

# Let Down The Rains

by

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## DESCRIPTION

A journey changes as the journey goes on, without any guarantee that where the journey ends is where it had intended to go from the start. This often happens in taxi cabs. This is what happens here.

## CHARACTERS

NATHAN DEMBIN, cab driver, must have Irish accent; significantly older than CAPELLA:

CAPELLA WING, a radio psychologist; considerably younger than NATHAN

## SETTING

- Taxi cab
- Room in Rutland, Vermont
- Diner
- Porch of CAPELLA's house

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Two chairs—plain, wooden, armless
- Rocking chair
- A table
- Other props as called for in the play

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## SCENE 1

*Two chairs center: the front seat of a cab, NATHAN driving. CAPELLA, with coat on and holding a small suitcase, hails his taxi. Throughout, NATHAN drives through the city traffic, with all its pedestrians, traffic lights and roadway drama.*

CAPELLA: Taxi! (*to herself*) C'mon, c'mon, c'mon. (*out loud*) Taxi! Taxi! Yes! Great! Great! May I sit up front?

NATHAN: I usually don't let people sit up [front]—

CAPELLA: Why?

NATHAN: I'm not in the habit of frontloading my—

CAPELLA: I can be your co-pilot.

NATHAN: I prefer my fares in the back.

CAPELLA: But I was hoping for a view from the front. And everyone can use a good co-pilot.  
Please.

NATHAN: You could ride the hood as an ornament.

CAPELLA: The figurehead on a ship.

NATHAN: A ship'd be lucky to have a figurehead like you. Come on. Wait—let me set the seat  
back. I wouldn't want to be sued for the bruising of such pretty knees.

CAPELLA: A gentleman and a scholar.

NATHAN: You're half right.

*CAPELLA gives her suitcase a drum roll.*

CAPELLA: Your next line is, "Where to, ma'am?"

NATHAN: I'll bite: "Where to, ma'am?"

CAPELLA: Train station.

NATHAN: Penn or Grand Central?

CAPELLA: Penn.

NATHAN: To where, if I may ask?

CAPELLA: A train to my home.

NATHAN: A good place for you, home?

CAPELLA: Oh yes. Especially now.

NATHAN: And traveling light, I see.

CAPELLA opens the suitcase to show that it is empty.

CAPELLA: For bringing some home back to here.

NATHAN: Very good, then.

CAPELLA: Yes it is.

NATHAN: Some radio? Music? More heat, less heat?

CAPELLA: I am just like Goldilocks: everything is just right.

NATHAN: You're easy to please.

CAPELLA: That's not entirely true, but it's nice of you to say it.

NATHAN: And I might as well admit it—I know who you are, Ms. Capella Wing. You are much better looking than your advertised face plastered on the sides of buses.

CAPELLA: And I have to admit that those pictures scare me—enlarged pores, nose like a rutabaga—

NATHAN: “The Shock of the New”—nifty show title, The Shock of the New.

CAPELLA: Into its tenth year—one decade of—well—(*looking at his ID card*)—Mr. Nathan Dembin, what would you call it? One decade of my doing what?

NATHAN: You're assuming I listen to your show.

CAPELLA: I thought everyone did.

NATHAN: Perhaps one or three who don't—but I am not among them.

CAPELLA: (*mock anxious*) Oh, I was so worried—

NATHAN: Whenever it's on my shift—like this morning.

CAPELLA: And?

NATHAN: You're looking for a review?

CAPELLA: A considered opinion.

NATHAN: From a raw-faced stranger.

CAPELLA: A warning about me, Mr. Dembin: if I'm in for a dime, I'm in for a dollar.

NATHAN: And you look eager for an opinion.

CAPELLA: I am all ears.

NATHAN: All right—

CAPELLA: Engage.

NATHAN: As a radio psychologist you, let's say, pull a lot of cars out of the mud that, personally, I would just leave there because they often sound like they simply want to spin their wheels in the muck for the joy of the spinning. I am less forgiving than you on that account.

CAPELLA: One not much for self-pity.

NATHAN: When I've applied it to myself, I've only gotten a rash, so I don't do it.

CAPELLA: You've never pitied yourself?

NATHAN: I didn't say "never"—

CAPELLA: You didn't say "never"—

NATHAN: Only that when I have so self-pitied, I've found that what I thought were anguished tears was just me peeing in my own boots. Pardon my Welsh.

CAPELLA: So I have these people peeing in their boots, so to speak—

NATHAN: And you take them more seriously than I think their tinkling deserves—you show them what sounds like real heart.

CAPELLA: "Let no heart be unhinged"—

NATHAN: Sincere without making me feel you're "acting" it. And given the daily crap that sluices out of this radio—you're a touch above. And did that go on a bit too long?

CAPELLA: I may pay to have you quote yourself on my show.

NATHAN: Sometimes my tongue wags worse than a puppy. Or beats like those fingers of yours on your suitcase. You seem a bit jittery—have been since you got into my ticking whale.

*CAPELLA, noticing her own drumming on the suitcase, smiles and stops—for a moment. Then picks it up.*

NATHAN: Is it about going home?

CAPELLA: Not about going home.

NATHAN: So home is a good place.

CAPELLA: Home is a great place.

NATHAN: As it isn't for so many. You're lucky.

CAPELLA: I'm not peeing about it. I want to tell you something.

NATHAN: In fact, I'd prefer—

CAPELLA: Would that be all right?

NATHAN: Ms. Wing, I am not a confessional kind of cabbie.

CAPELLA: I wouldn't want to tell you if you were.

NATHAN: Like I said, I usually prefer my fares in the back, limited information in my ear.

CAPELLA: But up front—yes? Made room for my knees.

NATHAN: Prow of the ship.

CAPELLA: Meaning I'm not "usually."

NATHAN: What else could be concluded about a woman with a rutabaga nose?

CAPELLA: This would be like me doing a call-in to you.

NATHAN: You to me.

CAPELLA: Bartenders, hair dressers, cab drivers, and parish priests all play in the same league—whether you like it or not—and you all aspire to be radio psychologists.

NATHAN: So, my only chance.

CAPELLA: I will never be in the flesh in your cab again.

