



ROSA RAINE

by James Crafford

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# **ROSA RAINE**

(a ghost story in the form of a play)

**“He’s in love with a dead girl.”**

*A new play in two acts*

*By JAMES CRAFFORD*

## ***THE CAST OF CHARACTERS***

***HOWARD*** *robust 50-ish*

***RUTH*** *his wife, equally robust, younger*

***WALTER*** *still younger, smaller and less masculine friend*

***IRENE*** *younger still, a friendly bawdy buxom gal*

***ROSA RAINE*** *a twenty five year old petite pixie nymph*

**ACT ONE**

*Scene: On a country home: forty acres or more is a large square-box tool shed/garage with a window. It has many and sundry tools hanging from the walls and a couple of foldout chairs. One is against the wall and one is open in the middle of the room. There is an old torn carpet on the floor. A few odd sportsman type magazines and an out of date calendar can be seen. There is a front and side door with the side door leading to the main house. A musky smell permeates the air. Despite an early chill, there is warmth.*

*The sound of children playing can be heard as two men enter. They are old friends and the affection between them is obvious. The first to enter is HOWARD. He is 50-something, robust but tired and then his friend, WALTER enters, a little younger, smaller and more delicate. HOWARD hangs a knapsack he was wearing on the wall as WALTER looks out the window. The sound of the children fades.*

*Time: Late fall, early winter.*

**HOWARD**

Where are they going? I don't hear them.

**WALTER**

Don't worry; they're right here. They just ran around the house.

**HOWARD**

I don't want them too close to the road.

**WALTER**

They're fine, Howie...relax...they're kids...they're playing...! (pause) Such innocence, eh? You and I have been pals since we were their age, Howie...that's going back four or five eons.

**HOWARD**

Hard to believe. Not many people have had friends half as long as us. We've been Lucky.

**WALTER**

Lucky? Is that the way you'd put it? (under his breath) Lucky.

**HOWARD**

Damn. That knapsack wears me down. I always take too much when we take one of our monster hikes.

**WALTER**

I'm always glad you bring it. You think of everything. And god knows I do not have the strength to lug such things around. You ox!!

**HOWARD**

Ox?

**WALTER**

Lucky ox.

**HOWARD**

Lucky ox?

**WALTER**

Children, a wife...a home...such land...what a life you have, pal!

**HOWARD**

My wife is the lucky ox. She has more strength than me. She has the strength of ten men.

**WALTER**

And she is still beautiful, Howie. Still quite the looker!!

**HOWARD**

She is, Wally. That she is. But I don't feel all that lucky, although I am quite the ox.

*The sound of playing, running children returns louder than ever. The lights fade as the sound heightens. In darkness we hear HOWARD'S VOICE. We don't know what He is saying at first and slowly the words come clear and the lights rise again. HOWARD is seated in the folding chair talking to WALTER who takes the second chair, unfolds it and sits across the room listening.*

**HOWARD**

...I'd chose woods. Of all the things in nature...ocean, sky, flowers, mountains, animals, dogs...I'd chose woods...I love to walk a well-worn path in thick dense woods, preferably in the fall...with autumnal colors splatter all over like paint...

**WALTER**

And I'd chose women. (They laugh) Women. The female form. Of all things in Nature.

**HOWARD**

A close second.

**WALTER**

A close second? A distant third.

**HOWARD**

Third to what?

**WALTER**

Wine. Fine wine.

*There is a long silence and then slowly the sound of children playing. HOWARD bends his head forward and begins to weep. And then Immense sobbing commences. WALTER rises and approaches him*

*And gives him a manly hug and walks out a side door that leads into  
The main house. HOWARD's sobbing blends with children playing  
The lights go dark again.*

*Lights rise.*

*Now two women are in the tool shed. They are RUTH and IRENE.  
RUTH is HOWARD's wife, robust for a woman, and firey and alive  
With youthful good looks and sparkling eyes. IRENE is more frail  
and younger with a prominent bosom.*

**RUTH**

He's in love with a dead girl.

**IRENE**

You're tossing that word love around with the word dead and the word girl again...

**RUTH**

He's in love with a dead girl.

**IRENE**

Now, now...the girl is dead. Some respect here, please.

