight. I'll need to eat before. And (*looking at his watch*) it's already after two. So that only leaves, what? Just a few hours? Hmm. . . alright . . . well. I don't have any cash on me right now. And I'm really sore from my leg workout yesterday. Well, good to know . . . but. . . I mean, you said it could just be a small burn right?

RAINBOW: Yes. It could.

QUIN: Well, that wouldn't be so bad. She burns herself on that straight iron all the time.

RAINBOW: Sure. We've all had a little burn before.

QUIN: Yeah.

LYRIC: Though it could cause a deadly wildfire or house fire, like you said.

QUIN: Yeah, but those chances are pretty low. Aren't they?

RAINBOW: Yeah, I guess. I don't know the exact odds.

QUIN: Hmm . . . well . . . thanks for the info. I'll let her know. She may want to do that but . . . we may just decide to take our chances.

LYRIC: It's entirely up to you.

QUIN: Of course it is. It's my Saturday. I have a lot to do. It's my only day off. She can do the acts of kindness, can't she? She's the one who bought cursed Pez dispensers.

RAINBOW: Very true. Yep, she definitely can. To each their own.

LYRIC: Live and let live. It really was nice to meet you.

QUIN: It was nice to meet you too. Both of you. I better get home and apologize, I guess. Sorry for how I acted to you both. I just haven't seen anything like this before. I'm working on expanding my world view.

LYRIC: Totally fine. Apology accepted.

RAINBOW: Zero worries, really.

LYRIC: Welcome to the neighborhood.

QUIN: Thanks so much! See you around, guys.

LYRIC: Bye now.

RAINBOW: Take care.

QUIN exits toward home.

RAINBOW: They are going to be interesting to have around, aren't they?

LYRIC: Mhmm. They certainly are.

A moment passes.

RAINBOW: I'll clean up the twigs and debris around the perimeter of the house this weekend.

LYRIC: Good idea. And I will take the truck and fill up some barrels of water. And buy some masks while I'm out. You know, for the smoke.

RAINBOW: Just in case.

LYRIC: Yep.

The lights fade on LYRIC and RAINBOW as they continue to sit in their lawn chairs at their yard sale while wearing their gloves.

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I wrote the original draft of this play in September of 2021 in three hours as part of a 24-Hour Theatre Festival at Salt Lake Community College. The festival gives playwrights the challenge to incorporate a specific prop into the script. The production team chooses from a group of random items available. The prop my production team chose was a bin of Pez dispensers -- the perfect find at a yard sale. The play quickly took shape from that point as the characters began to grapple with the timely concerns and questions we face as humans living in 2021 including risk, freedom, responsibility, and survival.*

AUTHOR BIO: Mindy Curtis is a playwright, deviser, director, educator, teaching artist, mother, wife, traveler, adventurer, and knitter. Mindy's plays have been produced and performed by various educational and community theatres and venues throughout the U.S. Mindy is also an experienced theatre educator and has taught, led, and directed theatre programs across the country. Mindy holds her BFA in Theatre Education and BA in History Teaching from Utah State University, her MA in Theatre from Central Washington University, and her PhD in Education from The University of Idaho. Currently Mindy serves her local theatre community by holding the position of President on the Utah Advisory Council of Theatre Teachers. She lives in Taylorsville, Utah with her talented husband, two spunky kids, siamese cat, and labradoodle puppy.

