

# **THE INHERITANCE**

by Gordon L. Wiener

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I've been acting, directing, and designing for community and small professional theaters for over forty years. This is my first bake-off! Yes, you may publish this.

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## CHARACTERS

LARRY, man in 30 - 35

DENISE, woman about the same age as Larry

ROSALIE, woman of advanced age (*Rosalie may appear live or on video. If video is used, change lines as necessary*).

Well dressed MAN - 40s

Well dressed WOMAN - 18 - 25

*Present day, Summer.*

*A tidy living room with inexpensive furniture. One doorway leads to an off-stage outside front porch, another to a kitchen which is also off-stage. We hear a quick ring of the doorbell and the sound of a package dropping onto the porch outside.*

Larry - *(entering, loudly)* Denise, you expecting a package?

Denise - *(off)* I don't think so.

*He opens the door, leans out. We hear the sound of a truck pulling away.*

Larry - I'll bring it in ... *(then, muttering to himself as he crosses into the kitchen)* ...she must have ordered something and forgot about it because I don't remember ordering... unless it's a gift, but who the hell would be sending it... It's nowhere near anybody's birthday *(returning from kitchen wearing paper medical mask, latex gloves, and carrying a spray bottle of liquid and a roll of paper towels)* ...and it's August so there's no holiday...

*(He steps out onto the porch. We see a cloud of mist roll in through the front door while he sprays and wipes down the package. Larry re-enters with the package, spray bottle and some used paper towels. He drops the package onto a table as he continues into the kitchen).*

Denise - *(enters)* I saw the FedEx truck drive away. Who's it from?

Larry - *(coming back from the kitchen)* A lawyer. In Baltimore. *(reads)* Emerson J. Rabinowitz, attorney at law.

Denise - Emerson? Emerson?! What kind of Jewish name is Emerson? Do you want the box cutter? *(Larry nods)* I'll get the box cutter. *(she goes)*

Larry - *(to himself)* What kind of WASPy name is Rabinowitz? And Baltimore... I do have some cousins from Baltimore.

*Denise returns with the box cutter.*

I've never met them, but last I heard about them was... god knows how long ago.

*He starts cutting open the package.*

Denise - Distant cousins?

Larry - Nope.

Denise - Larry, your family is so messed up.

Larry - *(opening box)* Honey, not right now. Please?

*(Larry finds an envelope in the box, opens it and removes a letter. He starts reading to himself).*

Denise - C'mon, what's it say? Who's it from?

Larry - Shush! I'm reading it. Calm down.

Denise - All right. Shhh.

Larry - *(reads)* "Dear beautiful, beautiful boy, Lawrence. / I am your birth-mother's youngest..."

Rosalie - *(overlapping at /)* I am your birth-mother's youngest sister, Rosalie. Rosalie Watson. I live in Baltimore, Maryland. That is, I *lived* in Baltimore, Maryland. Because if you are reading this - and I know you are - I am dead. And not only am I dead, but I have been cremated, jarred, and delivered right to your doorstep. Yes, that's my earthly remains in the canister which accompanies this letter. More about that later.

Lawrence, your mother was an exceptionally beautiful woman. No man could walk by her without turning his head. And she knew what she had and took every opportunity to flaunt her good looks. But it made her lazy 'cause she could skate by all kinds of tests of character. People were pre-disposed to ignoring her faults. Which just got worse as she — Well, I'm not going to speak ill of the dead.

*(Lights come up on a well-dressed MAN and WOMAN. Silently, they have a flirtatious conversation, then they begin to dance).*

The point is, she wanted you to know that your daddy was a very famous man. Especially famous in the '80s, when you were born. He was a musician; a trumpet player. Your mother met him backstage after a show he did in Baltimore. She was naive; only 18 years old or so, and she agreed to meet him at his hotel later that evening for dancing and drinks. Well, I guess you can figure out the rest of what happened that night.

*(Lights go down on MAN and WOMAN, who are still dancing closely).*

And even if she wasn't allowed to contact you, she wanted you to know that she loved you. She loved you so much. And giving you up was the hardest thing she ever had to do. Mister Rabinowitz, the man's estate lawyer has warned me not to disclose your daddy's name because of severe financial penalties we would incur. But you always were a smart boy; you'll be able to figure out who it is I'm telling you about, for sure. Here's a clue: he must have died recently.

Anyway, this trumpet player had many such children like you in every town he played in. He was never interested in knowing any of you, and I believe he must be in Hell with the Devil. But he did have folks keeping track of you all, which became much easier after the Internet happened. And in the end, faced with his mortality, or god or whatever, he decided he owed all of you — I heard there are thirty-five of you! — some of whatever estate he had left behind that wasn't already owed to creditors.

So, if you look in the box, right next to me, you'll see what he left specifically for you.

*Larry takes a trumpet from the box*

Now, that instrument is not his first. His first trumpet is in a museum. But this is a later one he used in the '70s and '80s. It's a Selmer, and he knew you were a jazz lover and he wanted you to have it. By the way, I put some cash in the mouthpiece. You will be nicely surprised by how much!

And now, having fulfilled my duties under an agreement with your late father's estate, via Mr. Rabinowitz, I just want to wish you long life, good health, and much / love and happiness. Sincerely, Rosie.

Larry - *(overlapping at /)* ...love and happiness. Sincerely, Rosie.

*(Larry folds up the letter and puts it back in the envelope. Larry and Denise sit quietly for a moment, kind of stunned. Larry puts down the envelope and re-examines the destination address on the top).*

Larry - It's for the next street over.

*(Denise nods. Larry takes the trumpet out and examines it. He puts the mouthpiece to his lips as if ready to blow).*

Denise - Don't.

*(Blackout)*