

# **ROSIE, THE RETIRED ROCKETTE**

**TEN-MINUTE PLAY**

**By Daniel Guyton**

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## **ROSIE, THE RETIRED ROCKETTE**

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**SYNOPSIS:** 86 year old Rosie is confined to a nursing home, but that doesn't stop her from living the life of a fabulous Rockette! When her slightly dysfunctional family shows up for Christmas dinner, they realize just how dedicated to her old life Rosie can be. A black comedy treat for anyone who ever wanted to hold onto the best of life!

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

(4 WOMEN)

ROSIE (f) .....	86.
DAWN (f) .....	49.
CHRISTIE (f).....	19.
ELLA (f) .....	15.

### **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

*Rosie, The Retired Rockette* premiered at the Prop Theatre in Chicago, IL. It was produced by the n.u.f.a.n. ensemble (Paul Barile, Artistic Director) as part of their **7 Plays in 7 Holi-days Festival** in December 2011. The cast was as follows:

ROSIE.....	Kristin Broadwell
DAWN .....	Megan Mackie
CHRISTIE.....	Colleen Mooney
ELLA .....	Grisel Abarca

Director .....	Ron Mace
Production Design.....	James Sparling
Production Design.....	Carol Rudy Ludwick
Stage Manager .....	Lauren Pace

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*This play is dedicated to Momore, who inspired my warped sense of humor, and who taught me how to laugh, even when we both knew we shouldn't.*

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**AT RISE:**

Lights up on ROSIE, an elderly woman in a small bedroom in a nursing home. She sits quietly in her recliner, as soft Christmas music plays over her radio. There is one Christmas decoration in the room—perhaps a small tree or wreath. As the song fades out, a new one begins to play—“It’s The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.” ROSIE instinctively begins dancing from her chair. It’s a weak dance from a seated position, but the moves are still ingrained within her. During her routine, there is a knock on the door. She is taken out of the moment and looks around, confused. The music fades as CHRISTIE enters with a tray of food, followed by ELLA with a bag of presents.

**CHRISTIE:** Hello Grandma, Merry Christmas! (CHRISTIE places her tray on the nightstand.)

**ELLA:** Hi Grandma.

She kisses ROSIE on the cheek. ROSIE looks at them without recognition. She smiles politely, but confused. DAWN enters, with another bag full of food.

**DAWN:** (Business-like.) Mom. (DAWN looks down at her mother. After seeing no recognition, she sighs, then kisses her forehead.)

**CHRISTIE:** (Laying out the food.) We brought ham, and stuffing, and even sweet potato casserole for you, Grandma.

**ELLA:** (Helping.) Oh, and pumpkin pie!

ROSIE does not understand at first, but then sees the food.

**ROSIE:** Oh no, dear. I have to go on stage in a few minutes.

She stares into space again, practicing her dance steps as DAWN looks at her daughters. The daughters share a smile.

**DAWN:** No, Mom, you’re not at Radio City today. You’re in Northbridge. We’ve come for dinner.

**ROSIE:** (Confidently.) Oh no, I’m at Radio City. This is the green room. Albert will be very upset with me if I miss my cue.

**ELLA:** Who's Albert?

**DAWN:** Shh.

**ROSIE:** Albert, dear? Why, he's the stage manager. You'd better not anger him, or he'll keep you out of the show. *(She continues dancing.)* Ethel says he's a "poof"—but I don't believe her.

**CHRISTIE:** Grandma!

*ELLA giggles.*

**ROSIE:** Well, Ethel's just mad because he fancies me. *(She keeps dancing, light as a feather. The girls giggle. She stops dancing, and looks at them, annoyed.)* You must be new here.

**DAWN:** *(Picking up some of the food.)* No Mom, this is Christie and Ella, your granddaughters. *(ROSIE waves them off and continues her dance steps.)* Well, I'm gonna take these to the kitchen and heat them up. Girls, will you take care of Grandma while I get the food ready?

**ELLA:** Of course, Mom!

**CHRISTIE:** Mm-hmm.

*DAWN smiles at her mother.*

**DAWN:** I love you Mom. *(No response. She exits.)*

**ELLA:** Grandma, I got a 96 on my math test. And I'm kicking butt in physics. *(ROSIE keeps dancing in her chair.)* I think I might go into nano-science. *(ROSIE keeps dancing. The two girls shrug at each other.)* And Christie's got a boyfriend.

*ROSIE stops dancing.*

**ROSIE:** Oh? What's his name dear?

**CHRISTIE:** *(Embarrassed.)* Well, he's...not a "boyfriend" really. It's...Barry. He's on the swim team.

**ROSIE:** Oh! Well, Barry's a handsome name. I dated a Barry once. When I was in grade school. He had the cutest little dimples. *(Small pause.)* Have you girls been laid yet?