NATHAN: All right.

CAPELLA: Good.

NATHAN: I'll pick up the phone.

CAPELLA: Good. Look, Nathan Dembin.

*CAPELLA hesitates, then pulls back her hair to show NATHAN a bad scrape on her right ear.*

NATHAN: What is that?

CAPELLA: What would you call it?

NATHAN: A pretty bad scrape from being in a scrape. Your ear looks like hamburger.

CAPELLA: I—acquired this—mark—about hour before I got onto your boat.

NATHAN: I should be taking you to the—

CAPELLA: It doesn't hurt—

NATHAN: But still—

CAPELLA: It's minor.

NATHAN: That's not minor.

CAPELLA: I'm not suffering.

NATHAN: Why aren't you?

CAPELLA: You don't really suffer from getting such a gift.

NATHAN: That.

CAPELLA: Who says a gift has to comfort? Where is it written that a gift brings only joy? I can see by your face that you know exactly what I mean, don't you? Because I discovered something. Missing.

NATHAN: Connected to that—

CAPELLA: Yes.

NATHAN: And you want to tell me about that?

CAPELLA: Because of how you complimented my knees. Let me ride up front. Same league, remember? (*coaxing*) "Confrere." You're not refusing to listen, so good. I like my show. I think it's good, and you do, too, it seems. I like my life—I think it's good, too.

NATHAN: Your word on that.

CAPELLA: I have a book out—soon to be plural—

NATHAN: Congrats.

CAPELLA: I do my lectures, I write my articles. I admit I'm ambitious—but I admit I'm not all that ambitious because I like things sweet and a little easy—

NATHAN: Who wouldn't?

CAPELLA: The life-gift to me of a happy childhood with two stable parents, no psychic scars, and only mild demons to dance with.

NATHAN: A wonderful litany.

CAPELLA: I have had, and I am having, an intact life. And all of that is true.

NATHAN: An apple without a bruise, it seems.

CAPELLA: Ah—(*considers the phrase*)—an apple without a bruise—(*drawn out*) But—

NATHAN: (*mimicking her*) But.

CAPELLA: (*prompting him*) But—

NATHAN: That “but” bears the sound of a bruise.

CAPELLA: Knew I could depend on you! Exactly. Something—underneath—is not right.  
Something—inside is not satisfied despite—

NATHAN: Despite all your listed satisfactions.

CAPELLA: Yes.

NATHAN: An emptiness?

CAPELLA: No—a—boredom.

NATHAN: Ah—

CAPELLA: You say that like you know it.

NATHAN: I do say that like I know it.

CAPELLA: (*pointing to ear*) But then this.

NATHAN: How?

CAPELLA: Could we pull over there? I need your attention.

NATHAN: It’s a commercial zone—no standing—

CAPELLA: I’ll pay any tickets. I can see you don’t like it, but—thank you. There’s an alleyway I usually exit by from the studio—and there she was—Dolores. She was the last caller—

NATHAN: I remember her.

CAPELLA: On me like contact paper, Mr. Dembin.

NATHAN: She had been shouting at you on the air.

CAPELLA: Which she continued to do in the alleyway. Along with some slapping and slamming.

NATHAN: That’s how—

CAPELLA: And then, whoosh, gone. But the attack is not important.



NATHAN: You said an hour before—

CAPELLA: And I had a cup of tea after—not important—if someone assaulted you in this cab, you'd be scared, right?

NATHAN: I constantly practice the proper “cringing” that is going to save my life.

CAPELLA: Brought up the same way. You know—(*takes up a mock defensive posture*) But—there's that “but” again, Mr. Dembin—

NATHAN: But no cringing with Dolores?

CAPELLA: And that's not all. What Dolores had done—it felt good.

NATHAN: It didn't frighten—

CAPELLA: It thrilled me. You do not pronounce me crazy.

NATHAN: No, I didn't. I don't.

*CAPELLA beats a quick happy tattoo on her suitcase.*

CAPELLA: The one thing I've started to hate lately? My voice. I hate this perk creeping into it.

NATHAN: “Perk.”

CAPELLA: Oh so animated, so—jaunty. You know. (*in a perky voice*) “And how can I help you today solve your problem?” while underneath in subtitles, “your stupid little life.” Not good. People phone me from the heart of darkness looking for ease, and more and more they find this perked-up voice telling them things that I can't believe I—

NATHAN: Like Dolores. I heard what you said to Dolores.

CAPELLA: And?

NATHAN: I thought it flippant. And harsh. And not in your usual vein.

CAPELLA: Exactly! She had the standard guy standard maltreating her like standard crap—but instead of “shocking” her into, say, the “new” thing of standing up for herself—

NATHAN: You've done that.

CAPELLA: I have done that—I have—but, instead, I, the slightly bored perky little meatman—

NATHAN: “Meatman’s” a bit far—

CAPELLA:—I heard myself telling her that maybe the reason he treated her so miserably is that she really is a miserable person and that she needs to—

NATHAN: And that’s when the ballistics began.

CAPELLA: And she was right! But see—with a quick-fingered engineer, that doesn’t matter.

NATHAN: Volume to zero.

CAPELLA: And the closing theme plays, and the perky little voice of Capella Wing is already winging out to the stars. I dispense and then move on, clean my hands—

*CAPELLA cleans her hands.*

CAPELLA: But when Dolores smacked me down, I suddenly felt very, very, very, very real. After Dolores, I was definitely not bored. (*imitating Dolores*) “I am not going to let you fucking make me feel small!”—that suddenly put me in my body, the complete opposite of radio waves—I had weight! It was almost erotic, Nathan Dembin. Really. Really! The asphalt, the grit against flesh, “I am not going to let you fucking make me”—she made me suffer—and she brought me back.

NATHAN: Ms. Wing, that’s not suffer[ing]—

CAPELLA: The pain made me feel full again.

NATHAN: That’s not [suffering]—

CAPELLA: I should thank Dolores since she had really, really listened. Maybe I should have a Dolores smackdown once a week.

*CAPELLA smacks her suitcase.*

CAPELLA: And that’s my story.

*NATHAN puts the car into gear and pulls away.*

CAPELLA: What?

