

# ***Each Slow Dusk***

*by*

*Joseph Arnone*

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Cast of Characters

<u>BENJAMIN</u> :	19
<u>MAE</u> :	50's
<u>MARSHALL</u> :	40's

Place  
Cabin

Time  
Night

2.

Setting: The play takes place inside a small cabin in the middle of the woods during the late 1860's American west.

At Rise: The play opens with Benjamin seeking refuge from a thunderstorm and Mae watching him from inside her cabin.

SCENE 1

*Ominous thunderstorm.*

*Rain explodes upon the Earth.*

*We see an old wooden cabin enter the atmosphere as the lights slowly fade up.*

*The exterior of the cabin is soaking wet, with a large wooden porch.*

*Inside, a fire glows through the front window.*

*BENJAMIN enters, carrying a lantern and wearing a cowboy hat, leather vest and spurs.*

*Benjamin looks inside the cabin.*

*We notice a woman dimly lit with her hair in a bun. This is MAE. She stares back at Benjamin unimpressed.*

BENJAMIN: Hello! Please don't be startled! Is it alright if I stand out here on your porch for shelter?

MAE: Shelter?

BENJAMIN: From all this rain!

*Mae comes into full view at the window.*

MAE: It's raining hard outside?

BENJAMIN: Haven't you noticed?

MAE: ...Come on in then.

*Benjamin follows Mae towards the front door.*

*The cabin set moves halfway around and when it stops, reveals the entire interior of the cabin.*

*Mae opens the door, now positioned stage right. Benjamin stands at the doorframe a moment before entering.*

MAE: Sit.

*Benjamin enters and looks around before choosing a seat (stage right) to sit in.*

*Mae moves stage left to the kitchen and pours herbal tea into a mug.*

BENJAMIN: I'm afraid I've found myself completely caught in the rain. It seems I'm soaked to the bone. *(chuckles)*

*Mae places mug on the table before Benjamin.*

BENJAMIN: Thank you, kindly.

MAE: WHAT??

BENJAMIN: This tea?

MAE: HUH??

BENJAMIN: *(sniffs mug)* Is this tea?

MAE: Drink.

*Benjamin takes a small sip.*

BENJAMIN: Whew, that's hot. *(chuckles)* But good. Good and hot. *(beat)* That's lovely. *(beat)* Well, I thought it would hold long enough for me to, well, it got the better of me I'm afraid.

*Mae sits in her rocking chair by the fire place. She knits a sweater.*

MAE: Afraid? *(she laughs hysterically, one could say mockingly)*

BENJAMIN: *(uncomfortable)* Well, perhaps afraid is the wrong word. It's only a figure of speech, really. I'm certainly not afraid of any rain or any weather for that matter. *(loud thunder and lightening - Benjamin's shoulder's jump)* *(he clears his throat)* That would be foolish of me.

MAE: Foolish...

BENJAMIN: Do you mind if I warm myself by the fire?

MAE: *(nods slowly)*

*Benjamin hesitates and remembers to grab his tea before walking to the fireplace.*

*Mae studies him carefully.*

BENJAMIN: *(clears his throat - sips tea)* Mmm..lovely. I was gettin' a bit of the sniffles, but this fire here and this tea will warm me right up, I'm sure of it. Thank you.

*Mae rocks in her chair and continues knitting.*

*Pause.*

BENJAMIN: It's comin' down quite hard, but it doesn't matter the elements. I'm a bounty hunter. Bet you never would have guessed it. (*chuckles*) Well, true to form I am. Not by passion, just by trade. Got one a them wailers tied up in the wagon not too far off from here...got 'em chained up kinda good so he won't be goin' nowhere and I sure weren't gonna play no sittin' duck in this storm with 'em; listening to 'em wail about how he's afraid of lightning and thunder and all. Weren't my idea of a good night if you catch my drift. Been doin' this line a work far too long to have to listen to grown men moan about their misfortunes. I left 'em a bottle of whiskey. Sulk by himself. Least I could do. Hell. I'm getting' a pretty penny for hauling his ass in anyway. What difference does it make if I give away a cheap bottle a whiskey, eh? (*beat*) Another time I was haulin' in a former soldier turned rogue who had a rotting wisdom tooth. He'd be cryin' out to the moon each time the wagon wheels went over a big enough rock..finally, I took mercy on 'em and poured a bottle of whiskey down his throat...tied my fishing line to his tooth and gave him a good yank..out it came, black and gray all over..rest of the ride into town was pure bliss; even though they hanged his ass not six hours after. (*beat*) What's a lady like yourself doin' this far out in the woods alone on a night like this?

*Mae stands up and throws her own mug at the wall Benjamin stands next to.*

MAE: Drink your tea!!!

BENJAMIN: Well, I, I think I must be goin'.

