

# THE WOOLGATHERER

## ACT ONE

*Darkness. Footfalls in the hallway. Inaudible talking. Lights up slowly. Keys fumbling in the doorlock. Enter ROSE, followed by CLIFF swinging a satchel in a paper-bag.*

ROSE. And there was this girl ... She was a poet ... And she lived here ... In this room ... Before, you know, I moved in ... And she committed, you know, suicide, right here in this room.

CLIFF. Did she die?

ROSE. Of course she died.

CLIFF. How'd she do it?

ROSE. Rope.

CLIFF. Overdose of rope?

ROSE. No. She, you know, hung herself.

CLIFF. Just kidding.

ROSE. That's not funny.

CLIFF. So why'd she do it?

ROSE. Nobody knows. It's a big mystery.

CLIFF. Big mystery. Didn't she leave a note?

ROSE. No. She left a poem.

CLIFF. Lucky she was a poet.

ROSE. Why's that?

CLIFF. Suppose she was a novelist.

ROSE. This is it. The poem she left. It's called "Death is my lover."

CLIFF. Beautiful.

ROSE. Want to hear it?

CLIFF. Yeah. Just what I need. Something to lift my spirits.

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PLACE: South Philadelphia

SET: Efficiency apartment.

A single bed, neatly made.

A small table.

A chair.

An orange crate.

A door leading to a hallway.

A closet.

A boarded-up window hidden by cheap curtains.

CAST

ROSE

CLIFF

### IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of THE WOOLGATHERER must give credit to the Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author must also appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and must appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type.

ROSE.

"Death is my lover,  
You say it's not right,  
But his love's forever  
Day and night, day and night.  
We've gone to elope,  
Away from the light  
In his cozy house,  
Day and night, day and night.  
So I go with equanimity—"

CLIFF. Go with who?  
ROSE.

"So I go with equanimity,  
Without a fight,  
To be in his arms—"

CLIFF. Hey, hey, whoa, whoa. Look, kid, I had a rough day and I don't want to hear about no weirdo's suicide note.

ROSE. O, you don't like poetry?

CLIFF. Hey, I'm nuts about it.

ROSE. Really?

CLIFF. Hey.

ROSE. Do you write poetry?

CLIFF. Hey, everyday.

ROSE. Really?

CLIFF. Hey.

ROSE. I'd like to read some.

CLIFF. I don't write it down. I talk it. Here ya go:

ROSES ARE RED

VIOLETS ARE BLUE

I DIG SHOTS AND BEERS

DO YOU LIKE ICE HOCKEY?

ROSE. That's it?

CLIFF. Like it?

ROSE. It's very . . . very interesting.

CLIFF. It's about my mother who was run over by a garbage truck.

ROSE. O. I'm sorry.

CLIFF. What can I say?

ROSE. Did she suffer?

CLIFF. Hey.

ROSE. I'm really sorry.

CLIFF. Me too, being that I pushed her under the wheels. Rose, that's a joke. You know, ha-ha?

ROSE. I don't joke around about that kind of stuff because it was very tragical the way that poor girl kicked the chair out from under herself and then changed her mind.

CLIFF. How do you know that?

ROSE. The police said. And the papers.

CLIFF. How could they know that unless they was here?

ROSE. They said she kicked the chair out from under but changed her mind and reached up for the rope and tried to save herself and they found rope fibers in her palms but her arms got tired and she, you know . . .

CLIFF. She must've been hung up about something.

ROSE. I don't think that's funny.

CLIFF. Well I don't think it's a good subject to make conversation with.

ROSE. Well it's true.

CLIFF. Alotta things are true, but you shouldn't talk about 'em.

ROSE. Why not?

CLIFF. Because no cops and no paper and no poem can give you the bottom line on what's going on in some weirdo's brain when she puts on the rope and leaps into the great ever-after. Even when you got all the facts in your hands, they don't add up to the leap. There's something missing. Maybe she just didn't fit.

She added up the pluses and minuses and figured life ain't worth the hurt. So she turned in her scruples and checked out. And you and the cops and the papers want to know something? She had guts. And I respect that. A lotta people come up with the same figures but they buy insurance. So who knows? Maybe she did the right thing. Maybe she's happy now. Ever think of that?

ROSE. No.

CLIFF. Well you should.

ROSE. I was telling you about the room.

CLIFF. Well I don't want to hear about it.

ROSE. Then drop the subject.

CLIFF. Who brought it up?

ROSE. Me.

CLIFF. Then you drop it. Talk about something nice.

ROSE. Like what?

CLIFF. Like anything.

ROSE. I can't think of something nice.

CLIFF. I can.

ROSE. What?

CLIFF. I can think of something real nice.

ROSE. What?

CLIFF. I can think of something fantastically nice.

ROSE. What?

CLIFF. You.

ROSE. What're you doing?

CLIFF. Taking your poncho.

ROSE. O.

CLIFF. What'd you think?

ROSE. O, I just didn't know why you snuck up on me.

CLIFF. I didn't sneak up.

ROSE. I can take it off.

CLIFF. I know you can.

ROSE. Thank you just the same.

CLIFF. Hang it in the closet?

ROSE. NO!

CLIFF. Sorry.

ROSE. Just lay it on the bed.

CLIFF. How come you whisper?

ROSE. The old lady next door, Mrs. Mancuso. She listens on the wall with a glass.

CLIFF. (*Indicating a spot on the wall.*) Here? (*ROSE shakes her head yes. CLIFF punches the wall.*)

ROSE. NO! Don't! She'll hear us!

CLIFF. (*To the wall.*) I don't care if she hears me.

ROSE. I do! She'll tell the landlord and I'll get evicted.

CLIFF. For talking?

ROSE. We're not allowed to have visitors.

CLIFF. How do you know she listens on the walls?

ROSE. I can hear her move the glass.

CLIFF. Beautiful.

CLIFF. How come the window's all boarded up like that?

ROSE. That girl did it. The one who, you know, the rope? My landlord said he would take it down.

CLIFF. Why didn't he?

ROSE. You'll get mad if I tell you.

CLIFF. No I won't.

ROSE. Yes you will.

CLIFF. Why should I get mad?

ROSE. It's not something nice.

CLIFF. C'mon, tell me.

ROSE. You sure?

CLIFF. Yeah.

ROSE. He died.

CLIFF. Don't tell me. Rope?

ROSE. No.

CLIFF. Aspirins?

ROSE. No. He was old.

CLIFF. He died of old age?

ROSE. Yes.