**CHRISTIE:** What?!?

**ELLA:** Grandma!

**ROSIE:** Well, I don't mind if you haven't. It's just that Tina Valentine. The dark-skinned one? She'll tease you endlessly if you haven't. So you might want to lie to her and tell her you have.

*ELLA covers her mouth, trying not to laugh.*

**CHRISTIE:** Okay, Grandma. We'll do that...

**ROSIE:** They're a great bunch of girls here, but...some of them know how to gossip.

**CHRISTIE:** Grandma, can I show you what I learned in dance class the other day?

**ROSIE:** Well...all right...

**CHRISTIE:** It's hard because I don't have my ballet shoes on. But...  
*(She performs a ballet piece from "Swan Lake"—then gets embarrassed and stops.)* I...don't have the music...

**ROSIE:** I can see why Russell hired you. *(She whispers to ELLA.)* He always liked the young ones.

**CHRISTIE:** I watch all of your old newsreels, Grandma. I...just...I want to be just like you.

**ROSIE:** *(Waving her off.)* Oh, flattery will get you nowhere in this business, dearie. *(Small pause.)* I'm lying, of course. It'll get you everywhere. Just don't sleep with Russell. He won't even buy you dinner afterwards. *(She continues dancing.)*

**CHRISTIE:** Grandma, we...talked about you in my dance class the other day, and...Ms. Yolanda says that African Americans were not allowed in the Rockettes until the 1980's.

**ROSIE:** Oh God, no. That would ruin the whole effect. We're supposed to be identical. One big happy family of replaceable twins. How could we ever...? No, no. Leon would roll over in his grave, God bless him.

**CHRISTIE:** But you said Tina...Valen...

**ROSIE:** What, dear?

**CHRISTIE:** N...Nevermind.

**ROSIE:** You mean the dark-skinned girl? She's Italian. Ethel says she's Catholic. *Caused a big stir among the girls here when she first came in. But we love her as one of our own. Fabulous timing. (She stands and does a two-step.)*

**ELLA:** What song are you dancing to, Grandma?

**ROSIE:** Why, it's the March of the Wooden Soldiers, dear! Can't you hear it? *(She dances more furiously. The girls look at each other and smile. She stops dancing.)* Okay, somebody catch me. *(She falls backwards like the wooden soldiers in the Christmas show, as CHRISTIE runs up and catches her. Pause. ROSIE whispers.)* Okay, now you gotta fall backwards too...

**CHRISTIE:** No Grandma, I don't...

*ELLA runs up behind her.*

**ELLA:** It's okay, Christie, I got you!

**CHRISTIE:** Um...okay...

*CHRISTIE lowers herself into ELLA's arms, and then ELLA slides back into the chair, holding both of them. CHRISTIE laughs. ELLA joins her in laughter. ROSIE jumps up.*

**ROSIE:** Oh, you girls are naturals! No wonder you got the gig! *(She jumps into position.)* Okay, now it's time for "Here Comes Santa Claus!" *(She starts to do a pretty animated dance. The girls look at each other. ELLA giggles, then ROSIE takes CHRISTIE'S hands. They dance together. ELLA claps to an imaginary beat. Suddenly, ROSIE stops.)* Oh, I...I need to sit down, dear. *(CHRISTIE helps her to the bed.)* I suddenly feel very ill. *(She looks into CHRISTIE'S eyes.)* I hope I'm not pregnant.

**CHRISTIE:** *(Patting her hand.)* Oh, I'm...sure that's not the case.

**ROSIE:** I knew those navy boys would get me into trouble. Why didn't you stop me?!

*The girls look at each other, wide-eyed.*

**CHRISTIE:** What...navy boys, Grandma?

**ELLA:** (*Whispering to CHRISTIE.*) Was Grandpa in the navy?

**CHRISTIE:** No.

**ROSIE:** They were just so happy the war was over. I... (*Sadly.*) I wanted to be patriotic.

**CHRISTIE:** Well, I'm...sure that they appreciated it, Grandma.

**ELLA:** Appreciated what?

**CHRISTIE:** Nothing. Go get her some water. (*ELLA exits to the bathroom.*) I'm sure that was just too much excitement for one day. (*She leads ROSIE to the armchair.*)

**ROSIE:** I don't even know their names...

**CHRISTIE:** Here, let's just sit down in the armchair. (*ELLA hands ROSIE a glass of tap water, which she drinks.*) Mom will be here in a few seconds with the food.

