

A GRAND ENTRANCE:
Scenes and Monologues for Mature Actors

Compiled and Edited

by

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THE INHERITANCE

Vin Morreale, Jr.

CHARACTERS

WILMA: Late 50s.

CATHERINE: Early 60s.

PLACE: Anywhere.

TIME: The present.

AT RISE: A simple kitchen. WILMA sits at a worn kitchen table. CATHERINE stands by the counter, her back to WILMA. By their postures, we can sense the tension between them.

CATHERINE. Would you like some coffee, Wilma?

WILMA. You know I don't drink coffee.

CATHERINE. Oh, that's right. I forgot. Tea? With lemon and honey?

WILMA. Just lemon. I'm watching my figure, in case you haven't noticed.

CATHERINE. I noticed. *(An awkward silence as CATHERINE places two cups on the table. She fills them with hot water from a well-worn teapot. In WILMA's, she places a tea bag. In the other, she spoons some instant coffee.)* It is good to see you again, Wilma.

WILMA. Really? That's funny.

CATHERINE. Why is that funny?

WILMA. It is the same thing you said to me the last time I was invited over here. And that was twenty years ago.

CATHERINE. Has it been that long?

WILMA. The last time was when Daddy died.

CATHERINE. There must have been some...

WILMA. There wasn't. But as to my comment, I was wondering why, if it is so good to see me, you wait until two decades pass before we get together?

CATHERINE. Is that entirely my fault?

WILMA. Not entirely. Mostly, would be more accurate.

CATHERINE. You never change, do you?

WILMA. Actually, I've changed a lot. It's you who never changes, Catherine.

CATHERINE. You think so? That's funny. I could have sworn becoming a widow, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, and fighting a four-year bout with cancer might have changed me a little. *(With a hard smile.)* But I'm probably wrong. You always were so much more perceptive than me. *(Pause.)*

WILMA *(not knowing what else to say)*. This is good tea.

CATHERINE. Thank you. I dropped the bag in the water myself.

WILMA. Why do we do this, Catherine?

CATHERINE. I don't know. Because we are sisters, I suppose. Natural antagonists, linked by an accident of genetics.

WILMA. Cute.

CATHERINE. Thank you.

WILMA. I meant to call you when you were in the hospital.

CATHERINE. I got your card. What was the postmark? Denmark?

WILMA. Detroit.

CATHERINE. Ah, that explains why you were unable to visit. Two tankfuls of gas can be so expensive.

WILMA. I was wrong about you not changing. You have developed quite a talent for sarcasm.

CATHERINE. It keeps me sane. All alone in this big, empty house.

WILMA. I can imagine.

CATHERINE. And how is your life? Roger and the kids?

WILMA. Roger left me for a 23-year-old bimbo. I thought you heard.

CATHERINE. I did. I just wanted to hear it from you...
(Lowering her head.) I...I'm sorry.

WILMA. That's okay. I need my ego lacerated by my sister every couple of decades.

CATHERINE. I really am sorry, Wilma.

WILMA. Right.

CATHERINE. I guess...I guess knowing you've been through some tragedy too gives us something in common.

WILMA. I suppose the same parents and the fifteen years growing up together wasn't enough for you?

CATHERINE. Let's not do this.

WILMA. I was thinking the same thing. However, I figured it would be more polite to finish my tea before I left.

CATHERINE. That's not what I meant. Please let's not tear each other apart anymore. We aren't little girls fighting over Daddy's and Mommy's affection.

WILMA. Or running from it.

CATHERINE. Or running from it. We can't change the past.

WILMA. I know. But I'm not ready to let it go yet.

CATHERINE. Wilma... You are 55 years old.

WILMA. Fifty-eight.

CATHERINE. Fifty-eight. The point is... when *will* you be able to let it go?

WILMA. I don't know if I ever can.

CATHERINE. Of course you can. You just don't want to. Anger is a great motivator in life. But it is also poison. It makes even the great things you've accomplished seem inadequate.

WILMA. What do you know about what I've—?

CATHERINE (*cutting her off*). I know everything you have accomplished. Graduated magna cum laude from one of the top engineering schools in the country. You earned a master's degree in engineering back when women in the profession were looked upon as oddities...

WILMA. Or freaks...

CATHERINE. Or freaks... But the point is, you did it. With no support from Mom and Dad...you did it. You made a name for yourself and a career. Then you eloped with Roger, because you didn't want any of the family to spoil your day. You gave birth to twin daughters...Darlene and Deborah...my only nieces, whom I have never seen...

WILMA. I sent you photos...

CATHERINE. Once. When they were 5.

WILMA. You never wrote back.

CATHERINE. You didn't put your return address on the envelope. I took that as a rather blatant hint.

WILMA. It wasn't.

CATHERINE. It was. Why deny it? As I said, the past is over.

WILMA (*softly*). You would like them. Darlene especially.

She is just like you. Practically perfect in every way.

CATHERINE. I was only perfect in your eyes, Wilma.

WILMA. And in our parents' eyes.

CATHERINE. Was that my fault?

WILMA. Wasn't it?

