

# MOM'S TRUMPET

by

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BIO: Walter H. Placzek has been active in the New Jersey theatre realm for many years. His previous works, A Love Story and Zarg, have been produced as part of Jersey Voices at Chatham Playhouse

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WHAT'S KEEPING ME POSITIVE: Re-runs of South Park. (I have dined at the real Casa Bonita!)

Yes, you may publish this.

# **CHARACTERS**

CARLA, female, age 40-50  
MAGGIE, female, her sister, age 40-50

## **TIME**

The present.

## **PLACE**

The front porch of a suburban home.

THE TWO SISTERS ARE HIGH- ENERGY, HAPPY-GO-LUCKY PEOPLE WHO LIKE EACH OTHER, AND THE WHOLE FAMILY HAD A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE. SO KEEP THE PRODUCTION UPBEAT—THE PAST IS ALWAYS REMEMBERED WITH HAPPY FONDNESS, NOT SAD FOR WHAT ISN'T NOW, AND THE CHARACTERS AND TONE SHOULD NEVER. EVER BE MAUDLIN, SAD, OR DEPRESSING.

THE “DA”S IN THE CATERPILLAR SONG ARE SIMPLY PLACE MARKERS FOR NOTES WHEN ONE KNOWS A TUNE BUT NOT WORDS: PEOPLE GO “DA DA DA DA.” FEEL FREE TO SELECT OR MAKE UP WHATEVER TUNE YOU FIND APPROPRIATE, BUT THE SEQUENCE SHOULD START SLOW AND BUILD UP PACE AS THEIR MEMORY RETURNS TO THEM. AS TO THE DANCE, KEEP IT MIND IT IS THE CATERPILLAR SONG, SO USE CATERPILLAR SUGGESTIVE MOVEMENTS. AND SINCE THE DANCE WAS ORIGINALLY PERFORMED WHEN THE SISTERS WERE KIDS, IT SHOULD HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF GOOFINESS WHICH MOST EIGHT-YEAR OLDS WOULD FIND EXTREMELY FUNNY.

THE CURTAIN RISES ON THE EXTERIOR FRONT PORCH OF A HOUSE WITH SEVERAL TAPED UP BOXES AND SMALL PIECES OF FURNITURE WHICH MAGGIE IS EXAMINING. CARLA ENTERS FROM THE FRONT DOOR, CARRYING A TRUMPET CASE WHICH SHE SHOWS TO MAGGIE.

CARLA

Maggie? Look what I found in the garage corner. Buried between the Mamie Eisenhower kitchen ware and the Richard Nixon garden gnomes .

MAGGIE

Mom's trumpet? She hadn't played that since we were kids.

CARLA

She clearly didn't want it found until now, since she knew neither of her Bernie loving children would ever approach those tchotchkes.

MAGGIE

Can you play it?

CARLA

You know I'm as musical as a box of unfrozen lima beans.

MAGGIE

I'm going to miss her. Wait--that's a really stupid thing to say.

CARLA

That you'll miss her?

MAGGIE

It's not really stupid that I'm going to miss her. It's just the saying of it out loud that sounds really stupid.

CARLA

I'll say it out loud even if I do sound really stupid: I am going to miss her. She gave up playing after Dad died.

MAGGIE

How old were we?

CARLA

I was eight. That would have made you ten.

MAGGIE

If I were ten again, Dad would be alive. And then Mom would be playing that trumpet.

CARLA

Remember that one tune we danced to?—What was it? The Caterpillar Song?

MAGGIE

We called it the caterpillar song. I have no idea of the real name of the tune,.

CARLA

It only lives in our heads.

MAGGIE

(thinking and addressing her own head)

Ok. Head. How did it go?

CARLA

(happily starting to puzzle out the memory)

Mom never started it.

MAGGIE

Dad would always smack the back of the couch first to start the performance.

(mimicking smacking the couch)

Bang!

CARLA

Mom would launch the tune. It began like “Da” And you’d do the caterpillar dance move.

MAGGIE MAKES THE FIRST CATERPILLAR DANCE MOVE.

MAGGIE

Like this! And then it was a “Da da.” And you’d dance back.

CARLA MAKES A CATERPILLAR DANCE MOVE IN RESPONSE.

CARLA

And you’d dance back. And then “da, da, da.”

CARLA AND MAGGIE PERFORM THE CATERPILLAR DANCE, EACH HAPPILY RESPONDING TO THE MOVEMENTS OF THE OTHER AT THE CHILDHOOD MEMORY OF THEMSELVES AS SMALL CHILDREN. AT THE END THEY ARE GIGGLING LIKE SCHOOLKIDS.

