

THE TRUMPET OF GABRIEL

by Alicia Harabin

NAME: Alicia Harabin

WHERE YOU ARE FROM: Somerville, NJ

BIO: Alicia Harabin is a director, actress, teacher, and occasional writer. She has appeared on the Summit Playhouse stage in *Boeing Boeing* and *All My Sons*. She is a board member at Circle Players, where she acts and directs frequently. Favorite acting roles include the women in *The 39 Steps*, the fool in *King Lear*, and Elizabeth in *Richard III*. Alicia has not written a play since college and is widely known to be terrible in the kitchen, but she is nonetheless excited for this bakeoff challenge. Thanks to Al Romano for sharing his experience on the train.

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What's keeping you positive? Books, and learning French on Duolingo.

Yes, you can publish this!

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CHARACTERS

JO. Zen master of organization and calm, like Marie Kondo. Attractive in a seemingly effortless way - casual, but impeccably chic.

RAFI. Driven by a deep desire to make others happy. Deeply apologetic if you feel you are being smothered in the process. Looks like a hugger.

ARI. Hates going into the city. Most at home in the garden. 100% organic.

CAM. Like Sherlock Holmes, sees through social cues instead of engaging with them. Great at solutions.

All characters are genderless, ageless, and could be embodied by any adult actor who fits the personality. They wear modern dress suited to their personas, although something may seem a bit "off" about their mannerisms. ARI and CAM enter with face masks around their necks, at the ready.

TIME

Late summer, 2020. Evening.

PLACE

Scene: The front porch of an unremarkable, middle-class home in a well-populated commuter town to a major city (not unlike Summit, New Jersey). The yard is small, but contains a carefully tended garden. There is a bench or seat in the garden, and one on the porch as well. Gabriel and Azrael, whom we never meet, are inside the house throughout.

Lights up on the front porch and yard of an unremarkable, middle class suburban home. JO sits on the porch, busy making a list, as RAFI paces. JO is clearly accustomed to this.

RAFI

If they don't find it - are you worried they won't find it? I hope they find it. (pause) I didn't mean to imply that I don't think they can find it, I just... It would just bring Gabby such peace to know it was found. You know?

(RAFI pauses to look at JO.)

JO

Of course, Rafi. We can all calm down once it's found.

RAFI

(resuming pacing) Cam will find it. Cam must be on the way home now. (checks phone) Do you have any messages, Jo? I don't have any messages. I know Cam's alright. I know that. I know they'll find it. I just... I wonder if they found it yet?

JO

I'm sure they'd call us. Don't worry yourself, Rafi. Cam is good at finding things, and Michael won't give up easily. And Ari is helping, too. It's not a sock that's lost. Things that are precious don't just disappear. They'll find it.

RAFI

At least they're doing something. I feel like I'm not doing anything. I need to do something. Can I help you with anything?

JO

I'm making a list.

RAFI

A list?

JO

Well, three lists. This is a list of all of the places Gabriel has already searched. (turns the page) And this one lists all those who may have had

intentions to take it. (turns the page again) This list is a description of the horn and its qualities, in case we need to enlist the aid of the people.

RAFI

Like, the police? I'm not sure that would be beneficial.

JO

I was thinking more along the lines of posting fliers around the neighborhoods, as they do for lost dogs. It's possible someone found it. Perhaps we could appeal to them to return it with a sympathetic story.

RAFI

How do you mean?

JO

You know the sort. "It was our grandfather's trumpet that he played as his fellow soldiers marched into battle on D Day." Something like that.

RAFI

Were there trumpets on D Day?

JO

There were, but facts seem to be irrelevant these days anyhow.

RAFI

I don't think Gabriel would like it if we posted his secret all over the city.

(As JO thinks this over, ARI enters from the sidewalk and heads directly to the garden seat, clearly rattled.)

RAFI

Ari! How are you doing? You're not well. (rushing down to take ARI's hands) Here we are. You're home now. Be here now. Healing breaths. Iiiiin and oooout. Are you hungry? Did you eat? I'll get you something to eat.

(RAFI exits into the house without listening for an answer.)

ARI

I ate. I ate! I... nevermind.

(JO crosses down to sit on the steps - closer, but giving ARI space).

JO

(gently) It's so nice to have a beautiful garden to come home to.

ARI

Yes. Yes. God, I hate the train!

JO

It's funny. Trains used to bring people such joy. Now, they are a symbol of the rat race and despair.

ARI

Yes! You can smell the... the... failure to thrive, like rotting plants. Although, actually, the smell was worse. I'm all for back-to-nature, but natural deodorant and public transit do not mix.

(RAFI returns with an assortment of vegan snacks and sits by JO.)

JO

Was it very crowded?

RAFI

Did you find it?

RAFI

Oh, gosh. I don't mean to overwhelm you. Take your time. Take a snack. Want an apple? Ha! Maybe *I* need a snack. All this worrying isn't healthy.

ARI

I don't... I don't think so.

