

WHITE ROSES AND GOOSEBERRIES

A ten-minute drama by
B.J. Burton

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CATHERINE, female, 17, optimistic, confident.

JENNY, female, 15, worried, afraid.

TIME

August 1855.

PLACE

Somewhere off the trail in the wilderness along the Overland Route to Oregon.

(CATHERINE, disheveled and weary from the journey, has walked away from the trail looking for gooseberries. She wears a long dress, an apron and sturdy shoes. Her long hair is pinned up with two combs.)

CATHERINE: I know there must be more here somewhere! ...Here, gooseberries! ...Where are you?

JENNY: *(Off:)* I found some! Catherine! I found some!

CATHERINE: Where?

(JENNY enters. The skirt of her dress is ripped in several places. Her long hair, half pinned up, is full of twigs.)

JENNY: *(Showing Catherine two small gooseberries:)* Here!

CATHERINE: Oh, dear. Just two?

JENNY: That's all I could find.

CATHERINE: We'll find more! I promise you!

JENNY: *(Giving one of the gooseberries to Catherine:)* Here. I'll share.

CATHERINE: *(Sarcastically:)* Oh, boy.

(Jenny eats her gooseberry. Catherine saves hers.)

At least we still have sugar and tomatoes.

JENNY: And beans. Don't forget beans!

CATHERINE: How could I? ...Let's rest a bit.

JENNY: I'm for that! ...Ugh, I feel seasick.

CATHERINE: Is there an ocean nearby?

JENNY: It's from the wagon. The rocking makes me feel all...ugh...

CATHERINE: Oh, then you must have trouble eating!

JENNY: That's one thing I don't have trouble with.

(Catherine rubs her leg.)

How's your leg?

CATHERINE: Better. I'm so used to jumping in and out of the wagon, I never thought my shoe would get caught in the wheel. I'll be fine. Doc Lowell did a fine job of tending to me. Thank goodness, it's not a break.

JENNY: Yes!

CATHERINE: Next time, I better wait until the wagon stops!

(They giggle together a moment.)

JENNY: Do you see the wagons? You can see better than I can.

CATHERINE: *(Looking into the distance:)* I can see Mother. She's rolling out pie dough on the wagon seat. I'll be glad to see her doing that on a real table again someday.

JENNY: What do you think she's fixing?

(Catherine looks at her gooseberry.)

CATHERINE: I don't think it's gooseberry pie!

(They giggle a moment.)

JENNY: Are you going to eat that?

CATHERINE: In a minute.

(Jenny twirls around a bit.)

JENNY: I hated leaving my hoop skirt.

CATHERINE: I know. We'll get you another one, Jenny, as soon as we reach Oregon. I promise you!

JENNY: Weren't you sad to leave your mirror?

CATHERINE: Now what good is a mirror going to do me here? Do you see a handsome gentleman asking me to dance?

JENNY: There's Tom Kirkland and Doc Lowell!

CATHERINE: Oh, yes! Our raggedy dresses look so lovely, don't they?

(The young women giggle and dance around a bit.)

JENNY: He smiles at you when he plays the harmonica.

CATHERINE: *(Teasing:)* I didn't know Doc Lowell played the harmonica!

JENNY: I mean Tom Kirkland!

CATHERINE: Oh...

(Jenny giggles again.)

Actually, I think he smiles at you when he plays the harmonica.

JENNY: No, he doesn't! ...Are the wagons still there?

CATHERINE: Yes. Mother is chasing Henry.

(A beat.)

JENNY: Thank you for taking me in.

CATHERINE: What should we do? Leave you by the side of the road with your hoop skirt?

JENNY: And your mother's pickles!

CATHERINE: Heavens! The 26 jars of pickles! How could I forget that!

JENNY: It's good to be part of a family.

CATHERINE: We'll be sisters now, even though we're really cousins.

JENNY: Don't you miss home?

CATHERINE: I can't think about it, Jenny. I have to think about what's ahead. We both do.

JENNY: (*Upset:*) I can tell you what's ahead! More rocks, more brambles and what? Two gooseberries! ...I'm sick of gooseberries, anyway! Sick, sick, sick of them! Why are you still holding onto your gooseberry?

CATHERINE: I'll get to it.

(Jenny pulls some twigs out of her hair. It all falls down.)

Oh, Jenny...I'll fix it for you.

(Catherine takes the combs out of her hair and fixes Jenny's hair with them.)

There! Tom Kirkland will really smile at you now!

(Jenny bursts into tears.)

What is it?

JENNY: We're never getting out of here!

CATHERINE: Oh, Jenny!

JENNY: We're not!

CATHERINE: Of course we are!

JENNY: We're not! It's been nothing but wilderness for days! For weeks! I don't even know what month it is!

CATHERINE: It's August.

JENNY: Are you sure? How do you know?

CATHERINE: I keep a calendar.

JENNY: I miss my family!

CATHERINE: I know.

JENNY: I don't want to go on! I want to go back to Council Bluffs!

CATHERINE: We're more than halfway there! You know we have to stay with the wagon train or we'll be lost!

JENNY: We're lost now! I want to go back! I want to see people wearing proper dresses living in proper houses growing proper white roses in proper gardens! And I want my hoop skirt!

CATHERINE: Listen to me! We can't go back now! The only road for us is the one we're on and that's the one that's moving forward. I know you miss your family. I miss them, too. We did what we could for them, and it's a God-given miracle that we didn't die from the cholera, too. We gave them a peaceful resting place near the Boise River, and that is the best we can do! Now we must think about what lies ahead!

JENNY: What does lie ahead then? Tell me that!

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