NATHAN: It's nothing.

CAPELLA: Confreres don't lie.

NATHAN: I don't want to disrespect you, so I'll keep the puppy shut.

CAPELLA: I didn't tell you for you to keep your mouth shut. Give me a response.

NATHAN: I don't think you want a response.

CAPELLA: (*statement and question*) I don't?

NATHAN: I think you want approval. A congratulations.

CAPELLA: Is that so?

NATHAN: I think, for some reason, you want—

CAPELLA: (*cutting him off*) Enough with the "I thinks." How about this, Nathan Dembin? Are you listening?

NATHAN: With my unscraped ears.

CAPELLA: (*without rancor*) How about confrere Nathan Dembin just giving me the straight fucking answer I asked for?

*NATHAN keeps an eye on CAPELLA and an eye on the road. CAPELLA keeps her eye on NATHAN.*

CAPELLA: (*perky*) Have I hit a nerve, Nathan?

NATHAN: You may rent the cab, but you don't rent me.

CAPELLA: So where did "a ship would be lucky to have a figurehead like you" go to? Or were you just blowing smoke up my skirt for the sake of a good tip? Maybe you think I need something else up my—

NATHAN: The Dolores smackdown? One of the daftest ideas I've heard in a long time— (*dismissive*) Pain as a gift—adrenaline as truth—(*catches himself*) I think the rest should be done in silence.

CAPELLA: I think the rest should be loud with the goddamn truth.

NATHAN: The benefits of truth are over-rated.

CAPELLA: People who say crap like that over-rate themselves.

*The gauntlet is thrown down.*

CAPELLA: Pull over, right now.

NATHAN: I can't be—

CAPELLA: Right there—there!

*NATHAN pulls over to the curb. CAPELLA gets out of the cab. NATHAN looks over his left shoulder as if to pull away.*

CAPELLA: Wait a second—I didn't tell you to leave.

NATHAN: You got out—

CAPELLA: You still have my suitcase—

NATHAN:—what else am I supposed to suppose?

CAPELLA: Get out of the car—

NATHAN: We can't be having a tête—

CAPELLA: Hup! Hup!

*NATHAN, clearly controlling himself, goes to slap the meter off.*

CAPELLA: Keep it running—that's right—get your hand away from that—

*NATHAN gets out of the car and stands opposite CAPELLA.*

NATHAN: All right, you pulled me over, you're paying for the time to run—so what do you want?

CAPELLA: "Daftest." Daftest. Is that the best you can do? I want your full attention. I want a better insult. Look at me straight and tell me—

NATHAN: Take your complaint to the hackney division—"my driver was not rude enough"—I have check-off cards—

CAPELLA: Don't get back inside—

NATHAN: Then get back in the cab.

CAPELLA: I've got nothing to hide.

NATHAN: Get back in so I can take you safely where you want to go.

CAPELLA: No.

NATHAN: That's my job. It is not my job to toss trash with you on the street, Capella Wing—I am just not going to do that.

*NATHAN gets back into the cab. Then CAPELLA gets back in. NATHAN puts the car into gear and jerks the car back into traffic. A horn blow, a rude gesture. CAPELLA waits until they're going again.*

CAPELLA: Now, that was adult.

NATHAN: Shut up. Sorry. I don't need to insult you. Because you've insulted yourself—that loopy notion of—

CAPELLA: Loopy—

NATHAN: That daft idea—

CAPELLA: Daft—

NATHAN: Whatever the Christ you want to call it—

CAPELLA: You want to call it.

NATHAN: That stupid idea, then, that pain—your "Dolores smackdown"—your suffering—you didn't suffer—the—notion—that pain is a form a spiritual enlightenment—that attitude, Ms. Wing—that—goddamn—privileged—

CAPELLA: Go on.

NATHAN: It's exactly what an intact unbruised well-off apple would say. "Aesthetic suffering."  
The aesthetic suffering of the unbruised apple.

*CAPELLA reaches into her coat pocket, pulls out a dollar, slaps it down.*

CAPELLA: You and I are definitely in for the whole dollar now, Nathan Dembin.

NATHAN: No we're not. A short distance to go.

CAPELLA: I've got the whole fucking island if I want it.

*NATHAN refuses to budge, so CAPELLA begins drumming on her suitcase in a manner calculated to annoy—perhaps even on to the dashboard and the pine-tree air freshener invisibly hanging from the invisible rear-view mirror and even NATHAN, though she doesn't touch him.*

*Finally, NATHAN reaches out—does not touch her hands but indicates that she should stop. CAPELLA adds a tattoo or two more to make her point, then rests. NATHAN reaches into his pants or shirt pocket and pulls out a dollar bill, drops it on her suitcase.*

*Then NATHAN pulls over to the curb—or double-parks—and shifts in his seat to face CAPELLA. He considers what to say, then launches.*

NATHAN: One thing I have not been liking about your show.

CAPELLA: I'll hold on to the ante—

NATHAN: That sometimes, to this ear, you lose your heart and flip up into your head. Maybe that's when this infamous boredom kicks in.

CAPELLA: And how [does this]—

NATHAN: You get all "tough love"—rub the caller's face into "the truth"—like you're doing them a favor. That's when you lose me.

CAPELLA: A lot of them need [that]—

NATHAN: And who are you to tell them what they need to need?

CAPELLA: That's why they call.

NATHAN: Now you're just truculent.

CAPELLA: Tru-cu-lent—

NATHAN: Then how's pig-headed and tart-mouthed and spite-filled? You know that's not why they call you. You said so yourself.

CAPELLA: Nathan Dembin doesn't think people should be made to face the truth—

NATHAN: "Should be made to"—

CAPELLA:—when it's not facing the truth that's jerking their lives around.

NATHAN: "Should be made to"—a nasty phrase, Ms. Wing. A "head" phrase, a "perk" phrase. Fascist.

CAPELLA: Daft, loopy, stupid, and now "fascist."

NATHAN: "Should be made to" is just like Dolores grinding your ear into the ground. "I am not going to let you fucking make me feel small!" Think about that for a moment. "Should be made to"—I know what I'm talking about. Is that what you want carved into your tombstone? "Capella Wing, perky little meatman, hurt people for their own good." How nice to provide them with such a service! (*softer*) How nice.

