

A ROSE IN ITS TIME:

The Jennie Wade Story

A Drama in One Act

by Jeffrey M. Watts

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PUBLISHED BY

ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Dedication

To my brothers:

David, Christopher, Stephen, Douglas and Curtis.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Jennie Wade was the only civilian killed during the Battle at Gettysburg. A stray bullet came through the door of her sister's home and struck Jennie while she was kneading dough to feed the Union soldiers. **A Rose in Its Time** is a moving portrait of this spirited young woman who loved life, cared for others with a rare generosity of spirit, and delighted in her family and her fiancé with all her heart. Jennie's sister, Georgia, tells the story in the play just as she did in real life, keeping the memory of Jennie Wade alive for the rest of her own years and finding greater understanding of life and death.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 3 w, extras, doubling possible)

JENNIE WADE: A young woman at Gettysburg.

GEORGIA WADE MCCLELLAN: Her sister.

MARY WADE: Their mother.

JOHNSTON HASTINGS "JACK" SKELLY: Jennie's fiancé.

JOHN WESLEY "WES" CULP: A friend of Jack and Jennie.

LOUIS MCCLELLAN: Georgia's husband.

NURSE

YANKEE OFFICER

THREE SOLDIERS

Time: The years prior to the Civil War and the three days of the Battle at Gettysburg.

Place: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

SETTING

The first part of the play is performed in isolated areas downstage before a curtain or screen with minimal props. The upstage area is the interior of Georgia McClellan's home. The home is divided into two sections. The left is the kitchen area with a counter and oven. There is a set of steps UL leading to the bedrooms. UC is the outside door. A small table is DC in direct line of the door for Jennie to work her dough. The right section is a sitting room that has been transformed into Georgia's bedroom. There is a four-poster bed SR with a cradle DS of it. There is a window with a window seat UR and a table with two chairs DRC.

PROPS

Rose
Bench with potted rosebush
Pocket knife, a piece of carving wood
Picnic basket
Letters, letter paper, writing instruments
Bouquet of roses
String of pearls wrapped in a handkerchief
Sewing supplies
Wedding dress
Tea service
Christening gown wrapped in paper
Infant doll in blanket
Tray with a plate of biscuits and three cups of water
Neckerchief for Wes
Small framed photograph
Sampler, needle
Apron for Jennie
Bible
Vase
Breakfast tray
Quilt

A ROSE IN ITS TIME

(AT RISE: A LIGHT comes up on GEORGIA MCCLELLAN, a young woman, holding a rose. She steps DC and addresses the audience.)

GEORGIA: Before two springs ago we were young and full of life. Our heads were packed with dreams and raced with thoughts of what could be. I speak with love of Mary Virginia Wade, my sister, and, of all, the dearest heart to me. Mary Virginia – but I called her Jennie with sweet affection. Our lives were far from easy. Our father was ill and in a sanitarium. Our mother worked, and we with her to meet the family's needs. Despite the hardship, we felt safe in a burg far hidden from the world. And as we passed from girlhood toward womanhood our thoughts turned toward romance. One beautiful summer's day, Jennie met Johnston Hastings Skelly who was known by his friends as "Jack."

(SPOTLIGHT dims. A SPOT comes up DL. JACK is seated on a tree stump whittling. JENNIE enters US and pauses before she walks down to him.)

JENNIE: Do you always come to church socials to sit alone?

JACK: Not always. *(A beat.)* Are you always surrounded by a dozen fellows?

JENNIE: *(Quick glance to each side.)* Not always. *(Pause.)* How come you never join in with all the other young people? After all, it is a social.

JACK: I figure if I sit here alone I know there's bound to be some girl out of the crowd that'll take pity on my loneliness and come over here to share her picnic lunch with me.

(JENNIE looks down at her basket; then flushing with anger, she turns to go.)

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JACK: Hey, where are you going?

JENNIE: I'll leave you alone in case there's some girl over there in the crowd who wants to share her picnic lunch with you.

JACK: But I thought that's why you were coming by here.

JENNIE: You are presumptuous, Jack Skelly!

JACK: And you're pretty when you're all fired up, Jennie Wade.

JENNIE: You're ill-mannered, too. Saying things like that to someone you hardly know ... and how'd you know my name?

JACK: The same way you knew my name. Somebody told me.

JENNIE: *(Letting HER guard down.)* Why'd somebody tell you?

JACK: The same reason somebody told you my name. I asked.

JENNIE: *(More relaxed.)* Why'd you want to know my name for?

JACK: Oh, it don't matter now. Before now, I only saw you at a distance and, well, you looked a little older, you know, a girl of the right age for a fellow like me. But now that I see you close up – well – you're younger than I thought. *(A beat.)* How old are you anyway?

JENNIE: A gentleman never asks a lady her age.

JACK: I'd say you're fifteen.

JENNIE: *(Indignant.)* Fifteen? I'm sixteen ... next week.

JACK: Like I said ... I thought you were older.

JENNIE: My mother was married at sixteen.

JACK: Well, I'm not askin' for you to marry me!

JENNIE: Well, I'm not asking you to ask me to marry you! I have a dozen fellows who would marry me in a blink – that is, if I were the kind of girl who would want to go marrying herself off to just anyone.

(JACK laughs at HER.)

JENNIE: What are you laughing at?

JACK: You.

End of Freeview

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