And What a Rummage Sale
An Easily Prepared Entertainment
for Twelve Women

By

ARTHUR LEROY KASER

CHARACTERS

MRS. CATHERINE COOKY, chairman of the Rummagers.
MRS. JANE JUGGER, behind the ladies' cast-off counter.
Miss SUSIE LAMB, selling men's furnishings.
Miss DORA COCKATOO, on the children's used garment counter.

MRS. SMULLENS,
MRS. TARBER,
MRS. CLEMENT,
MRS. FRIEDMAN,
MRS. WERTZ,
MRS. SLACK,
MRS. BLAKEMAN,
MRS. BEATTY,

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

All the characters are more or less old-fashioned in dress, mannerisms and speech. All are married women except SUSIE LAMB, who is a giggly, rather frivolous girl, and DORA COCKATOO, who is very dumb. MRS. COOKY considers herself very important. MRS. JUGGER isn't any too pleasant.

SCENE.—A plain room. Entrance on one side of stage is sufficient. One long table at c. Another set at a forty-five degree angle to c. table on L. stage. A third table in similar position R. stage. On R. table are piled some clothes suitable for children and babies. On end of table is a dilapidated baby carriage. On c. table: ladies' discarded dresses, an old coat, hats, shoes, etc. Also some battered kitchen utensils, and a large gilded frame containing a life-size portrait of a man taken years ago. On L. table are men's furnishings, including shirts, trousers, ties, etc. Everything is piled neatly on the tables.)

(At rise of curtain, SUSIE is behind L. table. JANE is back of table at c. DORA is behind table R.)

SUSIE. (Giggles) Just like working in a regular big store, ain't it, Mrs. Jugger?

JANE. If you had ever worked in a regular big store like I have you wouldn't think it was such fun. A rummage sale like this is for one day only while in a store it's day after day, every day and every day.

DORA. (Nods head knowingly) Uh-huh, an' twice on Saturdays.
SUSIE. Do you think we'll sell all this stuff, Mrs. Jugger?

JANE. Humph! I doubt if we sell any of it. When I lived in (name near-by town) people donated things we could sell, but look at the trash the folks have brought in here. I don't see how in the world they expect us to make any money for the church if they don't donate something somebody wants. Just because it's called a rummage sale they think any old thing will do.

DORA. I was a-readin' the other day 'bout the world years an' years ago, an' it was called the stone age.

SUSIE. I wish I'd lived then. I just love cave-man stuff. (Giggles.)

DORA. An' then come the iron age. See?

JANE. See what?

DORA. First, the stone age an' then the iron age.

JANE. Well, what about it?

DORA. Oh, nothin', only now (indicates tables) it's the rum-age.

SUSIE. (Giggles) Rum-age! (Giggles.) He-he! Rum-age!

JANE. (Turns up nose) Dumb-age!

(Enter CATHERINE, strutting very importantly.)

CATHERINE. Is everything ready, girls?

DORA. I ain't powdered my nose yet.

CATHERINE. Well, it's eight o'clock and there are three or four women clamoring to get in. They saw me and pounded on the door. I wish I were not so popular. I'm always made chairman of everything.

DORA. My sister's chairman in a theatre in Chicago. She tells folks what chair to set in. Only they call 'em ooshers.

SUSIE. Not oosher. Usher.

DORA. Well, anyway, they're seater-setters.

JANE. Might as well open the door and let those women in. I don't want to stay here all day and all night, too.

CATHERINE. Hold out for high prices, girls. I'm chairman of this rummage sale, and I've got to uphold my reputation. Furthermore, if we don't take in anything we'll never be able to buy varnish for all those benches in the church.

JANE. Humph! They don't need any varnish. They're so slick now my old man slides out of 'em every time he goes to sleep.

DORA. (Indicating baby carriage) How "bout this one-ton truck, Mrs. Cooky?
CATHERINE. Somebody with a baby will be willing to pay a good price for that.

DORA. Mebbe I'd better not sell it to anybody with a fat baby. Lookit that. (Shakes the dilapidated carriage.)

SUSIE. Dora, if you had a nice bouncing baby you'd just love to haul him around in that.

DORA. Uh-huh, push him about a block an' he'd be bouncin', all right—on the sidewalk.

(Loud pounding off stage.)

CATHERINE. Hear 'em? Hear 'em? The charge of the Six Hundred. Hear them knocking.