CAPELLA: (*sotto voce*) "Perky little meatman."

NATHAN: Not saying it's all the time, or even all that often—but by your own admission it's more and more—

CAPELLA: (*sotto voce*) "Perky little meatman."

NATHAN: And when your voice goes "Now, let me be straight-out with you," I just want to tell the caller to hang it up because you're going to busy-body them to death.

CAPELLA: Does Nathan Dembin think I do anything right?

NATHAN: He already said you do—it's when your heart is tuned in, not your head. Then you don't go "daft."

CAPELLA: This is not what the marketing people usually tell me.

NATHAN: The “marketeers”—

CAPELLA: They suck up the conflict—they supposedly can track ad revenue against when callers take offense.

NATHAN: And is that not offensive? No wonder you’re bored. Ms. Wing, those who ring you usually have too much “should be made to” being done to them by every bottom feeder in their lives—they don’t need it from you, even if they say they do.

CAPELLA: (*to herself*) Phoning in from the heart of darkness.

NATHAN: Those who call you, Ms. Wing, are the bruised apples God threw out of Eden. There’s nothing else to call them. No aesthetic suffering for them—not an option for them. All they really want—is a kind word and what will pass for an embrace to pick themselves up out of their self-pity and move on. The intact ones never have the right to tell the bruised ones what is good for them.

CAPELLA: You know this.

NATHAN: I know this harder than you can imagine. I am now going to pull us back into traffic and take you to your destination. I never could be a radio jock.

CAPELLA: Why?

NATHAN: Because when I open my Irish gob, I insert one foot, then the other, and throw in my hobnailed boots for the door prize.

CAPELLA: Tell me, Mr. Dembin—are you a bruised apple?

NATHAN: Funny you should ask that.

CAPELLA: Even while daft, I still have a radar.

NATHAN: Because today I am. To be fair with you—I feel more bruised today than I have in a long time, and so some of my comments may have come from that—

CAPELLA: Promise not to get tough with you.

NATHAN: All right.

*But NATHAN does not speak right away.*



CAPELLA: I do promise—

NATHAN: I am in mourning for my friend. For a friend who died. Thomas Carlyle.

CAPELLA: I'm very sorry—

NATHAN: This friend kept me hopeful—and now I am not so sure.

CAPELLA: How—did he—

NATHAN: Thomas was murdered.

CAPELLA: Oh God.

NATHAN: Thomas was a beggar and crippled—that's how I met him—he had his station up on 59th—but he had made a complete work of art out of his incompleteness. I'd give him some of my tip money, I'd spot him to meals, we'd take in a game or a museum—and we'd talk. My dim view of the dim tide of humanity was lifted every time I talked with him.

CAPELLA: Mr. Dembin, I am sorry.

NATHAN: Apparently murdered for sport since no money was taken. There's nothing else to say.

CAPELLA: I never take "nothing" at face value.

NATHAN: I have heard you use that phrase before.

CAPELLA: So let it gently prod you to go on.

NATHAN: It is not easy to speak of my feelings, even in ordinary hours. But I am angered, Ms. Wing—I am enraged—at how a brute coward has broken something so beautiful. I apologize if I have been rude—

CAPELLA: You haven't been rude.

NATHAN:—since it was driven by an unhealthy regard for my own grief outside the grief of others.

CAPELLA: No apology needed, Nathan Dembin. I'll take this over Dolores any day.

NATHAN: And with that dispensation, we have the train station coming up.

*A sudden realization that the ride is over. They wait.*

NATHAN: I haven't asked you where home is.

CAPELLA: Did you love your friend?

NATHAN: I did. I do. I will continue to.

*CAPELLA begins to cry. NATHAN digs a packet of tissues out of his jacket pocket. CAPELLA takes them, uses them. NATHAN gently takes the used ones and puts them into his pocket.*

NATHAN: I sometimes think a taxi is like a whale, like the ticking belly of a whale, taking all of us scared little Jonahs through a wicked city where everyone swims around in a dream—and then it lets you go—abandons you to scabble around for a truth that will save your life.

CAPELLA: The Farm.

NATHAN: What?

CAPELLA: The Farm—I'm going to The Farm. You asked me where I was going.

NATHAN: The Farm.

CAPELLA: The Farm.

NATHAN: Where the weary be at rest, hey?

CAPELLA: *(grinning)* Once upon a time—*(stops herself)* One hundred acres in Rutland, Vermont—we, friends, bought it an ice age ago and started a commune—

NATHAN: And you still have it going?

CAPELLA: It's weird and it's strange but we still have it going.

NATHAN: Now you should see your face—

CAPELLA: Rocking chair on the porch—such peace in that rocking chair, Nathan Dembin—

NATHAN: I can hear it rock in your voice.

CAPELLA: Gardens, bird-song—three or four stay year-round, the rest of us—

NATHAN: Escape the wicked cities when you can?

CAPELLA: Money has to be made and paid. But yes, escape, and that is where I am going, where “the weary be at rest.”

NATHAN: (*taking the last of her tissues*) It sounds wonderful. You are very lucky.

CAPELLA: I’m sorry—

NATHAN: Apology is futile.

CAPELLA: Not for me—little ol’ intact me—for your friend—for Dolores—

NATHAN: And some for yourself would be all right.

CAPELLA: Nah-uh—gotta be “tough”—no self-pity!

NATHAN: Ah, go on—take a little!

CAPELLA: And some for yourself.

NATHAN: Acceptable.

NATHAN: I wish there were more time to hear about The Farm.

CAPELLA: Here’s your dollar back—and the fare.

NATHAN: No tips for me today. In homage to Thomas—give it to whom you think needs it so that hope may arise.

CAPELLA: A cab driver not taking a tip—I’m surprised the world doesn’t fall off its axis.

NATHAN: I’m surprised about that very thing every day. You have a good trip.

CAPELLA: Watch out for this wicked city.

NATHAN: Full-time occupation.

CAPELLA: (*hesitating*) If you would like to talk more about him—

NATHAN: (*smiling*) Face to face and not on the phone?

