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*Dramatic Publishing*

# Under a Midsummer Moon



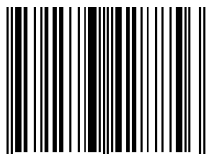
*Drama by Claudia Haas*

# Under a Midsummer Moon

**Drama. By Claudia Haas. Cast: 5m., 6w., 3 either gender, up to 10 extras.** It's the summer of 1969. Cities are crumbling, and the country is divided about the Vietnam War and the crushing economy. As the country prepares for the Apollo 11 moon landing, young people gather in a park to play, to protest and to work. Joe, testing self-discovery, tries on the guise of a mime, an explorer and a Shakespearean actor to discover who he is. Natasha is looking for friendship but cannot look up from reading *War and Peace* to connect with anyone. David comes to the park to work, but bitter-sweet memories keep him apart from his friends. Russell has created a group of disenchanted teens to protest the war and the wasteful spending of the moon landing. Sent to America to get out of the beginnings of "the troubles" in Belfast, Ireland, Madrigal knows the times are fragile and call for magic. If the fairies won't supply enchantment—she will. She recreates herself as a gift-giving sprite who designs a moon tree in celebration of the coming moon landing and devises a scavenger hunt complete with gifts for all. The youngest in the park believe in the magic of the mysterious fairy while the older ones carry all the cynicism of their elders. They fear her innocent offerings and resolve to capture the evil gift-giver. But with a little moon glow shining down on them, all become enraptured by the scavenger hunt and, under the midsummer moon, discover truths about themselves and each other in this coming-of-age tale of surprising friendships, unexpected journeys and the awakening of new possibilities. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: U40.*

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# **Under a Midsummer Moon**

Drama by

CLAUDIA HAAS



**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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*Under a Midsummer Moon* was developed in 2012 with a grant from Playwrights In Our Schools administered by AATE and sponsored by Broadway Across America-Utah Education Fund.

The production at the Minnesota Fringe Festival in August of 2012 was presented by Howling Wolf Productions.

*Cast*

Lee.....Jonah Hintgen  
Gene.....Olivia Bates, Lydia Anderson  
Maida.....Jacqui Bertelsen  
David.....Derek Hanson, Anthony Larson  
Madrigal.....Sylena Wilson  
Natasha.....Caitlin Nelson, Kaylee Anderson  
Russell.....Alex Berlin  
Cindy.....Rachel Meldman  
Vicky.....Connie Dale  
Ronnie.....Noah Ross  
Chris.....Nina Bertelsen  
Joe.....Johnny Barrett  
Sherrie.....Sophie Gaschott  
Terry.....Sarah Johnson

*Production*

Director.....Michael Mikula  
Scenic, Sound and Prop Designer.....Dennis Joslyn  
Costume Design.....MaryBeth Gagner  
Stage Manager.....Erin Gaschott

# Under a Midsummer Moon

## CHARACTERS

DAVID: (m) 17, park employee, grieving over the loss of his brother in Vietnam.

CHRIS: (m/w) 16, park employee.

LEE: (m) 12, summer is for fun and he and his three friends are still young enough to play make-believe.

GENE: (m/w) 12 or 13, gets bored easily.

MAIDA: (w) 12, as with her group, summer is for playing and enchantment.

JOE: (m) 15 or 16, trying to find himself by reinventing himself every day.

SHERRIE: (w) 15 or 16, Joe's close friend who is all about staying under life's radar.

MADRIGAL: (w) 16 or 17, sent to the USA from Belfast to escape the violence. She recreates herself as a gift-giving sprite.

CINDY: (w) 16 or 17, protesting, because she can.

RUSSELL: (m) 16 or 17, intensely dedicated to the cause of ending the Vietnam War.

VICKY: (w) 15 or 16, a people pleaser looking for fun and validation.

RONNIE: (m) 10 or 12, Vicky's younger brother who is spending the summer being dragged around by his sister; it's not fun and, in reality, he seems older than Vicky.

TERRY: (m/w) 16 or 17, passionate about changing the world.

NATASHA: (w) 15, new in town, hides behind books.

NEWS ANNOUNCER VOICE: A recorded voice.

## SETTING

A run-down urban park inspired by New York City's Central Park. Props and set decoration can be changed at director's discretion.