SUSIE. Just so they don't knock our store.

CATHERINE. Now remember everything I've told you, girls.

JANE. (Sharply) Did you ever work in a store, Mrs. Cooky?

CATHERINE. Humph! I should say not.

JANE. Then don't try to tell me anything.

(Pounding off stage.)

SUSIE. Sounds like a hundred women out there. (Giggles.)

DORA. Let's let 'em both in.

CATHERINE. (Going to exit) And listen, girls. Don't let them maul things over. [Exits.

JANE. Now for it. I've been through this before. I know what it is to be behind the counter on a sale day. When they stampede in here and make a counter-attack, don't get frightened. Hold your ground. Don't get flustered.

DORA. You mean to keep a lip upper stiff.

JANE. If something happens to go wrong just overlook it and —

DORA. I know. Don't spill over cried milk.

(Sound of a number of voices approaching off stage. Enter talking and jostling: MRS. SMULLENS, MRS. TARBER, MRS. CLEMENT, MRS. FRIEDMAN and MRS. WERTZ. Their talking at once stops as they stride to tables bent on business. MRS. SMULLENS and MRS. TARBER to table L. MRS. CLEMENT and MRS. FRIEDMAN to c. table and MRS. WERTZ to table at R. They literally dive into articles, throwing things to one side, pushing many pieces to floor.)

MRS. SMULLENS. (With a sigh) Oh, my! You don't have any, do you?

SUSIE. Yes, I guess not, we do. What was it you didn't want, Mrs. Smullens?

MRS. SMULLENS. A man's evening suit.
SUSIE. Yes, we have no pajamas.

(MRS. SMULLENS continues to maul through articles.)

MRS. CLEMENT. (Holding up lady’s hat) How much?

JANE. Two dollars.

MRS. CLEMENT. What? Two dollars for this old hat? Why, I can get a new Paris hat for two dollars. I just saw a beautiful Paris green felt for two dollars at —

JANE. I know where you can get a big box of Paris green for a dollar.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Holding up old shirtwaist) Is this silk or rayon?

MRS. CLEMENT. Let me see, Mrs. Friedman. (Snatches it away from MRS. FRIEDMAN.) You can tell by pulling out a thread. (Picks and pulls out thread.) It's silk.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. It may be silk one way, but the other way— Let me have it. (Snatches waist from MRS. CLEMENT and plucks out thread.) See that, Mrs. Clement? Rayon.

MRS. CLEMENT. Pull on the goods. If it's rayon it's rigid. If it's silk it'll stretch. (Yanks on waist until it tears in two. Tosses it back on table.) It's cotton.

(They continue to disarrange articles.)

MRS. WERTZ. (To DORA) You see, he's only eight months old.

DORA. (In a dumb tone) Who is?

MRS. WERTZ. Why, my little Andrew. He does the cutest things. You know what he did last evening?

DORA. Who?

MRS. WERTZ. My little Andrew. His papa is so proud of him. And when he came home from work —

DORA. Little Andrew?

MRS. WERTZ. No, no! His papa. He said I should get one of these for him. (Lays hand on carriage.)

DORA. For papa?

MRS. WERTZ. No, no, no! For my little Andrew. What is this baby carriage worth?

DORA. 'Tain't worth anything, but you can have it for three dollars.

MRS. WERTZ. Three dollars? My dear girl, the baby is only eight months old. Three dollars! It isn't worth that much.
DORA. Most babies ain't.

MRS. WERTZ. (Offended) Humph! (Crosses to table L.)

(Enter breathlessly and excited: MRS. SLACK, MRS. BLAKEMAN and MRS. BEATTY.)

MRS. SLACK. Oh, here it is.

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Thank goodness!

MRS. BEATTY. We heard you were going to have a rummage sale, but we didn't know where. Oh! I'm all out of breath. I never buy anything at rummage sales because I want what they've got, but just to sort of help along the cause, you know.

MRS. SLACK. The same with me, Mrs. Beatty. Heaven knows I wouldn't wear something that somebody else has thrown away. (Picks up lady's coat and holds it up.) Do you think this would fit me, Mrs. Blakeman?

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Perfectly, Mrs. Slack, if you would alter the sleeves a little and change the collar line and —

MRS. SLACK. You don't think it will make me look older?

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Oh, my land, no. It couldn't.