CAPELLA: Even you say I do a good job. It is a something I can do.

NATHAN: Being who I am, Ms. Wing, I am going to let that car sit in the mud a bit and spin.

CAPELLA: All right, then. All right. But not too long.

NATHAN: Eventually an ox will pull me out.

CAPELLA: Take care.

NATHAN: And you as well.

*CAPELLA still hesitates, and there is the feeling that they would both sit there far longer if only one of them would suggest it. Finally, CAPELLA gets out, moves out of the light, and stands. NATHAN stares in the direction that CAPELLA has left, as if following her with his eyes.*

NATHAN: “There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.”

*NATHAN waves. CAPELLA waves back. Lights shift to Rutland, Vermont. Transition with music.*

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## SCENE 2

*CAPELLA slumps in a rocking chair, coat draped over her shoulders, suitcase by the chair. There is also a second chair. She holds legal documents. She rocks.*

*NATHAN shows up at what would be the front door, a kit bag slung across his shoulder. CAPELLA notices NATHAN, laughs.*

CAPELLA: Oh, oh, oh.

NATHAN: Are you all right?

CAPELLA: In such shapes—

NATHAN: Are you all right?

CAPELLA:—do our angels come.

NATHAN: Where is everything?

*CAPELLA holds out the documents for him to read. NATHAN kneels by the rocking chair and reads in silence.*

CAPELLA: I found those in a neat diseased white envelope on the seat of this rocking chair. I'll bet you if I had sat on it, I would've rotted out my cunt.

*NATHAN shuffles through the papers.*

NATHAN: They took it.

CAPELLA: They took it, all righty.

NATHAN: All of it.

CAPELLA: They took me, all righty.

NATHAN: You got outvoted.

CAPELLA: And, stupid me, I didn't even know they were voting. I left them a message I was coming up—post-Dolores—in that hour—

NATHAN: They cut you out of the vote—

CAPELLA: Must've made them scurry around—like rats—

NATHAN: You being here wouldn't have made any difference—

CAPELLA: That's why they hadn't changed the locks yet—I had to discover the infection—

NATHAN: (*reading*) The new owners are changing the locks next week.

CAPELLA: Funny how we called that a trust.

NATHAN: But they didn't cut you out of the money—at least that's a—

CAPELLA: We had established the legal entity of a trust, and, stupid me, I thought that meant—

NATHAN: It says here—

CAPELLA: I know what it says.

NATHAN: They just needed a majority—

CAPELLA: I know! And now all I have is the book of the dead and you. And why am I not surprised to see you here?

*NATHAN sits in the other chair. He folds the papers and hands them to CAPELLA, but she lets them drop.*

NATHAN: I am really sorry—

CAPELLA: A sorry one you are—I assume you hijacked the cab—

NATHAN: I did—

CAPELLA:—to Rutland-edge-of-the-abys-Vermont—

NATHAN: I did—

CAPELLA: My used kleenex in your pocket?

NATHAN: They are—

CAPELLA: How gallant.

NATHAN: More gallant than you have at the moment—

CAPELLA: And my not being surprised to see you: what is that supposed to mean?

*CAPELLA gets up, paces, then slams the rocking chair against the floor.*

CAPELLA: Tell me what anything of this something is supposed to mean.

*CAPELLA slams down the chair again.*

CAPELLA: The meaning—what is the goddamn meaning—betrayal and treachery and murder and treason and false heart and—aaahhhh!!!

*CAPELLA has the chair over her head, ready to smash it down, her coat fallen from her shoulders—absolute rage. NATHAN gets to his feet.*

NATHAN: Ms. Wing, don't—you talked—don't—you talked to me—don't!—about the rocking chair, about the chair that gave you peace—gave you peace—a friend that stayed—it didn't do any of this screwing-over—

*CAPELLA pauses, looks around, looks at NATHAN, and laughs. NATHAN takes the chair from CAPELLA and puts it down. CAPELLA walks up to NATHAN and puts her hand against his cheek.*

CAPELLA: My fool.

*But instead of a caress, CAPELLA gives him a vicious slap with her other hand.*

CAPELLA: I want to sit myself inside this rage. It is warm and sharp and clear.

*CAPELLA goes to slap him again, but NATHAN grabs her wrist. She goes to slap him with her other hand, and he grabs that wrist as well. She gets a hand free, goes to slap, he blocks her. It is a strained awkward dance, but NATHAN has the strength to control it.*

*CAPELLA pulls her hands away.*

CAPELLA: Right now I wish I had Dolores on the phone. Because I would tell her—all of them—that I hate being eye-deep in the running sewer called their “lives” because it's so hard to love people who don't love themselves—“he doesn't like me, I don't feel actualized, what's my full poten[tial]”—Christ!—fire! ice! fucking locusts!—doesn't matter as long as it would wipe away this scum, this scum that—scum that would—that would do that, scum that pisses where I sleep and shits where I dream and takes—and takes—and takes—the possibility—of peace—away—from me. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh goddamn it!

*NATHAN goes to put her coat around her shoulders. CAPELLA pulls it out of his hands, pulls it tight around her.*

CAPELLA: Christ, give me that—I don't even feel like hitting you again—

NATHAN: Good, because I don't feel like turning the other cheek—

*The silence hangs.*

CAPELLA: What are you doing here?

NATHAN: I am as surprised as you are about my ending up in Rutland-edge-of-the-abyss-Vermont—

CAPELLA: Stop it—don't bull[shit me]—

NATHAN: None intended—

CAPELLA: (*smirking*) "Geezer on a Quest"—

NATHAN: I did choose—I chose you—

CAPELLA: And why would The Geezer waste himself on a choice like that?

NATHAN: The Geezer is hundreds of miles past thinking it's a wasted choice.

CAPELLA: Thus proving his mental defect. Because from this point forward I intend to be someone who—

NATHAN: So you're kicking this gift to the curb?

CAPELLA: Gift?

NATHAN: What is a gift but something you don't know you need and still get?

CAPELLA: I needed you?

NATHAN: Why else am I here?