MAE: Think...always thinking. Thinking of the screams directed at the heart. The caged rage circulating up and down my ribcage. His final breath was years ago. It was trickery! It was decided! The evil spirit that smokes. Puff! Puff! Puff! Puff! Like a fiend. Crying shames of laughter. Pleading forms of joy. Gentle feelings of hatred...the stench of an unwashed deed remains forever. What isn't said is what is said, no? The mockery. The collection, yes? Vomit. Such darkness won't be saved. Dancing on Benjamin's.

BENJAMIN: You say Benjamin?

MAE: Benjamin.

BENJAMIN: Do I know you?

MAE: Benjamin.

BENJAMIN: That's my name...do you know me?

*Benjamin observes Mae.*

BENJAMIN: I don't believe I know you...how do you know my name lady?

MAE: Benjamin.

BENJAMIN: Stop saying that! How do you know my name? *(beat)* I've never seen you before lady. I appreciate your hospitality...I must be going.

*Benjamin goes back out onto the porch.  
The rain hasn't let up at all.*

*Benjamin turns up his collar and begins to sway. He extends his hand to the cabin but becomes faint...he collapses.*

## SCENE 2

*Benjamin is laying down on a single cot against a wall beside the fireplace.*

*Mae applies a wet rag to his forehead.*

*Benjamin is completely naked, except for the blanket over his body. He stirs awake.*

MAE: Shh, shh, shh, shh...you must not move. You have fallen ill.

BENJAMIN: Ill?

MAE: No, no.

*Benjamin sits up.*

BENJAMIN: Where are all my clothes?

MAE: Clothes?

BENJAMIN: MY clothes.

MAE: You have no clothes.

BENJAMIN: Where are my clothes?!

*Mae stands up and steps back.*

BENJAMIN: Where did you put my belongings?

MAE: You have taken ill.

BENJAMIN: I am not ill!

*Benjamin gets up and wraps the blanket around himself. He hunts the cabin for his belongings.*

BENJAMIN: (turning to Mae) For the last time, where have you put my belongings?

*Mae sits in her rocking chair. She knits and rocks back and forth.*

*Benjamin's rage boils over and he grabs Mae by her shoulders and stands her up.*

BENJAMIN: WHERE IS MY RIFLE??

MARSHALL: That's enough.

*Marshall steps forward out from a dark corner of the cabin.*

*Marshall aims a rifle at Benjamin.*

MARSHALL: Slowly step away from Miss Mae and sit yourself down, Benjamin.

*Benjamin takes a step away from Miss Mae. Miss Mae sits back in her rocking chair.*

MARSHALL: Miss Mae was kind enough to come find me out by my wagon and untie me after she learned who the real fugitive was.

*Benjamin sits.*

MAE: Send him off.

MARSHALL: Don't you worry Miss Mae..I will. Come on Benjamin, off we go. Get up!

*Benjamin stands.*

BENJAMIN: Where's my clothes?

MARSHALL: I'm taking you in just as you are for the humiliation of what you caused me.

BENJAMIN: In the nude?

*Marshall pulls the blanket off from Benjamin and tosses it over a chair.*

MARSHALL: Now you in the nude!

BENJAMIN: Can't a man die with dignity?

MARSHALL: A man? You never got that far Son. There's no such thing in this world of ours, not with the likes of your kinds. Now get!!

MAE: Mr. Marshall?

MARSHALL: Yes, Mam?

MAE: Surely, he doesn't have to go in the nude, does he?

MARSHALL: Well, I...

MAE: He's welcome to my blanket to keep him decent.

MARSHALL: This man ain't decent.

MAE: I know, but still...it would make me feel better about it all, considering we try to be decent folk regardless..wouldn't you say?

MARSHALL: I believe you do have a point Miss Mae. Apologies if I've offended you.

*Marshall tosses blanket back to Benjamin.*

MARSHALL: *(to Benjamin)* Go! *(to Mae)* I truly appreciate your generosity. Much obliged, Mam.

*Marshall opens the front door.*

*Benjamin walks out the door first.*

*Marshall follows while aiming the rifle at Benjamin. He nods a last nod to Mae.*

*Mae closes the front door. She opens up a closet door stage left. She takes out Benjamin's belongings and lays them out on the table after she folds them.*

MAE: When you was just a little boy, you used to play in that very same closet. Day or night I would always find you there. Always so distant...always keepin' to yourself. How many times did I tell you to stop foolin' round with your daddy's guns? You were somethin' awful, until you became somethin' awful...didn't you? Didn't matter how far away I sent you. Didn't matter who's care you were under. It was always inside of you, no denying that. And now you will have your final caring place. They will treat you cold. You will be nonexistent. You still won't ever matter. Your father mattered. He was the only one that truly mattered. That's all I'll ever know.

**END OF PLAY**