(JO and RAFI exchange a look.)

JO

You don't... what do you mean you don't *think* so? You're not hungry?

RAFI

Ari?

ARI

It was just such a strange coincidence. Any other day I'd have thought nothing of it, but right as we're looking for it...

JO

Ari, I need you to organize your thoughts. What did you see?

ARI

I was sitting on the train. I was surprised at how many people were on the train with everything shut down again, but... I suppose there aren't supposed to be so many of them left by now.

RAFI

Are we SURE? I mean, are we really certain that this is supposed to be it?

JO

We've discussed this. We were sent. That's irrefutable.

RAFI

I know. I know! But I just don't want to see anyone harmed needlessly. And somehow I always pictured the announcement as coming more directly. More objectively. I never thought it would be this vague.

JO

Well, perhaps once Gabriel takes his turn things will all become clearer.

RAFI

Everything was always clear before. I imagined it would be the same down here. But it's not at all. It's like all my senses have all been dulled.

(RAFI looks to the sky. JO puts a comforting arm around RAFI.)

JO

Perhaps it's the atmosphere.

(to ARI) So, the train.

ARI

There was this man, a raggedy scrap of a man, tugging a little fold-up shopping cart through the door from the adjoining car. No mask. Holes in his shoes. Bits of something in his beard. He yanks his little cart through the

door with a clatter and the wheels squeaking behind him as he drags it down the aisle. It was full of torn garbage bags, stuffed to the brim with Lord-knows-what, and at the top, a battered old trumpet. (JO and RAFI react.) Just the regular type. I didn't even think of it at first. Probably some kid left it on a train so his mother wouldn't make him practice and this old ragman just happened to pick it up. But then, he launched into this speech.

(a pause)

RAFI
Yes?

ARI
It's silly.

RAFI
Don't let yourself be burdened with it, Ari. It will bring you peace to tell it. We're a team. After all, isn't that why we're helping Gabriel look for it?

ARI
I suppose. It's just... he called it the Trumpet of Gabriel.

JO
But, it wasn't...

ARI
It didn't look like it. Not at all. But he made this whole speech. He said, "You don't know me, but I am a prophet of Israel! I have met the angels and they have gifted me with the music of our most heavenly father!" And then he reached into his cart and he held that battered little trumpet up over his head like some sort of trophy. He was good. All the intensity of a classic fire-and-brimstone preacher.

JO
If only they'd known how slow and labored the process would actually be.

RAFI
If only we'd all known. It does seem odd that they haven't really noticed it happening, though. Considering how often they've claimed the end times

were coming over nothing whatsoever, you'd think they'd all be bunkered up with their Kool-aid by now.

JO

We've been here for months now. Are you really still surprised?

RAFI

It just hurts me to see it every time. Stupidity seems to be the one affliction I cannot heal.

ARI

It seems like this delay has been pretty effective on them, actually.

RAFI

Yes. They seem more bothered by impatience than they are by actual pain.

JO

Ari, I don't understand why this wretched beggar's trumpet has you so shaken. It was a strange coincidence. I'll grant that. But it couldn't be Gabriel's horn, as you've described it. His horn is a thing of beauty.

ARI

I'm not sure if it was the trumpet, or him.

RAFI

Him?

ARI

The beggar man. He really laid it on, showing it all around. He talked on and on about how the angel Gabriel had dropped this down to him from heaven - he said it just like that - "dropped it down on me and gave me the gift of this here horn. I never did blow a horn before, but as soon as I put it to my lips? Why, from this horn came the most heavenly sound you ever did hear."

RAFI

Dropped from heaven? He said dropped?

ARI

Yes. And then he told us he was going to play it for us. I don't know why he was able to draw me in, but I was so glad to be wearing a mask because I could feel my cheeks reddening and I wanted to pull in my petals like a flower and hide from his gaze.

JO

But you didn't do anything that gave you away, did you?

ARI

No. No, I held it together. I watched the others and mimicked their reactions. The man pulled out a hat and put it on the ground beside him, like they do. And then, after all this fanfare, he finally blew on the horn.

RAFI

And?

ARI

And it was awful! The noise was like nothing in nature. If rust had a sound - that's what it sounded like. Or greed. Maybe it was the sound of greed. He must have had something lodged inside it. It really was the most painful earthly sound I have ever heard. But then - this man was a genius - as we were all sitting there wincing in pain and astonishment, he broke into this little dance. He danced like he was dancing to the sound of the angels. He did some quick little steps with his feet, and he grabbed onto the poles in the aisle to spin himself around. He really was very light on his toes. And then he looked up, like he could hear music spilling down from heavens. He kissed his hands - the same hands that had just touched every communal pole in the car - and he raised them to Heaven. He took a bow. He picked up the hat. And then he said, "There was your heavenly music. I have played it for you. And now I'm gonna pass around this hat. And if y'all don't put some money in this hat... I'm gonna play my trumpet again."

JO

Oh dear.