CAPELLA: Just go—I'm tired—

NATHAN: Will this new "someone" be—

CAPELLA: Go—

NATHAN:—maybe, Wonder Woman "in her satin tights / fighting for her rights"—

*CAPELLA turns on him.*



CAPELLA: If you're going to mock me—

*CAPELLA goes to kick him.*

CAPELLA:—call me someone with a side-kick so I can kick you in the fucking side—

*NATHAN moves out of the way.*

NATHAN: Or will you be Achilles—“sing, O goddess, of the anger of Achilles”—

*CAPELLA throws the chair at him.*

CAPELLA: Shut up!

*NATHAN sets the chair upright, stands on it.*

NATHAN: Behold the low-rent hard-ass.

CAPELLA: Shut up.

NATHAN: The car spins its wheels in the muck of its own self-pity—

*CAPELLA moves toward NATHAN, who, with a surprising spryness, gets off the chair and puts it between himself and CAPELLA.*

NATHAN: Here, this hard-boiled romantic with a stone heart to keep her safe from the bungs of the wicked world—

CAPELLA: Shut up.

*NATHAN gets back up on the chair.*

NATHAN: “Vengeance is mine”—

*NATHAN does a careful little jig on the chair.*

CAPELLA: Stop that.

NATHAN: I'm your good-luck Irish leprechaun, come at the end of the rainbow. La-di-dah-di-dah-di-di— I suppose you're gonna sue 'em.

CAPELLA: You're going to crack your bones—

*NATHAN still dances.*

NATHAN: Bring on the sharkish lawyers—

CAPELLA: Stop—

NATHAN: I'm here to stop you from such legal foolishness—top of the mornin' to ya—

CAPELLA: Irish leprecut—

*NATHAN stops dancing.*

CAPELLA: I am going to sue them.

NATHAN: No! No! Ms. Wing, I have to try harder—

*NATHAN starts dancing again.*

CAPELLA: It's Capella—and stop—

NATHAN: Still Ms. Wing to me—

CAPELLA: Just stop!

*NATHAN stops dancing, catches his breath. They watch each other.*

CAPELLA: Why shouldn't I make them suffer? Why shouldn't I murder them back?

*NATHAN gets off the chair.*

NATHAN: Sit. Please.

CAPELLA: Answer my question.

NATHAN: Sit.

*CAPELLA sits in the rocking chair. NATHAN sits in the other chair.*

NATHAN: I add to your docket of heart-murder by supposed friends the case of Senseless Brutality versus Thomas Carlyle.

CAPELLA: Thomas—

NATHAN: My beggar friend.

CAPELLA: Right.

NATHAN: My bruised apple.

CAPELLA: I'm sorry—I'd forgotten.

NATHAN: Who do you think got me to come here? It never would have been Geezer Nathan Dembin all on his own.

*With THOMAS' name in the air, they fall into silence.*

CAPELLA: Shit! Shit!

*More silence.*

CAPELLA: It's like I have this fucking monitor that sits up here—"oh, look at how rageful she's being, how she's trying to be so sincere"—a goddamn critique—a performance—

*CAPELLA faces NATHAN.*

CAPELLA: But there was a moment—a moment—

NATHAN: There always is—

CAPELLA:—when I saw the papers—when I first saw you—

NATHAN: Pure—

CAPELLA: Pure it was—

NATHAN: That's why we sometimes hunger for rage—

CAPELLA:—it was clean—so clean—right through the gut—purged—cleansed—

NATHAN: Filleted—

CAPELLA: Chop-chop!—and then—to get dragged—back to—grief—

NATHAN: To the Farm and Thomas and [Dolores]—

CAPELLA:—and all the annoyance of having to, again, breathe in and breathe out—

NATHAN: And to figure in and figure out—

CAPELLA: Keep in and keep out—

NATHAN: Call in and call out—that should've been yours—

CAPELLA: It just got me tired—

NATHAN: Me, too—all of it—

*CAPELLA looks at NATHAN directly.*

CAPELLA: If you're my weather report, Mr. Dembin, then what's the forecast?

NATHAN: I talked to Thomas, all the way here—a little like talking to someone on the radio.  
About what I seemed to be doing.

CAPELLA: Do you know what you're doing?

NATHAN: No. And yes. And then no and yes again.

CAPELLA: You're ahead of me.

NATHAN: Do you want to hear what I said to Thomas?

CAPELLA: Of course.

NATHAN: Good—because there is much riding on the back of this horse.

*NATHAN pauses, then stands, turns, unzips his pants to tuck in his shirt.*

CAPELLA: What are you doing?

NATHAN: This is the only way I know how to do this.

CAPELLA: You look like a schoolboy.

NATHAN: And altar boy—old bottle for a new wine.

CAPELLA: (*pointing, smiling*) Ah, Mr. Dembin—

*NATHAN looks down and sees that his fly is unzipped.*

NATHAN: Oh, for Christ's sake—is everything—

CAPELLA: Intact.

NATHAN: Good. Wouldn't want your mind distracted. What the schoolboy/altar boy in the ticking whale said to his friend Thomas.

CAPELLA: You look like you've just dropped forty years.

NATHAN: More like forty IQ points. Okay. What I told Thomas. I told Thomas about an article I read about lost twins—about how in a lot of twin pregnancies, one of the twins just disappears, leaving an empty space. Thomas mused that maybe every single baby is a left-behind twin because he noticed that we never seem to stop hungering for that “one” who makes us feel complete.

CAPELLA: Thomas is a much better co-pilot than I was.

NATHAN: (*holds up hand*) I lose track easily. I added that perhaps this also explains the human puzzle that, at one and the same time, we ache to be connected and yet fear any closeness because we may lose it again to chance and death. And yet we do manage, somehow, to connect. Thomas agreed. It went something like that.

*NATHAN cups his hand to his ear, as if he were wearing a headset, and sits.*

NATHAN: Thank you for calling. How can I help you? Make believe I know what I'm doing. Come on.

CAPELLA: Thank you for taking my call.

NATHAN: How can I help you?

CAPELLA: I'm not sure.

NATHAN: I never take "I'm not sure" at face value. You have to try a little harder.

CAPELLA: I want to understand.

NATHAN: All right.

CAPELLA: And I want amnesia.

NATHAN: To protect you from the understanding—all right.