MRS. SLACK. (To JANE) How much is this coat?

JANE. It ought to be worth seven dollars. The lining alone is worth eight dollars. That makes fifteen dollars. You can have it for three dollars, or if you have the right change I'll let you have it for two-ninety-eight.

MRS. SLACK. (Removing her coat and laying it on table) I'll try it on. Here, Mrs. Blakeman, hold it for me. (She dons coat and talks it over with MRS. BLAKEMAN.)

(MRS. TARBER approaches table c. and picks up MRS. SLACK'S coat.)

MRS. TARBER. (To JANE) What is the price of this coat?

JANE. (Abstractedly) Two dollars if I don't have to wrap it up.

MRS. TARBER. (Gives her money) I'll wear it. (Removes her own coat, lays it on table and dons purchased one.). It's just right, isn't it? (Crosses L. and shows it to MRS. SMULLENS.)

(MRS. WERTZ goes to table c., picks up MRS. TARBER'S old coat.)

MRS. WERTZ. I'll give you a dollar for this coat.

JANE. Sold. Where's your dollar?

MRS. WERTZ. Humph! Maybe you think I don't have a dollar. I'd like to have you know I have two dollars. (Opens purse and pays JANE.) There's your old dollar. (Removes her coat, places it on table and dons purchased coat. Crosses to table at R.)
MRS. SLACK. (Returning to table c. To JANE) I'll take this one. Wrap up my old coat and— (Looks on table for old coat.) Why—why, where is my coat? (Sees MRS. TARBER wearing her coat.) I beg your pardon, but I'd like to have my coat.

MRS. TARBER. What?

MRS. SLACK. (Pointing to coat) I say, I'd like to have my coat.

MRS. TARBER. Your coat? I just this minute bought this coat. If you don't believe it, there is my other coat on the table—er—on— (Fails to see her old coat.) Where in the world— (Sees MRS. WERTZ wearing her coat.) There it is! (Crosses to MRS. WERTZ.) What are you doing with my coat on?

MRS. WERTZ. (Tilts chin haughtily) I beg your pardon?

MRS. TARBER. You are wearing my coat.

MRS. WERTZ. I am not.

MRS. TARBER. You are, too! And I certainly like your nerve —

MRS. SLACK. (To MRS. TARBER) Well, I'm waiting for you to take off my coat.

MRS. TARBER. I paid two dollars for this coat.

MRS. WERTZ. And I paid one dollar for this.

JANE. Well, for land's sake, whose coat is this? (Holds up MRS. WERTZ'S coat.)

MRS. WERTZ. That's mine.

MRS. TARBER. Then take off mine and put on your own.

MRS. WERTZ. I don't take it off until I get my dollar back. (To JANE.) Where's the dollar I gave you?

JANE. It's worth a dollar to have it quiet in here. (Hands her money.)

(MRS. WERTZ removes coat, tosses it on table and dons her own coat.)

MRS. TARBER. (Picking up coat.) I think I'd better hang onto it.

MRS. SLACK. I'd like to hang onto mine if you'll be kind enough to take it off.

MRS. TARBER. But I paid two dollars —

JANE. Here's your two dollars. Please! Please! Take it off!

(MRS. TARBER, grumbling, removes coat and tosses it on table. Takes money.)

MRS. SLACK. (Pounces on coat. To JANE) I'll trade this old coat of mine for a hat.
JANE. (Picking up an old hat) Here's a very nice one. There'll be a dollar difference. It's in very good shape. There's only a few feathers missing, and the crown needs some sewing. You can put in a new lining easily.

MRS. SLACK. Oh, well, I'm just doing this, you know, to help along the cause. (Gives JANE money, removes her hat and lays it on table. Puts on new hat. Sees MRS. TARBER stepping to table, and quickly places both hands over her old hat, and glares at MRS. TARBER.) Oh, no you don't!

(Enter CATHRINE.)

CATHRINE. I hope you ladies are finding what you want.

MRS. SLACK. (Glaring at MRS. TARBER) Yes, but the queer places we're finding them.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Who has strolled to table R.) Oh, Mrs. Clement, come here. (MRS. CLEMENT goes R.) Isn't this a dear? (Holds up child's romper suit.)

MRS. CLEMENT. I'll bet a peanut that that romper belonged to Mrs. Heller's little boy. She always buys that color.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (To DORA) How much is this? I want it for my little boy.