*DAWN enters.*

**DAWN:** Well, here we are! Who's ready for a delicious Christmas dinner? (*She sets down the food and pulls out the rolling tray table. She starts preparing ROSIE's plate.*)

**ELLA:** Did you know Grandma had sex with sailors?

**DAWN:** What?!?

**CHRISTIE:** (*Whispering.*) Several of them.

**DAWN:** Mom, what are you telling these girls?!?

**ROSIE:** Oh, don't judge me! You'd have done it too, if you saw the look on their faces... So happy... (*ROSIE starts to cry.*)

**DAWN:** Girls, your grandmother is very sick. She doesn't know...

**ROSIE:** Oh, shut up Ethel! Don't judge me!

**DAWN:** Mom, I'm...I'm not Ethel. I'm your daughter Dawn.

**ROSIE:** (*Dismissively.*) Yeah... (*She spits on the ground.*) I know what you did with Albert in the cloak-room.

**DAWN:** Who's Albert?

**ROSIE:** You don't want *anyone* to know, but I know...

**ELLA:** (*Whispering.*) He's the stage manager, Mom. Ethel thinks he's a "poof"—remember?

**DAWN:** Ella!

**ELLA:** Well, that's what *she* said!

**DAWN:** Well, I don't care! You don't use that kind of language! Mom, look what you're teaching your granddaughters...

**ROSIE:** Pssh! They're in show business, dearie! They'll learn a lot more than that!

*DAWN throws her hands up.*

**DAWN:** Ugh!

*CHRISTIE pats her mom's back.*

**CHRISTIE:** It's okay, Mom. It's okay. Let's just serve the food.

**DAWN:** She was never like this...

**CHRISTIE:** I know...

**ROSIE:** Don't talk about me like I'm not here, Ethel! I'm right here!

*DAWN starts to tear up. CHRISTIE hugs her.*

**CHRISTIE:** I know, I know...

**DAWN:** What if I do this to you some day?

**CHRISTIE:** Oh Mom...

**ROSIE:** And you're a shitty dancer too, Ethel! Can't even keep a beat...

**DAWN:** Mom. Jesus!

*ELLA kneels and touches her grandma's knee.*

**ELLA:** Grandma?

**ROSIE:** (*Angrily.*) What do you want?

**ELLA:** It's Christmas, Grandma.

**ROSIE:** Humph. Christmas. Just another work day to me...

*DAWN slides the tray of food over to ROSIE.*

**DAWN:** Well here. Here's some ham. And some stuffing. And your sweet potato casserole.

**ROSIE:** What are you, trying to make me as fat as you, Ethel?

*DAWN clenches her fists together.*

**CHRISTIE:** Mom?

*DAWN holds up her hand to stop CHRISTIE. She moves the tray of food aside. ROSIE looks up at her, a bit frightened. DAWN kneels down in front of her.*

**DAWN:** Mom. I am your daughter. Dawn. I am not Ethel. Ethel died twelve years ago. She was a VERY nice lady who used to babysit me when I was a little girl. Now, you are going to recognize me, and you are going to eat your goddamn dinner, or by God, we will leave you here to celebrate Christmas on your own.

**CHRISTIE:** Mom...

**DAWN:** No. She understands me. Do you understand me, Mom?

*Pause.*

**ROSIE:** Dawn?

**DAWN:** Yes.

*ROSIE touches her face.*

**ROSIE:** Dawn, honey. You... look so old.

*DAWN scoffs.*

**DAWN:** Thanks Mom.

**ROSIE:** How did this happen?

**DAWN:** I'm 49 years old, Mom.

**ROSIE:** Forty-nine! My god. I...I don't understand.

**DAWN:** (*Kissing her forehead.*) I know, Mom. I know. But it's Christmas now, okay? We'll talk about that later. (*She brings the tray of food closer. CHRISTIE helps. She takes a spoonful of stuffing and offers it to her mom.*) Here's some stuffing. (*Pause. ROSIE eats it. DAWN looks at CHRISTIE and points to the meat. CHRISTIE cuts a piece for her—as DAWN gives ROSIE another scoop of stuffing.*) Do you like it?

**ROSIE:** Mmm. Who taught you how to make this?

**DAWN:** You did, Mom. Every Christmas.

*CHRISTIE hands DAWN a small piece of ham on a fork. DAWN offers it to her mother.*

**ROSIE:** Oh. I must have been a pretty good chef then, huh?

*DAWN tears up.*

**DAWN:** Yeah. You were pretty good. (*She continues feeding ROSIE.*) You girls go make your plates, okay?

*They do. ROSIE looks at the Christmas tree.*

**ROSIE:** Is it...Christmastime?

**DAWN:** Yes, Mom. It's Christmas.

**ROSIE:** Oh, I love Christmastime. It's the most wonderful time of the year.

*She takes another bite of ham—as DAWN smiles. The lights change, and "Swan Lake" begins to play. CHRISTIE steps out and dances to the music, as if in another world. Lights out.*

**THE END**