CAPELLA: And I want revenge.

NATHAN: Which may or may not bring you peace—all right.

CAPELLA: And I want peace.

NATHAN: Which may or may not come packaged with the understanding.

CAPELLA: How does this all connect?

NATHAN: Listen closely: Thomas speaks. You have to accept suffering, yours and others', accept its inevitability, and then forget it so that you can move on, but move on without forgetting it.

CAPELLA: I can't—

NATHAN: Ah-ah—

CAPELLA: Take my call again.

NATHAN: Thank you for calling.

CAPELLA: Thank you.

NATHAN: How can I help?

CAPELLA: I have no home to move on to.

NATHAN: I never take "I have no home" at face value. Try a little harder.

CAPELLA: I have no “try” left in me.

NATHAN: That only means that, for the moment, you have no love. And that “for the moment” only means for the moment, mind you. When you have love, then you have “try,” then you have home. Or something like that. Thomas would’ve said it better.

CAPELLA: Give me the papers. This is all I have, Mr. Dembin.

NATHAN: These? These are your instructions for letting go.

CAPELLA: You don’t know how beautiful it was here.

NATHAN: And there are no more beautiful places?

CAPELLA: But to be cheated—

NATHAN: Vengeance doesn’t bring the twin back.

CAPELLA: Can’t I chop them in the neck? Just a few blood-spatters?

NATHAN: Always with the gut sensations.

CAPELLA: It’s cold in here.

NATHAN: I can’t tell you how empty I felt when I saw how emptied out everything was—

CAPELLA: Your one big let’s-just-do-it impulse ends in a bust.

NATHAN: Let me finish the call, Ms. Wing.

CAPELLA: *(laughing)* Go ahead.

NATHAN: But I think my trip here has been wildly successful. So does Thomas.

*CAPELLA stands, grabs the valise, opens it, puts the papers inside.*

CAPELLA: The kleenex.

*NATHAN puts the used tissues inside as well.*

CAPELLA: Take me back, Mr. Dembin. No more gold foil on the dung pile.

NATHAN: The whale awaits.

CAPELLA: I still hate them. I still want to hurt them.

NATHAN: Betrayal is a form of murder, isn't it? Who wouldn't want to murder back?

CAPELLA: What would Thomas say—have said?

NATHAN: "Say" is the right tense. Do the murdering in your head—it's a lot easier to clean up afterwards, and you can do it as often as you want. In the meantime, get your revenge by living well—much easier on the gut.

CAPELLA: Quite the fool, he was.

NATHAN: Thank God, wouldn't you say? I do.

*CAPELLA leaves, standing just outside the light. Then NATHAN follows, slinging his kit bag across his shoulder and giving a push to the rocking chair that leaves it rocking. Then, on an impulse, he goes back and takes the chair. Lights go to black. Transition with music.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### SCENE 3

*A diner mid-way between there and here: table, two chairs, two coffee cups, NATHAN stage left chair, CAPELLA stage right chair. NATHAN's kit bag is slung across his chair.*

CAPELLA: I didn't realize I was so hungry.

NATHAN: Adrenaline can kill an appetite.

CAPELLA: You must be exhausted.

NATHAN: The bag of bones still has some kick in it.

CAPELLA: Dancing the little jig—

NATHAN: But it will be nice to get back.



CAPELLA: You'll be in trouble, though.

NATHAN: Still nice to be back.

CAPELLA: Theory-to-be-proved until I'm there.

NATHAN: Fair enough. What?

CAPELLA: It's all right.

NATHAN: Not a good time to hold anything back.

CAPELLA: No, really—

NATHAN: Ms. Wing—

CAPELLA: It's nothing—

NATHAN: That didn't work in the cab and it won't work here. What is it?

CAPELLA: It's nothing— As much as I want all this to feel—adventurous?—and the food was good, the talk was good—

NATHAN: Yes?

CAPELLA: My Dolores sense is still ringing.

NATHAN: Really?

CAPELLA: I gotta say it—

NATHAN: Loud?

CAPELLA: Off the hook.

NATHAN: Ah—you mean, "Why did the geezer cross the road to Vermont?"

CAPELLA: I mean this—you, total stranger, meets me once, then drives himself to Rutland—

NATHAN: Edge-of-the-abyss-Vermont—

CAPELLA:—without—look, I should just be flattered—

NATHAN: No—no—

CAPELLA: Grateful—

NATHAN:—what Dolores is saying is, What are the nasties in this fool?

CAPELLA: Yes. Exactly. I'm sorry, but—yes—

NATHAN: When will his dirt hit me—hurt me?

CAPELLA: Because nobody is this—can be this—

NATHAN: And because you think that nobody has ever—you can't trust me.

CAPELLA: Mr. Dembin, after today, who knows what's in anybody's heart. Look, forget it—I'm just being ungrateful—

NATHAN: Why are you so intent at this moment to make it all make out to be nice? It's not all nice.

*NATHAN reaches into the bag and brings out an enormous sheathed knife, lays it on the table.*

NATHAN: There are times when etiquette will get your balls cut off—pardon the Welsh. SOG Recon Bowie.

CAPELLA: It has a name.

NATHAN: High-carbon SK5 steel and gun-blued for rust inhibition and stealth. Epoxied leather handle and spanner nut for balance and feel. Vietnam-war era.

CAPELLA: And it has you as its owner.

NATHAN: Pick it up if you want.

CAPELLA: This has stories.

NATHAN: Of course.

CAPELLA: Has it—

NATHAN: It has been used. Go ahead—slide it out. But keep it low—I wouldn't broadcast it about.

CAPELLA: You have used this.

NATHAN: Yes.

CAPELLA: You are capable [of]—

NATHAN: Yes.

CAPELLA: I have to ask.

NATHAN: You being you—Dolores being Dolores—you do, don't you?

CAPELLA: I do.

NATHAN: Because you know that even perfect angels kill, like St. Michael with his sword, and gallant knights do slaughter.

CAPELLA: Make it quick.

*NATHAN takes the knife, sheathes it, puts it away.*

NATHAN: We don't need this.

CAPELLA: Make it quick.

NATHAN: Nineteen-eighty-nine, Namibia. Do you know where Namibia is?