DORA. Ten dollars.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Aghast) Ten-ten dollars! Why, I can buy a new one for ninety-eight cents.

DORA. I know it. But your little boy threwed a stone at me an' I told him then I'd get even. Ten dollars.

MRS. FRIEDMAN, I'm willing to give fifty cents for it.

DORA. I was just thinkin' it'll just 'bout fit my little brother. 'Tain't for sale. (Tosses it back of table.)

JANE. (Signalling to MRS. SLACK) Hey, you!

MRS. SLACK. Well?

JANE. You didn't pay for that coat yet.

MRS. SLACK. That's right. How much did you say?

JANE. Six dollars.

MRS. SLACK. Six dollars? You said three dollars.

JANE. But you didn't pay cash when you took the coat and there's three dollars carrying charge.

MRS. SLACK. (Quickly removes coat) I won't pay it. Where's my old coat?

JANE. You haven't got one. You traded it for that hat you have on.

MRS. SLACK. (Sighs') Well, then I'll trade my old hat for my coat.
JANE. All right. There'll be a dollar difference.

MRS. SLACK. (Is angry) All right, all right! (Tosses money and hat on table.) Give me my coat. (Dons coat.) Only thing is, I wish I had my own hat back. This one doesn't fit me at all. It's too tight. (Takes it off.) Let me have my old hat, please. You can sell this one to somebody else.

JANE. There'll be a dollar difference.

MRS. SLACK. (Is very angry) Crooks! (Tosses purchased hat on table. Then slaps down money.) There's your dollar. My hat, please. I'm through! Absolutely through with your old rummage sale. (Starts toward exit.) Paid out three dollars and don't have a thing to show for it. Crooks! [Struts out.

SUSIE. (To others) Anything you want for your husbands right over here.

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Wrap me up a rolling pin. (Laughs.)

SUSIE. Can't wrap up a rolling pin. Have to wait till they stop rolling. (Giggles.)

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Have you any neckties? Just something for around the house.

SUSIE. Nothing for around the house. Only ones I have are for around the neck. (Giggles.)

MRS. BLAKEMAN. The ones he has now are all worn out.

SUSIE. Take some of these. He'll never wear these out unless it's an awful dark night. (Giggles.)

(MRS. BLAKEMAN looks at ties.)

DORA. (Ballyhooing) This way, ladies and gentlemen. Anything you want for the baby except razors and shotguns. Lookit this! Lookit this! (Holds up child's garter and stretches it.) Something purty snappy for the kid.

MRS. SMULLENS. (At c. table) Oh, Mrs. Clement, look at this.

MRS. CLEMENT. Look at what?

MRS. SMULLENS. (Holding framed portrait up to view) Don't you think this would look nice over my organ?

MRS. CLEMENT. Who is it?

MRS. SMULLENS. I don't know. But that doesn't make any difference. The frame is pretty.

CATHERINE. That, ladies, is an old chromo.

MRS. SMULLENS. Chromo? Did we ever know anybody by that name?

MRS. CLEMENT. No, no, Mrs. Smullens, she means that's the artistic name. Don't you remember? You've seen bromo advertised —
CATHERINE. That is a picture of Mrs. Davidson's grandfather. They say he was a great hero in the War of 1812.

DORA. Didn' you ever hear 'bout him? He's the feller what knowed a man what heard Gen'ral Perry say, "Give me liberty bonds or give me debts."

CATHERINE. The frame is, indeed, exquisite. Other frames made at the same time by the same man may be found in all the old mansions of the country, and cannot be bought for hundreds and thousands of dollars. This frame when new was no doubt priced around one or two thousand dollars, and now as an antique it should be worth twice that much. You may have it for thirty cents.

MRS. SMULLENS. (Opens purse) Well —

JANE. (Takes frame) I have a mirror at home that would just fit in this frame. (Sets it back of table.) Clerks, you know, always have first choice.

MRS. SMULLENS. They, also, have a lot of nerve.

JANE. (Politely holding out an old aluminum pan) Perhaps I could interest you in this beautiful stew pan?

MRS. SMULLENS. (Turns up nose) Humph! It's full of holes.

JANE. (Pleasantly, holding pan out to MRS. CLEMENT) A nice aluminum sieve, lady?