CATHERINE. No. No, it wasn't. Yet, you have wasted our entire lives torturing me, as if I had stolen them away from you. Well, here's a news flash, Wilma. Mommy and Daddy are dead. They have been for twenty years. Isn't it time to drop the sibling rivalry?

WILMA. That's easy for you to say.

CATHERINE. Is it? Is it easy to have that same door slammed in your face year after year? To know that your only living relative still hates you for something that you never did understand? (*Desperately.*) Listen, Wilma. I don't know why Mommy and Daddy lavished everything on me. I have no idea why I was their favorite, and you weren't. I don't know the reasons for any of that. And I don't even know why they left the house to me and not you. I never asked them for it!

WILMA. But you didn't refuse it.

CATHERINE. No, I didn't refuse it... Jonathan was just starting his business at the time. We, uh, didn't have a lot of money.

WILMA. I didn't have a lot of money either.

CATHERINE. I know that. I...I should have borrowed against the house and given you half. It would have been the fair thing to do.

WILMA. It would have. But you didn't do it.

CATHERINE (*taking a deep breath*). That is why I am doing it now.

WILMA. What?

CATHERINE. I want you to have the house.

WILMA (*stunned*). You're kidding.

CATHERINE. No, I'm not. I have had it longer than I deserved. It's your turn now.

WILMA. You mean...you are giving me this house?

CATHERINE. It's just a house, Wilma.

WILMA. The only one you have ever lived in.

CATHERINE. While you have been able to travel all around the country. Maybe it's my turn to do that for a while.

WILMA. Two years after bankruptcy and suddenly you have enough to become a jet-setter? A world traveler?

CATHERINE. Look. I'm an old woman now. I've lost my husband. We never had any children. All I have left... All I have is my memories. They don't take much room.

WILMA. Catherine...

CATHERINE. I don't need this much space. I don't need much of anything anymore.

WILMA. I can't take your house.

CATHERINE. It's not my house. It's Mom and Dad's. Now it's yours.

WILMA. I don't want it.

CATHERINE. You don't have a choice. The paperwork is all drawn up. (*She moves to the counter and picks up a manila envelope. She tosses it on the table in front of WILMA. WILMA stares at the envelope, she opens it slowly, examines the paperwork inside.*) It is perfectly legal. I had a lawyer draw it up last week.

WILMA. This isn't what I wanted.

CATHERINE. It doesn't matter. It's yours now.

WILMA. Stop being so damned noble and listen to what I am saying! (*She hesitates, then.*) I don't want the house because I don't need it anymore either... Roger is living in Omaha with his new Barbie-doll wife. Darlene and Deborah have their own families now, and I only hear from them on Mother's Day and Christmas. One ten-minute phone call each. That's all. (*Softly.*) I am 58 years old and completely alone. What makes you think I need this much space any more than you do?

CATHERINE. But you deserve it. This house is your inheritance. Either now, or when I die.

WILMA. What do you mean, when you die?

CATHERINE. Come on, Wilma. Let's face facts. I beat the last battle with cancer. It took everything I had left inside, but I beat it. When it comes back...

WILMA. *If it comes back...*

CATHERINE. If it comes back...I don't think I'll have the strength to fight it anymore. Or a reason to.

WILMA. Catherine...

CATHERINE. But none of that has absolutely anything to do with my giving you the house. Everything is already set in motion. It's officially yours as of the first of next month. No liens. No mortgages at all. The house is yours, free and clear. (*They stare at their cups. Neither one speaks for a while. WILMA is the first to break the silence.*)

WILMA. Okay, Catherine. You win. I will take the house.

CATHERINE. Good.

WILMA. However, I do have one condition.

CATHERINE. Why must you always look a gift horse in the—?

WILMA (*cutting her off*). My condition is that you agree to stay here, also.

CATHERINE. What are you talking about?

WILMA. You can't expect me to clean up this big old house all by myself? Not even you could be that inconsiderate.

CATHERINE. So hire a housekeeper.

WILMA. And spend what little money I have left? Nothing doing.

CATHERINE. So you're saying...

WILMA. We'll handle it this way... I'll live on the bottom floor. You take the top floor. We share the kitchen, basement and whatever bathroom is closest at the moment. If I want to pee in your bathroom, you can't stop me.

CATHERINE. This doesn't make any sense.

WILMA. It makes perfect sense. I will own the house and you will be sort of a permanent guest. You know, one of those annoying relations who come by to visit and you can never get rid of? We can be like that.

CATHERINE (*trying to hold back the tears*). Wilma... I don't understand... Why are you doing this?

WILMA. Because, Catherine... maybe I've finally realized what my real inheritance is. (*Wipes her eyes with a napkin.*) Now stop your blubbering and make me another cup of tea. (*CATHERINE looks at her sister and wipes the tears from her eyes. She rises, crosses to the kitchen counter. Her back to WILMA.*)

CATHERINE. Lemon and honey?

WILMA. No honey. I'm watching my figure, in case you haven't noticed.

CATHERINE. I noticed. (*Stage lights fade out.*)