CAPELLA: No goddamn asides—

NATHAN: I didn't until 1985, when I went there in the middle of its war against South Africa for independence. I was recruited by one Irish mercenary named Donald Acheson, an IRA man, like me, who himself was a hired member of a South African Defense Force death squad titled, nicely, the Civil Cooperation Bureau—

CAPELLA: No goddamn editorializing—

NATHAN: Acheson does away with leading Namibian independence activist Anton Lubowski, shot nine times outside his house with an AK47. Acheson was named alongside nine other people for the murder. But. They missed someone.

CAPELLA: You.

NATHAN: I was a member of Acheson's crew—Lubowski was only one of the many— But I was also playing the other side—the money was unbelievably good—right, no editorials—and I told the Namibians about the upcoming assassination. But for some reason— After the killing, I found it expedient to change my occupation since it was not healthy to be pursued by two governments, three if Ireland chipped in. It wasn't hard—I melted away. Into a taxi cab, my ticking whale. I do have blood on my hands.

CAPELLA: Why?

NATHAN: Many reasons, no absolutions—I did it because the money was good, I'd known Acheson for the crazy IRA fuck that he was and at that time in the politics of my life "crazy IRA fuck" went a long way with me.

CAPELLA: I'm wondering if I should be afraid.

NATHAN: Of that? No—no. I do carry it for protection—which is an illusion because I am not sure I could ever use it again. For what it had been used for. You taking it out is the first time it's been out since—well, it's never been tested in my cab.

CAPELLA: I meant afraid of you.

NATHAN: All I can say is this: I am what I am because of what I have been. I listen to Thomas and come for you in Rutland because of what I have been. Everything that was has been poured into what is. What else can I say? Except I wouldn't be surprised if you decided—

CAPELLA: Which hand did you use?

NATHAN: Both.

CAPELLA: Most often.

NATHAN: My left.

*CAPELLA gestures to him, and NATHAN hands her his left hand. She slides it under her coat and places it on her left breast. NATHAN tries to pull away,*

NATHAN: What are you doing—

*CAPELLA does not let him go.*

CAPELLA: Don't. Feel. Feel! What do you feel?

NATHAN: Nothing.

CAPELLA: Not nothing. Breast?

NATHAN: No—I don't—

CAPELLA: Then what?

NATHAN: A ridge.

CAPELLA: A ridge of scar.

NATHAN: Cut away?

CAPELLA: Cut off. To the bone. By my own chosen knife. A scarlet letter over my heart.

*NATHAN gently tries to tug away, but CAPELLA holds him.*

CAPELLA: What else? Feel.

NATHAN: Your heartbeat. Your ribs. Your breathing. In and out.

CAPELLA: You feel my life—the same as this morning—and not the same. Take it back now.

*NATHAN takes his hand away, looks at it as if it's been either charmed or withered.*

NATHAN: "Should I be afraid of you?" is a question on the table as well.

CAPELLA: We all have our knives in their sheathes—that's all, Mr. Dembin, that's all it was.

NATHAN: Does this swap of information make it that we're traveling back together? Or not?

CAPELLA: I think—I think we have to give our ticking whale a chance to spit us back onto the beach.

NATHAN: The Bible said “vomit” for Jonah—but I think I can do us better than that.

*They stand. NATHAN puts down money for the check.*

NATHAN: Your dollar’s in there. Jonah went on to complete his work, you know. Telling people about their sins. The whole city of Nineveh, as a matter of fact—they put on sackcloth and repented and God accepted.

CAPELLA: The Ninevehns had it easy, though, didn’t they? They got a full set of instructions. I’ll drive.

*CAPELLA gestures for the keys.*

NATHAN: You give me a tough co-pilot act to follow.

CAPELLA: Just find us something interesting to listen to on the radio. Think you can do that?

NATHAN: Aye-aye, captain.

CAPELLA: And I want you to know that just because you have the rocking chair in the back seat does not mean anything.

NATHAN: And I am getting close to being double your age.

CAPELLA: Nothing here has been tied up, neatly or otherwise, Mr. Dembin—

NATHAN: Since when is that a requirement? Or even a thing to be desired?

CAPELLA: And Dolores is still “on.”

NATHAN: For us both. A lot of deal-breakers here, aren’t there?

CAPELLA: Just no talk radio on the way home.

NATHAN: Just music.

*CAPELLA speaks as she walks away.*

CAPELLA: I’m glad you saved the rocking chair.

*NATHAN follows. Transition with radio/music.*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### SCENE 4

*Several days later. NATHAN is in the rocking chair; there is a second chair next to him. CAPELLA walks in, as if coming from somewhere.*

NATHAN: Good show today, Ms. Wing.

CAPELLA: Yeah, it was. Why aren't you—

NATHAN: As you can imagine, I am no longer employed by my hackney company, the trip to Vermont off the meter somewhat outside their rules and regs—they decided not to press charges once I told them of my heartfelt journey—

CAPELLA: You're kidding.

NATHAN: Not about the knife, but most everything else. That and the restitution I made to them seemed to solve everything. They won't give me a letter of reference, though, I don't think.

CAPELLA: What are you going to do?

NATHAN: I have some means—not to worry. But at the moment it gives me time to cross the river to your New Jersey porch and warm this up for you.

*NATHAN gets up and offers CAPELLA the rocking chair, which she takes.*

NATHAN: Adjustments for customer comfort. What?

CAPELLA: Will you do me a favor?

NATHAN: I'm in favor of that.

CAPELLA: Will you call me Capella?

NATHAN: I suppose I've earned that.

CAPELLA: And should I call you Nathan or Nate?

NATHAN: Nate would be neat.

CAPELLA: Nate, sit down. Tell me what you liked about the show.

NATHAN: Capella, your little intro about acting upon one's primary impulses was strikingly apt.

CAPELLA: Nate, I want you to tell me all about what you liked about it.

*NATHAN leans into CAPELLA.*

CAPELLA: You may.

*They kiss.*

NATHAN: That's just an introduction to my commentary.

CAPELLA: And we sit where the weary be at rest.

NATHAN: Finally.

*BLACKOUT*