## TIME

July 19 and 20, 1969



## TIMELINE FOR 1969

January:

Beatles last concert (free)

February:

Arafat appointed head of the PLO

March:

Golda Meir sworn in as first female Prime Minister of Israel

NY Yankee Mickey Mantle retires

James Earl Ray pleads guilty to the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

John Lennon marries Yoko Ono

President Nixon approves secret bombing campaign

April:

Internet's symbolic birth date: Publication of RFC 1

*Oliver!* wins best picture award from the Academy

Sirhan Sirhan convicted of Robert F. Kennedy's assassination

Broadway's Tony award goes to *1776*

May:

Monty Python comedy troupe forms

US Forces capture Hamburger Hill

Sudanese government is overthrown in a military coup

Walt Disney World purchases railroad engines

June:

Last episode of *Star Trek: The Original Series*

July:

Ted Kennedy and the Chappaquiddick incident

Moon Landing

August:

Approximate time of the "Troubles" in Belfast, Ireland

Woodstock

September:

Gadhafi takes power in Libya

November:

Air date for *Sesame Street*

This excerpt begins with scene 2.

## **SCENE 2: JULY 20, EARLY MORNING**

*(MADRIGAL is arranging a note on the moon tree as well as three cut-outs of apples—two silver and one golden—with riddles on them. The note is placed so all can see and the apples are hung on the dead branches. She has added more flowers to the pot. The moon tree is becoming quite fanciful. Then MADRIGAL sits down to watch the sunrise.)*

*She also has a small pouch of small quartz stones to be revealed later and carries DAVID's sketchbook. DAVID enters and sees MADRIGAL. MADRIGAL remains intent on the sunrise. DAVID moves closer.)*

DAVID. Hey—

MADRIGAL. Shhh!

DAVID. You shouldn't—

*(MADRIGAL turns and quietly puts her fingers to her lips to keep him quiet and then moves back into position to watch the sunrise. DAVID stands over her.)*

DAVID *(cont'd)*. This isn't—

MADRIGAL. Shhh!

DAVID. Safe.

*(And they quietly watch for just one more moment. And the sun is up.)*

MADRIGAL. Ah—sure but that's a wondrous thing, isn't it? Seeing the sun rise up over the treescape. And it's there every morn, just for the taking.

DAVID. I guess. You really shouldn't be here this early. Nobody's in the park except muggers.

MADRIGAL. Surely, you're not proclaiming yourself to be a mugger then?

DAVID. Well, no.

MADRIGAL. Nothing evil can happen while the sun rises. 'Tis a fact.

DAVID. Where do you get your facts from? Fairy tales?

MADRIGAL. Indeed—one learns a lot from the “little people.” If one bothers to pay attention.

DAVID. And you do?

MADRIGAL. Most definitely. But don't try listening to them now. For they're all curled up snug as ladybugs in the dew-soaked petals of the smallest flowers. For they are but wee ones.

DAVID. Wee ones?

MADRIGAL. Little people. Don't look so wide-eyed. If you don't listen for them—you'll never hear them. And your life will be just a touch sad. And know that I am meaning that in the nicest way.

DAVID. You're a wee bit nuts, you know that? And know that I am meaning that—in the nicest way.

MADRIGAL. I know things.

DAVID. Told to you by the "little people?"

MADRIGAL. Yes.

DAVID. Soooo ... come here often?

MADRIGAL. Every morning. And you?

DAVID. I grew up nearby and now I work here. So, yeah, I come here. I used to dig up plants and bring them home and try to identify them. I didn't know it was illegal. I was—a "wee one." Once I brought my brother a pail filled with poison ivy. He was bummed when we broke out in a rash.

MADRIGAL. Ah—but 'tis all in the interest of discovery. Does your brother share your love of plants?

DAVID. Once. Not anymore.

MADRIGAL. Things change.

DAVID. That they do.

MADRIGAL. What will you be searching for today?

DAVID. I don't—search anymore. I work. And really, who cares about what grows in a city park? It's mostly weeds.

MADRIGAL. I believe—this is yours.

*(She returns his sketchbook.)*

DAVID. How—

MADRIGAL. Doesn't matter. But I noted there were some mighty fine plants sketched that were not weeds.

DAVID (*indicating the moon tree*). Are you—the perpetrator of this?