**RUTH**

My husband loves a girl who has been dead...for twenty years.

**IRENE**

Ruth, I cannot tell a lie—

**RUTH**

Twenty years that girl has been rotting and decomposing with worms crawling through  
her eyes and my husband is in love with her.

**IRENE**

It's the goddamned truth. It's the truth...Ruth.

**RUTH**

Well, I say **BREAK OUT THE BOOZE**. Let's have a few goddamned drinks!  
Let's drink to the dead girl!!

*RUTH AND IRENE take out a bottle of vodka from behind a tool case. Paper cups  
emerge from somewhere else. Each woman pours a little and GULPS and then  
repeats the action.*

**IRENE**

(imitating a man)

I say we get shit-faced drunk today for the goddamned fucking hell of it!!

**RUTH**

Yippie!!

**IRENE**

I say we drink until the cows come home. I say, just my opinion here now, that we drink until we piss our goddamned pants.

*They have another round with lightning speed. RUTH hands her head.*

**IRENE**

You ain't gonna start crying now...?

**RUTH**

(lifts her head)

**MY GODDAMNED HUSBAND IS IN LOVE WITH A DEAD GIRL!!!**

*Children playing can be heard. WALTER AND HOWARD enter. They immediately recognize the scene.*

**WALTER**

Howie and I are gonna play a little checkers...

**HOWARD**

They call it chess, Wally.

**WALTER**

Chess...we're gonna play us a few hands of chess...

*The retreat into the house.*

**IRENE**

Do you think they suspect we've been drinking?

**RUTH**

I can't quite I say I care one way or the other.

**IRENE**

I can tell by the expression on your face that you ain't lying.

*The children's noises fade.*

**RUTH**

Are the kids okay?

**IRENE**

(at the window)

They're fine.

**RUTH**

You're good people, Irene. You're good people.

*RUTH hangs her head but does not weep. IRENE embraces her.*

**IRENE**

I love to watch the children play. I love to hear their voices. I love to see their legs running and their toys and the noises they make and the sound of their laughter...I love their little feet, like tiny hooves, galloping...don't you, Ruth? Don't you just love the kids...the kids at play??

**RUTH**

I'm shit-faced.

**IRENE**

I can't believe I never had children. I can't believe it. I love kids. I'm good with kids. I teach kids. I love every damned little tiny micro-spot of kids and I never had a goddamned kid, Ruth. That just doesn't make any sense.

**RUTH**

(very softly without anger)  
My husband is in love with a dead girl.

**IRENE**

That just doesn't make a lick of sense.

*The lights fade to dark. Silence. Light suddenly rise and HOWARD, RUTH, IRENE AND WALTER are playing poker. HOWARD AND RUTH are seated in chairs while WALTER and IRENE sit on the floor. IRENE has her blouse off and sits there in her bra with her ample bosom on display. WALTER is giggling intensely.*

*HOWARD is eying her intently, with an over the top gawk and RUTH laughs into her cards in her hands.*

**RUTH**

I AM NOT DOING THIS!! (laughing) I am going no further. Irene, put your goddamned shirt back on.

**IRENE**

That, my dear, is not a goddamned shirt, that is a goddamned blouse...I am a Full-fledged GIRL, goddamn you and yes, sir, I am playing this goddamned Hand of strip poker—I am playing TO THE DEATH.

*Everyone laughs.*

**HOWARD**

Well, we can stop right now. We can...

**IRENE**

Not me. You like my top? Wait to you see my bottoms...bottom!!!

*Much laughter.*

**HOWARD**

We do not HAVE to PRO-CEED...

**IRENE**

I am goddamned proceeding.

**WALTER**

Play the hand, Howie. Take your damned chances. Lucky ox!!!

**HOWARD**

I don't feel lucky.

**RUTH**

I am not in this game. I quit. (She rises and walks into the house, but laughs along the way)

**IRENE**

You chicken-ass-shit!!

**HOWARD**

I don't feel lucky. (HOWARD throws down his cards and goes into the house)

**WALTER**

Oh, boy...I am feeling REAL lucky.

*WALTER and IRENE embrace and begin to kiss and make out madly. IRENE unbuckles his belt and his pants fall to the floor.*

**WALTER**

You're for real, aren't you?