ARI

And then he smiled. He smiled this devilish grin of pure satisfaction. God, he was clever. He walked all the way around the car, holding his smile and his horn. He met every person's eyes. And let me tell you... Anyone who didn't

have some money to drop in that hat? Their neighbor put in double. Willingly. Gladly! I put in a 5. And then... he winked at me.

JO
He winked?

RAFI
Oh, you poor thing.

ARI
I know. It's silly.

RAFI
It's not silly if it doesn't feel silly.

(RAFI crosses down and hugs ARI tightly as CAM enters down the sidewalk, carrying a long, narrow, angelic horn.)

CAM
It's Lucifer.

JO
Cam!

RAFI
Did you find it?

ARI
What do you mean, Lucifer?

CAM
Lucifer. He saw me on the train.

RAFI
Saw you? But where's the horn? Cam - you really didn't find it?

JO
Shh... don't let Gabby hear.

(ARI and JO cross downstage to CAM, farther from the house.)

RAFI

They should really eat something. I'll go in and fix them something.

CAM

No. Let Azrael handle it. Gabriel's grieving, not hurt. Azrael is better at this.

RAFI

But...

ARI

Let them be, Rafi.

JO

Chamuel... perhaps we should let Rafi cook something.

(CAM takes in RAFI's restlessness.)

CAM

That might be helpful.

RAFI

Az must be exhausted. I won't bother them. I promise. I'll just whip up some dinner real quick. For everyone. We're all exhausted! I'll be right back.

(They wait until RAFI has exited into the house, and then...)

JO

Are you sure it was Lucifer?

ARI

Did he have the trumpet?

CAM

No. He had *a* trumpet, of sorts, but not *the* trumpet. He was disguised as an old man - not his usual style. He put on this tremendous show on the train. All of the humans were swayed to give him money.

ARI

I saw him, too! I knew there was something unnatural about him. But that wasn't Gabriel's trumpet? You're sure? I'd never forgive myself if I let him walk right by me with Gabriel's horn.

CAM

No. Definitely not.

ARI

Oh, good.

JO

(contradicting) Well...

CAM

Well, not good. But could be worse. Anyhow, it seems he registered that my reaction was ingenuine.

ARI

I'm sure he knows Gabriel dropped the horn. Everyone must know it.

CAM

Everyone knows there's a delay. No one has an inkling as to why.

ARI

It's probably in Gabriel's best interest to keep it that way.

JO

It's in all of our best interest to find that horn.

CAM

Michael is still out there looking. God love him, he won't give up on it.

JO

Michael's not at fault for this.

ARI

But Gabriel?

(There is an uncomfortable pause.)

CAM

I can't believe that these events were accidental. There are no accidents. Something else must be at work here. Gabriel is not entirely to blame.

JO

Angels don't just drop things. We have grace.

CAM

Precisely. Even the rank-and-file don't just drop things.

ARI

But then, how did it fall from Gabriel's hand?

CAM

I don't know. But I think Lucifer may.

JO

And you're sure it was Lucifer you saw?

CAM

When I got off the train, he got out of another car - the beggar man. He'd left behind all of his things but a trumpet and his grifting hat, which was now on his head. He looked right at me.

ARI

Did you talk to him?

CAM

I had to. He waited by the exit. He waited for me, and as I drew near him he stepped in... and pressed this stack of cash into my chest.

JO

Cash?

(CAM pulls the stack of bills out of a pocket.)

CAM

Hundreds of dollars. Easily.

ARI

From the hat.

JO

What does Lucifer want with money?

CAM

I believe it was a taunt. As he forced this money on me, he leaned in close and said, "For the trumpet." I could smell the brimstone on him. Then he waved that pathetic little piece of brass over his head as he danced down the stairs. The bastard actually slid down the last bit of banister. Like a child!

ARI

He is a child.

JO

He may as well be.

ARI

Do you think he'll tell Father?

CAM

(considers) He'll keep our secret for now. He's enjoying watching us squirm. His goal has always been control.

ARI

But if he knows where it is... Why wouldn't he just let us get on with it? I always thought this is what he was looking forward to: power over the Earth.

JO

Perhaps he feels he has power over something better.

(They mull this over.)

CAM

I'm certain that he'll eventually get bored. He always does. And then he'll come up with some torturous game to get it back to us. If he even has it.

JO

Gabriel's so good with words. Don't you think Gabby could talk to him and find out what he knows?

CAM

No. That would just fan the flame. He's easily bored, but he's confoundingly patient when he's having fun. This could drag on forever if we provoke him.

JO

Michael's still looking. You don't think he'll do something rash, do you? If he runs into Lucifer?

CAM

He may. (CAM looks down.) I sent him... I told him I sensed it uptown.

ARI

Did you?

CAM

No.

(ARI and JO nod.)

JO

Probably best.

ARI

So, we just let it go on like this, then. For how long?

RAFI (from the doorway)

Dinner!

(JO, CAM, and ARI look at one another. Dejectedly, they exit into the house.)