

ZEPHYR

a full-length play

By Michael Rychlewski

© October 22, 2016

Michael Rychlewski
5858 N. Broadway Apt. 307
Chicago, Il. 60660
Home: 872-208-3939
Cell: 773-319-6857
ryclaire@comcast.net

October 22, 2016

Time:

The day and the night after 9/11

Place:

A dome car on the California Zephyr, going west.

Characters:

Sharon 60

Donna 42

Ross 23

Ellie 31

Andrew 50

Jamshed 40

Notes:

The passing landscape of America is where the audience sits.

**The movement of the train may be suggested by reflections
in the curved-glass portion of the dome car.**

SCENE ONE

Late morning in a dome car on The California Zephyr going west through Illinois. The car is sketched with four seats downstage in a quarter-circle numbered 1 to 4 from stage right to stage left. There is a single exit stage right. At rise SHARON sits alone in seat 4. She wears a dark business suit with a cameo necklace, a black 3-ring binder on her lap. She gazes out at the passing landscape a while, then opens the binder, takes out a highlighter and begins marking it up. DONNA enters dressed in a stylish but haphazard fashion, perhaps in layers with slightly mismatched colors. She carries an enormous purse. She takes seat 1, settles in and puts her purse on seat 2. She breathes in the view, then regards SHARON, who senses a conversation coming and burrows into her binder. DONNA takes out a Radio/CD player, puts in her ear-buds and dreamily regards the passing landscape. ROSS enters--handsome, dressed casually. He carries several magazines--Car and Driver, Sports Illustrated, Newsweek, PC World, Seventeen--and a folded Chicago Tribune. DONNA scoops up her purse and subtly offers him seat 2. He takes seat 3. SHARON continues to highlight. DONNA takes out her ear-buds.

DONNA

You have broad tastes.

ROSS

My grand pa.

DONNA

He reads *Seventeen*?

ROSS

(laughs) No! He runs a resort. "Reading materials in every cabin!" I grabbed these for the ride back. Give this to my sister.

DONNA

Let me guess. She's...fourteen!

ROSS

Nine!

(They laugh.)

DONNA

It's nice to have something light to read. After yesterday.

ROSS

I hear ya.

DONNA

I still can't believe it. How could someone do something like that? Take planes like that and... *(overwhelmed)* It's unbelievable!

ROSS

Don't worry. We'll find'm. ... We'll get'm.

(DONNA offers ROSS a handshake.)

DONNA

I'm Donna.

(They shake.)

ROSS

Ross.

DONNA

Ohhhh! Cold hands! ... Warm heart?

(DONNA holds his hand for a few moments longer than is necessary.)

ROSS

I hope so.

DONNA

How far you going, Ross?

ROSS

Denver.

DONNA

All the way to the coast! *(playfully)* The Father the Son and the Holy Ghost! *(searching if he knows the reference)* Took the last train for the coast?

(ROSS is slightly quizzical.)

ROSS

Okay.

DONNA

(to SHARON) How about you?

(SHARON does not respond. DONNA lowers her voice to ROSS.)

Lost in her work. That's the way to do it. *Disappear* into your quarterly sales projections.--

SHARON

Denver.

(DONNA narrows her eyes playfully.)

DONNA

Business or pleasure?

(SHARON measures DONNA. ANDREW and ELLIE enter, look around. Only seat 2 is left. They balk.)

ANDREW

You take it. I'll stand.

ELLIE

No!

ANDREW

It's no big deal.

ELLIE

We can come back later.

ANDREW

Sit. *(gestures to the passing landscape.)* Enjoy.

ROSS

Why don't you take my seat.

ANDREW

No, no.

ROSS

I've seen this a million times.

ANDREW

That's okay.

ROSS

I don't mind.

ANDREW

It's okay, young man. I'm fine.

(They are quiet a while. SHARON regards the passing landscape, absently touching her cameo. ANDREW watches her.)

ELLIE

(to ROSS) So...where you from?

ROSS

Stevens Point. ...Wisconsin.

ELLIE

They make beer there.

(ROSS is surprised and pleased she knows.)

ROSS

They do! Good beer.!

ELLIE

My brother used to drive up there with his buddy. They'd bring back a dozen cases.

ROSS

A man with taste! ...Does he still go up there?

ELLIE

He passed.

ROSS

Oh. I'm sorry.

ELLIE

That's okay.

ROSS

How about you? Where you from?

ELLIE

Carmi, Illinois. Way down at the bottom. Andy's from San Francisco. He's my uncle. We're going to the West Coast and then driving back. But first we're gonna get off at Grand Junction, Colorado. Andy wants to see this old movie theater. *(faux-exasperation)* He loves old movie theaters. "They have history, Ellie!"

ROSS

That's a cool area around Grand Junction. Canyon country.

ELLIE

Really!?

ROSS

Oh yeah! My favorite spot in the whole west is right there. The Colorado National Monument! It's like a mini Grand Canyon. There's these beautiful rock formations. At sunset! ...Man!

DONNA

Sounds wonderful.

ROSS

It's great..

ELLIE

We should go there, Andy.

ANDREW

Well, we're on a pretty tight schedule, Ellie.

ROSS

It's only a half hour from Grand Junction. There's this great drive along the rim. Seven hundred feet, right off the side. It's intense!

ELLIE

Wow! Maybe we can squeeze it in.

ANDREW

You know how you are about heights.

ELLIE

Well, maybe the only way to get rid of that is to face it. ...Right? We could go for a couple hours. Andy's got everything scheduled. He's been planning this for months. It's my first trip west and he wants it to be perfect. My brother promised to take me, but he never got the chance. ...And my father wasn't too interested. So...Andy's making good.

ROSS

Cool.

(They regard the passing landscape a while.)

DONNA

Hey! Look at that!

ELLIE

Oh wow!

ROSS

He's really bookin'.