**IRENE**

I'm for real Wally; I'm for real.

*The mad embrace and wild kissing continues as the lights descend into black. Lights rise slowly on an empty stage. There is a knock at the front door. RUTH eventually answers it. A young girl of twenty-five enters. RUTH lets her In. She comes into the space and surveys the room, approvingly. This is ROSA RAINE.*

**ROSA**

I could get use to this.

*Lights descend into a half light...RUTH goes out the front door. HOWARD enters. Lights descend into quarter light. Enter HOWARD.*

**HOWARD**

Rosa?

**ROSA**

It's me, Howard. Rosa. Rosa Raine. Your wife let me in. It's a beautiful shed, Howard. I love it. It has something of a poet's touch. No books, no words. Just rakes and shovels and hammers, eh, Howard.

*HOWARD is frozen stiff. ROSA approaches him.*

**ROSA**

Don't be frightened, Howard. Don't be frightened of a dead girl..

*Enter RUTH. The lights rise full.*

**RUTH**

Rosa Raine get the hell out of here!!!

**ROSA**

(Indignant)

Well, you invited me in. (ROSA exits through the front door)

**RUTH**

Howard! Howard, you cannot get that girl off your mind, can you? You're thinking of that girl again, aren't you? You have a one track mind, you goddamned fool. SHE'S DEAD. SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR TWENTY YEARS.

*RUTH goes into the house and HOWARD goes to the window.*

**HOWARD**

I can still see her playing with the children wearing those red denim jeans and that Green blouse she bought from the Salvation Army that Christmas.

*WALTER comes in smiling and upbeat.*

**WALTER**

Hey, old buddy, awww...cut that face out...you got that Rosa Raine face on, man. Come on we gotta take a walk in the woods, a long, long, LONG walk in the woods, eh, old buddy...we gotta wipe that Rosa Raine face off your face, my man. Here You take the knapsack, what's inside? Water? Check. Compass? Check. Maps, Check. What the hell is in this knapsack, old buddy, that makes it SSOOO heavy?

**HOWARD**

(putting it on)

Huh?

**WALTER**

This knapsack...what the hell you got in there?

**HOWARD**

Oh, nothing...just stuff I need...personal stuff...

**WALTER**

Heavy-ass personal stuff.

**HOWARD**

I'm carrying it.

**WALTER**

Right you are, Howie, old pal...right you are. (at the front door) Hey, I got LAID last night. I got stone cold LAID, my man.

**HOWARD**

So did I.

*They leave. RUTH enters with a brand new bottle of vodka. ROSA RAINE sneaks in And sits beside her.*

**RUTH**

I see you.

**ROSA**

I know. Does the vodka help?

**RUTH**

Don't question me.

**ROSA**

Does the vodka help?

**RUTH**

It numbs me.

**ROSA**

But does it help you forget? (pause) Of course not.

**RUTH**

It helps.

**ROSA**

You're lying...to yourself.

**RUTH**

Go away.

**ROSA**

I can't.

**RUTH**

Why not?

**ROSA**

**Because this was where I was most alive.**

**RUTH**

**I knew that.**

**ROSA**

**Then why did you ask?**

**RUTH**

**(gulping vodka)  
He met you in the woods...?**

**ROSA**

**Yes. He was walking the dogs...and he had one of the children with him.**

**RUTH**

**The big one or the little one?**

**ROSA**

**The little one.**

**RUTH**

**Twenty years ago...he was...thirty something or other...**

**ROSA**

**He was handsome and the dogs were beautiful and the child looked like an angel.**

**RUTH**

**How often did you meet him there...in the woods?**

**ROSA**

**Many times. I've lost count.**

**RUTH**

**And what drew you to him? What made him so attractive?**

**ROSA**

**His face. The way he spoke to the animals...the way he touched his child. The way he smelled.**

**RUTH**

**Smelled? Like dog shit and baby poop?**

**ROSA**

**No. Like musk and baby powder.**

**RUTH**

**He was that close to you?**

**ROSA**

**Sometimes.**

**RUTH**

**So, did you have a secret tree house where you'd rendezvous? Some bush you'd crawl under together?**