CARLA

Mom would laugh. Dad would laugh. Then he’d light up one of those hideous Black Devil cigars he

used to smoke. No one we knew smoked them, and no place around here sold those nasty things. I always wondered where they were bought.

THERE IS A SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED PAUSE BEFORE MAGGIE SPEAKS.

MAGGIE

Baffle Street Marakangesh Store. In New York City.

CARLA

How do you know?

MAGGIE

I know.

CARLA

How?

MAGGIE

I know.

CARLA

How?

MAGGIE

Remember every now and then Dad used to take me fishing?

CARLA

You never caught anything. Maybe once in a while.

MAGGIE

Once in a while--when he drove past the fish market on the way home to buy some flounder to make our trip look real. He knew Mom despised those cigars and never, ever wanted her to know where he bought them. The trips to New York were our secret. The shop was small, a narrow shoebox with a wired glass door and a snake painted on it. There were always candles lit and the place smelled vaguely of honey. The owner had some weird name, Fugenistankin or something like that, but Dad always just called him Fuji. The store was crammed wall to ceiling with all sorts of odd ball stuff--some I understood, like turtle soap and oil of crhystanthemum, and others my little girl brain couldn't make heads or tails of, like the bottles of crushed purple powder and blue liquid in jars or the hanging rack of animal antlers. Whenever we'd go in, Fuji always knew what Dad wanted, and as we'd leave he give Dad a stern warning in his heavy accent: "Dose Black Devil cigars are evil. Dey will kill you." He was right.

THERE IS A SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED PAUSE BEFORE CARLA SPEAKS.

CARLA

You have a Dad secret. I have a Mom secret. I can play.

MAGGIE

(indicating the trumpet)

That?

CARLA

Mom taught me.

MAGGIE

No.

CARLA

Yes.

MAGGIE

I never saw her teach you.

CARLA

We made sure you and Dad never knew. If Dad went to the store and you were playing at Patsy's house, out came the trumpet. If I was too sick for school and Mom stayed home with me, I learned. When you and Dad had a day-long fishing trip, I'd be pursing my lips and pressing the valves until the sun set and you came home.

MAGGIE

I never heard you play.

CARLA

You didn't need to. Mom heard me play. She said that was enough for her, and it could be our secret. Did you know I have a trumpet in my apartment? Keep it hidden in the shoe closet, just like Mom.

(semi-aghast but comically)

I turned into my Mother!

MAGGIE

Can you play this now?

CARLA

Hasn't been played in thirty years.

(after removing the trumpet from its case)

Seems in decent shape.

CARLA PUTS HER LIPS TO THE TRUMPET AND BLOWS. THERE IS A FLAT MUFFLED FIZZLE BUT NO REAL SOUND.

MAGGIE

Sounds like a box of unfrozen lima beans.

CARLA

Something's wrong.

CARLA EXAMINES THE TRUMPET. WHEN SHE REACHES INSIDE THE BELL, SHE REMOVES SOME CASH BILLS.

CARLA

It's money.

MAGGIE

What?

CARLA

Hundreds. Of hundreds.

MAGGIE

In her trumpet?

CARLA

There's a note.

CARLA UNFOLDS THE NOTE.

MAGGIE

Looks kind of old. What's it say?

CARLA

(reading the note)

"My dear Carla and Maggie: I know you won't find this until I'm with Dad again, and that's how I wanted it and why I stashed this in the garage near the Ronald Reagan royalty collection. You know I hated Dad's Black Devil cigars. Which he bought on his fishing trips. With Maggie."

WE SEE MAGGIE REACT TO THE FACT MOM KNEW OF HER SECRET TRIPS.

CARLA

(continued)

“After he died, I still hated the cigars but always loved your Dad. So whenever I thought Dad might need some cigars, I’d figure out how much they would have cost him, and just tucked the money inside the trumpet. I always believed that trumpets connect to heaven. If Saint Peter permits smoking up there, he’d give Dad cigars, and if Saint Peter doesn’t, Dad would just smile seeing me trying to get them for him. I never counted a total and have no idea how much money is in here, and I don’t care. Dad is either smoking or smiling, you have the cash, and go use it for something you want. Love you both always and forever. Mom.”

MAGGIE

Let’s go.

CARLA

Where?

MAGGIE

The music store. I want a trumpet. You can teach me to play.

CARLA

Then we can both play.

MAGGIE

And both connect to heaven.

CARLA

And keep Mom and Dad laughing.

**THE END**