MADRIGAL. Do you like it?

DAVID. It's—dead. Yeah, I like it.

MADRIGAL. But surrounded by life. Imagine—if you plant a moonbeam, what would you get?

DAVID. But you can't plant a moonbeam.

MADRIGAL. But I have.

DAVID. And what did you get? Moonbeam stalks?

MADRIGAL. Have fun with me if you will! For I am here today and gone tomorrow. But know that if you plant a moonbeam you will harvest memories to treasure. Those are precious things.

DAVID. If you say so.

MADRIGAL. I do. Spend the day with me. I'll take you to where the rocky highland dips into the lake. Will you come? It's me own private hazel wood of safety.

DAVID. You—want me to go fairy chasing with you?

MADRIGAL. It's a quest we will be doing. Searching for a magical safe place. Me da taught me that. Find your own safe place—where you can be quiet and discover yourself.

DAVID. This park used to be my safe place. Not anymore. Are you here with your dad?

MADRIGAL. No. He—died last spring.

DAVID. I'm sorry. Really.

MADRIGAL. The Giant's Causeway is me own safe place—do you know it?

DAVID. No.

MADRIGAL. It's a great, craggy miracle of a place. The wild Irish sea crashes against cliffs and caves. St. Patrick tended sheep on nearby Slemish Mountain and castles appear from clouds. It was made from the days of enchantment. Do you know those days?

DAVID. The days of the fairy tales?

MADRIGAL. From the days of wonder. In those times, there were two giants—Finn McCool and Benandonner. The great giant Benandonner built the Causeway all the way from Scotland to Ireland to fight with Finn McCool!

DAVID. So, your safe place was built by two warring giants.

MADRIGAL. Indeed. Now, we don't know for certain if Finn McCool was a pacifist or a great-grand scairdy-cat, but it is certain he did not want to fight Benandonner. When Benandonner came-a-calling, McCool wrapped himself in a blanket and curled up in a giant pram pretending to be a wee one. McCool's mother brought Benandonner inside and showed him Finn McCool's "baby brother"—who of course was Finn McCool himself! Benandonner took one look at the giant baby and decided that if that was how big the baby was—Finn McCool must be much bigger and stronger and it would be better not to fight him. He ran back across the sea to Scotland and tore up the great Causeway as he fled. 'Tis true!

DAVID. And—you believe that?

MADRIGAL. Benandonner left in such a hurry that his boot remains planted in the Causeway. If you saw it, you would believe it, too. Me da and I would sit by the boot every spring and he would tell me these tales.

DAVID. Sorry about your dad. He sounds—like one of the good guys.

MADRIGAL. You'd have loved him. Everyone did. There was an explosion you see, and Da was in the wrong place, talking to the wrong person at the wrong time. Me mum thought—send me away to my aunt in America. Keep me safe. But I'd rather be home. Even though there are troubles.

DAVID. There's no guarantee of safety here either. Crime is pretty high in the city, especially in the park. At sunrise.

MADRIGAL. At home, people want to build barricades to separate themselves from each other.

DAVID. Maybe there is no safe haven.

MADRIGAL. That's why you search inside you. Look at this.

*(She empties some of her pouch and shows DAVID small pieces of quartz.)*

DAVID. Pebbles. You carry around pebbles?

MADRIGAL. Precious pieces of quartz from the Giant's Causeway. From the sweet nights when my family built midsummer bonfires for the fairies. I take these everywhere. Where you see "pebbles," I see time. I see a piece of the Earth that was here when the dragons flew and the Earth began. Something that is as old as the fairies and as new as the first bud on a tree. They're memory, perhaps even eternity. Spend the morning with me. I am offering you an escape—if only for a brief moment in time.

*(MADRIGAL holds out her hand. DAVID does not take it. He looks at his dog tags.)*

DAVID. It's tempting, but the thing is—it's—just—weird. Going ... fairy chasing and with someone I don't know.

MADRIGAL. I'm Madrigal. Now you know me.

DAVID. If I went with you, could you do something magical?

MADRIGAL. I—don't know.

DAVID. Because that's what I need. Some magic to turn back time. But you can't do that. If you could, you would have gone back to save your dad.

MADRIGAL. Come with me, who knows what we will discover?

