REDWOOD

IDA JOHNSON

AUDITION SIDES

Character Overview + Three Audition Scenes

SECTOR 7 FILMS

IDA JOHNSON

Age 85 | Rod Ashton's Grandmother | Keeper of the Family Recipes

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Ida Johnson is Rod Ashton's 85-year-old grandmother. The script describes her as a thickly built woman with a kind demeanor. She is God-fearing and deeply convicted in her beliefs.

Ida is introduced where her power lives: in the kitchen. She cooks by instinct, prepares pies for church camp meeting, remembers generations of family tradition and carries herself with the ease of someone who has spent a lifetime serving people through food, faith and family.

But Ida is more than a warm grandmother. She is the guardian of the family's history. She has protected a worn recipe book for fifty years, a book passed through generations and tied to stories of Black history, survival and legacy. When she gives it to Rod, she is not simply handing him recipes - she is choosing the next keeper of the family's inheritance.

The key to Ida is AUTHORITY WITHOUT FORCE. She does not need to raise her voice. Her age, faith, memory and certainty give her weight. She can be playful with Rod one moment and speak with almost prophetic conviction the next.

WHAT THE AUDITION SHOULD SHOW

- Warmth - Ida and Rod should feel like grandmother and grandson with years of history between them.
- Faith - her belief in God is part of how she understands life, not something she performs.
- Humor - she enjoys Rod and the memories they share.
- Legacy - when the recipe book appears, the room should feel different. Ida knows what it means.
- Conviction - she sees a future in Rod before he sees it in himself.

DO NOT PLAY IDA AS FRAIL. PLAY A WOMAN WHO HAS LIVED A LONG LIFE, KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT SHE BELIEVES, AND STILL HAS SOMETHING IMPORTANT LEFT TO GIVE.

SIDE 1 - THE KITCHEN

SCENE: Rod visits Ida in her kitchen as she prepares food and pies for church camp meeting. The moment begins light and familiar, then Ida admits this will be her last year baking for the church.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Let Rod feel the comfort of home while gently preparing him for the fact that time is moving forward.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: The humor and warmth should feel effortless. Ida is not asking for sympathy about getting older. She is stating a fact with dignity.

Ida stands over the stove with several pots cooking. Rod sits nearby. The phone rings. She answers.

IDA

Good day. The Johnson residence.

(several beats)

Oh bless your heart Gloria. I do indeed appreciate the help. Saturday around one is fine, and you tell Rev. Franklin I said the pies will be ready in plenty of time fo' camp meeting. I'm saving two especially for him and the first lady.

(beat)

Okay, see you then.

She hangs up the phone and walks back toward the stove.

IDA

Mine are the only pies that man will eat.

ROD

Camp meeting already. I can't wait. I'm coming over Saturday granny. Remember when me and Dempson use to clean the bowls with our fingers when you were finished. That was the best.

Ida chuckles as she stirs the pots.

IDA

Ya'll couldn't wait to lick those bowls clean.

SIDE 1 - THE KITCHEN (CONTINUED)

They both chuckle. Then a brief pause.

IDA

I ain't told pastor yet. This gonna be the last year.

ROD

Last year for what?

IDA

Baking all them pies for camp meeting. I'm gettin' old. My hands don't work like they use to. And standin' on my feet all day.

She dips a large spoon into the pot and waves Rod over.

IDA

Try it...

ROD

Granny, you outdid yourself. Ooh, ooh, ooh this beef stew is to die for.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: Do not make the age confession sentimental. Ida has accepted where she is in life. The emotional value comes from Rod realizing that some things he has always counted on will not last forever.

SIDE 2 - THE BOOK

SCENE: After the kitchen moment, Ida takes Rod into the living room and reveals a tattered family recipe book she has protected for decades.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Make Rod understand that what she is giving him is not a cookbook. It is inheritance, history and responsibility.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: Slow the energy down. Ida has waited a long time for this moment. Let the history in the object affect her before she explains it.

Ida turns off the pots and takes Rod by the hand. In the living room she removes a tattered box from a shelf, sits in a rocking chair and pulls out an old book.

IDA

I called your uncle Wendell. Told I needed to see you. I got something I need to give you. Been holdin' onto it a long time.

She clutches the book for a moment.

IDA

I'm eighty-five years old. I've lived my life best I could raisin' ten children on my own. God knows it ain't been easy.

ROD

What is that?

IDA

I had it buried out in the field and dug up a few days ago. Had it for fifty years, from when my mother passed it to me, and her great aunt passed it to her. The pages are getting worn down. Some of them taped together. Your moma seemed too busy these days to have any interest in it.

SIDE 2 - THE BOOK (CONTINUED)

IDA

Recipes... they been in this family for four, five generations. Each generation pick them up and made'um better. These recipes fed negro troops in the Civil War. And my uncle Tilman used them in the White House to feed the Roosevelts in nineteen hundred and five.

Rod takes the book and looks through it.

ROD

We were feeding presidents?... This is it. They're all here. Even the sweet potato pie. You never share that.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: Ida is not boasting. She is preserving memory. Play the lines like someone naming facts the family cannot afford to forget.

SIDE 3 - LEGACY

SCENE: Rod now understands the book is special, but Ida needs him to understand why she chose him to receive it.

ACTOR OBJECTIVE: Put responsibility into Rod without frightening him away. Ida wants him to accept the book and, more importantly, accept the possibility of who he can become.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: This is the heart of Ida. The scene should feel intimate and certain. She is not making a motivational speech. She is telling Rod what she genuinely sees.

IDA

I ain't got much. Only what lil' God gave me. This means more than money. It's a part of our history. Our legacy. What's tween those pages almost cost a man his life in 1956. Protect it. You said you wanna own a restaurant some day. These recipes gonna get you there.

ROD

Granny I don't know.

IDA

Take it. It ain't doing no good tucked away on that shelf. I see somethin' in you that you can't even see yet.

Rod rests his head on her lap, clutching the booklet.

PERFORMANCE NOTE: The final line should land quietly. Ida is handing Rod a future, but she does not need him to fully understand it tonight.

AUDITION REMINDER

Across these three sides, we should see the same Ida in every beat: the grandmother who can laugh over a pot of stew, the woman of faith who has survived a long life, and the family elder trusted with something bigger than money.

Her strength should come from stillness, certainty and history. Give us warmth without softness, age without weakness, and faith without performance. When Ida gives Rod the recipe book, it should feel like a generational handoff.

THAT'S IDA. NOW SHOW US YOUR VERSION OF HER.