DORA. I'll take that, Mrs. Jugger. I want it to sift starch through so's I can have some face powder.

JANE. Sold. (Tosses it back of table.)

DORA. (Holding up baby's bib) How much am I bib for this? Who wants to bib for this bib?

CATHERINE. No, no, Dora. Not bib.

DORA. Sure, it's a bib.

CATHERINE. Yes, I know, it's a bib, but you said bib —

DORA. Well, shouldn't I say bib if it's a bib?

CATHERINE. (Turns away) Have it your own way.

DORA. (To others) Who wants to bib on this bib?

SUSIE. Oh, Dora, I'll trade you a good man's tie —

DORA. For the bib? Lay the tie aside and I'll lay the bib aside. What'll you give me for this baby buggy?

SUSIE. (Giggles) What model is it?

DORA. 1492 Columbus. I'll trade it to you for a pair of good socks or a size fourteen and a half shirt. My brother needs 'em.
SUSIE. I'd rather give you a couple o' good socks. (Giggles.)

DORA. Oh, my! An' spoil my delicious face?

JANE. (Sarcastically) How could anyone spoil a face like yours?

DORA. 'Sail right. Mebbe my face ain't so much, but —(lays hand on baby carriage) I have a good carriage.

MRS. BLAKEMAN. (To SUSIE) You don't happen to have a pair of trousers my husband could wear in the garden, do you?

SUSIE. I believe there's a pair of white duck pants —

MRS. BLAKEMAN. I want them for my husband. We don't have a duck.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. It's a good thing you mentioned trousers. My husband needs some, too.

SUSIE. (Pulls a pair of trousers from pile on table) Here's something nice. All wool. Even the buttons are made from the sheep's bones.

MRS. BLAKEMAN and MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Simultaneously as each grasps a trouser leg) That's what I want.

MRS. BLAKEMAN. (Pulling on one leg) I beg your pardon.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Pulling on other leg) And I beg your pardon!

MRS. BLAKEMAN. (Braces herself and tugs to get them away) I think I have first choice.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. My money is as good as yours. (Tugs.)

(There is a silent "tug-of-war" until the trousers part in the middle. These should, of course, be only basted together. As the trousers part in the middle both ladies stagger back, each holding a trouser leg. They glare at each other.)

MRS. BLAKEMAN. (Angrily to MRS. FRIEDMAN) You'll pay for them!

MRS. FRIEDMAN. I will not!

MRS. BLAKEMAN. Well, I won't. I'll let you know I have a will of my own.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. Maybe you think I don't have a will.

DORA. (Calls across) Speakin' o' wills, you both left a leg-I-see.

MRS. BLAKEMAN. (Throws trouser leg to floor) Cat! (Turns and looks through things on table.) If there's another pair here they're mine.

MRS. FRIEDMAN. (Throwing down trouser leg) Oh, is that so? (Goes through things on table.) Is that so?

(For a moment there is pushing and jostling and mauling until everything is pushed to the floor. Enter MRS. SLACK.)
MRS. SLACK. (Holding hand up dramatically) STOP! (All look at her in amazement. To CATHERINE.) How much do you want for everything in here?

CATHERINE. Why—er —

MRS. SLACK. (Sharply and impatiently) How much? How much?

CATHERINE. Four dollars.

MRS. SLACK. (Quickly shoves bills into CATHERINE'S hand) Sold! Here's your money. Thought you'd seen the last of me after you treated me so shamefully a while ago, didn't you? I met my husband on the street and I told him what a deal was handed me in here, and he says for me to come right back here and buy everything. He and I are alike. We like to have revenge, and now revenge is mine. Now I'm boss here. And do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to show you women up higher than a kite. I'm going to mend and repair these things, and if I don't sell them and make fifty dollars profit I'm a cross-eyed owl. You can't beat Mrs. Slack. Now get out of here—every one of you!

CATHERINE. Some of these things have already been sold.

MRS. SLACK. All right, all right. Take what belongs to you and get out. Everybody! (All look at her somewhat bewildered.) Did you hear me? Take what belongs to you and get out. OUT!! (There is instant confusion. Each lady snatches up as much as she can carry and exits, leaving nothing but the bare tables. MRS. SLACK looks around at bare tables.) Well, there's one consolation: I don't have to lug a lot of unsightly bundles down the street. (Shrugs shoulders, tilts chin and struts out.)

CURTAIN