DAVID. I—can't. There're things I need to do before work. I have my own—stuff.

MADRIGAL. If the seasons of your mind change—

DAVID. I'll find you.

MADRIGAL. Or—I'll find you. Now, there are things I must do. Promises to keep. *(Exits.)*

DAVID *(calling after her)*. I'm David.

(RONNIE enters with his encyclopedia. He watches DAVID, who is going through some things in his backpack—a picture of Sam and maybe a baseball, even a Boy Scout kerchief.)

RONNIE. Hey! Aren't you the guy who threw the book at us yesterday?

DAVID (*hastily puts away the belongings and starts stretching, as if prepping for a jog*). Yeah ... sorry about that. Hope I didn't hit anyone.

RONNIE. You didn't. Too bad you didn't hit my sister. And knock some sense into her. Going out for a jog or something? 'Cause if you want company, I'm in.

DAVID. Not jogging. Just something.

RONNIE. What—something?

DAVID. If you must know—I'm looking for a proper burial ground. I shouldn't tell you this stuff. You're just a kid.

RONNIE. *You didn't kill anyone, did you?*

DAVID. *No!* It's just—for—stuff.

RONNIE. Mind if I go with you?

DAVID. Don't you have anyone looking out for you?

RONNIE. Yeah. My sister.

DAVID. Where is she?

RONNIE. Don't know.

DAVID. You—jog a lot?

RONNIE. Not really. Let's just say I need to get in shape. (*Starts stretching.*)

DAVID. Getting bullied on the playground?

RONNIE. Something like that.

DAVID. And you want to be able to fight back?

RONNIE. Heck, no! I just want to be able to run away faster!

DAVID. I need to check out the far end of the park—it's kind of—peaceful. I guess you can tag along.

RONNIE. Thanks!



DAVID. Want to put your book in my satchel? The far end of the park's a good mile away. I leave my stuff here.

RONNIE. Is it safe? 'Cause I'm not done with this and it's getting compelling.

DAVID. Believe me, nobody's looking to steal books in this place. What are you reading?

*(RONNIE hands over his encyclopedia which DAVID puts in his backpack and then stows it behind a plant or a rock or with his park equipment.)*

RONNIE. The encyclopedia—"Book M." Figured I better brush up on my knowledge of the moon before the moon walk. Are you going to watch that?

DAVID. Forgot about it.

RONNIE. *You forgot about the moon walk?*

DAVID. Yeah.

*(They exit. NATASHA enters and opens her book. As she is doing that, SHERRIE enters with JOE following. JOE is now in full Shakespearean dress.)*

SHERRIE. You told me you were not doing the mime thing anymore!

JOE. And I'm not. Look! I'm not a mime anymore.

SHERRIE. I can see that. You look like you escaped from *Romeo and Juliet!*

JOE. That's the look I was going for! Perfect for the moon walk!

SHERRIE. What does Shakespeare have to do with the moon walk?

JOE. I'm Shakespeare—celebrating the moon landing—Shakespeare had a line about fighting aliens! "Combat with adverse planets in the heavens!" The bard was truly ahead of his time.

SHERRIE. You're nuts.

JOE. Join me on my Shakespearean adventure. Together we will speak the speech trippingly on the tongue. We will offer free Shakespeare in the park! Bring culture to the masses—delight—enchant—enthral!

SHERRIE. Sweet, delusional Joe! There already *is* free Shakespeare in the park. There has been for over 10 years! They open *Twelfth Night* next week.

JOE (*momentarily taken aback, but just for a second*). Anyone can put on a Shakespearean play. But can they do it with two actors? That's never been done. Together, we can make history. We'll shoot for the moon and settle for the stars!

SHERRIE. I don't want to make history. Don't want to go to the moon. I just want to do my shift at the concession stand, hang out in the park and get up in the morning and do the same thing again.

JOE. But that's so—ordinary. You know I have a calling!

SHERRIE. But who's doing the calling? You really don't know, do you?

JOE. I'm trying to find out!

SHERRIE. Oh, Joe—I can hang out with you—when you look normal. When you're not in costume and just want to be a regular Joe—

JOE. You really don't want to be seen with me, do you?

SHERRIE. I'll be late. Gotta go.

*(SHERRIE exits to go to work and JOE sits. He spies NATASHA.)*