

PANOS SAKELIS

**REHEARSAL
IN
THE RAIN**



Translation by
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*STARBUCK: There's no such thing as a plain woman.
Every real woman is pretty. They're all pretty in
a different way, but they're all pretty.*

LIZZIE: Not me. When I look in the looking glass....

*STARBUCK: Don't let Noah be your looking glass. It's
gotta be inside a you. Then one day that looking
glass will be the man who loves you. It'll be his
eyes maybe. And you'll look in that mirror and
you'll be more than pretty. You'll be beautiful.*

“The Rainmaker” by R. Nash

(a synopsis of the theatrical play is enclosed at the end of the book)

CHAPTER 1 : THE TOWN HALL CLOCK

AUGUST 16, 1973

The first distinctive clang of the Town Hall clock rang out in the middle of the night. Before the ringing had stopped echoing throughout town, a sleepless late-nighter made to look at his watch – but he didn't have time to; everything had frozen into timelessness. From somewhere in the distance rumble like thunder could be heard. This timeless situation that had befallen our small town lasted no more than a second, and ended when the Town Hall clock struck a second time.

Hearing the clock, the late-nighter finally looked at his digital night clock. It was 02:40 AM. It can't be. I must have imagined it, he thought.

If there was one thing which the small provincial town was known and distinguished for, it was its college, which was founded 59 years ago. The late David Copper, dead and gone a long time now, had many useful connections and had managed to procure the necessary license in order to build a school that would allow the youngsters of this isolated backwoods area to get a decent degree that would help them get into one of the country's bigger universities.

So it was that the college, with its wide variety of degrees, was the pride and joy of Copperville, situated roughly in the middle of nowhere.

There were many ranches and cattle farms in the broader area, and most of the commotion around the train station on the outskirts of town was from cattlemen sending their livestock to the big state markets.

The other town jewel and point of pride for the locals was the large clock adorning the right side of the Town Hall. Both the clock and the Town Hall itself had been donations from David Copper. The Coppers had been the first family to settle in the area and so had christened the town with their surname. But the family line had dwindled long ago, since the last of the Coppers had remained unmarried and produced no legitimate successors. Sure, there had been several children descending from David Copper and born out of wedlock, but Copper had managed to send his bastard children, along with their mothers, as far away as possible, making it worth their while with a hefty financial settlement.

The college was on the other side of town from the train station. The newer part of town developed around the college, with mansion-like homes spread across acres of land. The college campus and grounds also functioned as the town's main park, so there was never a shortage of hustle and bustle going on. Over the last decade, the college had finally acquired its own theatre hall, which now doubled for all college and town-related cultural events. The theatre hall,

along with the illustrious campus library afforded the college Dean a certain prestige, since his was the sole approval needed for the organization of such events. That was, of course, one of the reasons he held an honorary position on the Town Council.

The town's sole bus route started at the train station on the outskirts of town, went through the centre down to the intercity bus station, and ended up at the college campus. There was no other bus line, but the majority would tell you there was little need for another; most people had their own car.

The only month when traffic generally died down was August, and even then not for the whole month. In the last ten days of August, the Professors' Council at the college held regular meetings to determine which students would receive scholarships for the upcoming academic year.

The student dorms, on the edge of campus, provided room and board to students with limited funds. The scholarships were paid for in part by generous alumni donations; many college alumni who had succeeded in their careers wanted to contribute to the college. The rest of the scholarships were covered by the train station organization; the grounds peripheral to the station had belonged to David Copper and left at his bequest under the college's ownership.

The following summer would mark the 60 years since the founding of the college, and already 20 years had passed since the death of David Copper; in addition, they would be celebrating 80 years from the founding of Copperville itself. The mayor and the Town Council had decided they should extend the celebrations and make it a week-long affair. A series of events would take place, kicking off with the unveiling of a carved bust of David Copper on the Town Hall lawn, and ending with a theatre performance staged by the college Drama Club. In the mean time, events would include musical evenings organized by the local choir and the college Jazz Club, as well as a bazaar by the local Women's Charity Committee and many other hap-

penings that would keep the town busy and in high spirits throughout the week. The week where everything was to go down was at the end of the academic year right after schools closed.

And so it was that everyone was waiting with great anticipation for the summer to end and for September to begin, so that planning could commence full-swing. You think it's easy organizing something so big? And what of it being a whole year away? So many things needed to be put into place that an organizing frenzy had begun, mostly on the part of the women, as soon as the decision had been made public. Club meetings, delegating responsibilities and the general layout of the events, including every little thing in between, had to be planned right down to a T. In previous years they had arranged for the setup of a Luna Park, but this year the whole town wanted to outdo itself in a spectacle of events that everyone would remember for a long time to come.

CHAPTER 2 : LET THE SHOW BEGIN

SEPTEMBER 10, 1973

Mayor Joseph Cohen had called Copperville's administrative council to order so that the celebration procedures could be made official. Since they were also celebrating 80 years from the town's founding, the Town Hall was all cleaned up already sporting several flags and banners, in lieu of the arrival of various representatives of the cultural events to take place. The mayor was sitting at his office desk, waiting for the councilman in charge to inform him of his guests' arrival. He intended on entering the conference room last, mostly for effect, but also because he knew they would all try and corner him into procuring for themselves a more prominent placement in the week's events. But the commencement and length of events had already been settled and would last a week, starting on Sunday, June thirtieth and end on Sunday, July Seventh 1974.

The mayor was focusing on some papers in front of him when he heard a light knock on his office door. Looking at his clock, he knew it was too early to be called for the council meeting. He frowned, figuring it might be David, his advisor, looking to ask more inane questions. The truth is the mayor did not much like David Carradine, the local councilor for Civic and Cultural Affairs, because he liked to project himself as overly cultured and tended to try and control all coordinative efforts for the celebrations. Given the fact that Carradine would be running in the local elections next winter, it was obvious that he was trying to secure for himself alone all future praise for the celebrations' success.

"Come in," he said in a gruff voice, and lowered his head to look busy.

The door opened and in walked a young girl. Treading lightly she approached the desk and sat down in a chair opposite the mayor.

"Good morning, Mr. Mayor," she teased.

At this, the mayor finally looked up to see his daughter sitting across from him.

“Well hello there,” he said, softening his stern look. “To what do I owe the pleasure of your company, Nanita?”

“Did you forget I’m waiting on that birth certificate? I have to take my papers in to college today.”

“Of course not,” he said. “I have them right here, I just forgot you were coming in for them today.”

“Yup, it’s today alright,” she said, making herself comfortable.

Joseph looked through the pile of papers in his Outgoing shelf and extracting his daughter’s birth certificate slid it along the desk towards her. Nanita took the document, put it in her bag and continued to stare at her father as if there was something she wanted to ask, but didn’t know how. Joseph knew that look and not wasting time, confronted her.

“What is it? Did you have an argument with your mother?”

“Freda wants me to help out with the bazaar the Women’s Charity Committee is organizing for charity,” she said, obviously displeased.

“And?”

“I told her she could forget about it, I don’t want to hang around those old hags that’ll be there,” she said bursting into giggles.

“So you’ve decided to focus solely on your studies?” Joseph asked with hidden relief, peering at Nanita curiously.

Even though Nanita was a good student, she wasn’t the kind to stay home and devote all her time to studying.

“Of course not,” she replied coolly. “I’m thinking of joining the college Drama Club, helping out wherever they might need me.”

Joseph knew well where this conversation was going but he retained his poker face a while longer.

“Have you told your mother?” he smiled.

“It doesn’t concern her,” she said petulantly. “It concerns you and me,” she said smiling sweetly at him.