

# A Profusion of Roses

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# A PROFUSION OF ROSES

by  
Marcus Steinour

## CAST

ANNA: Old and fading, her death is near, but she is strong-willed and demanding now. Contemptuous of others, expecting special treatment.

VIVIAN: Her sister. She was eight years older than Anna, and lived with her. Died a few years before the play opens.

THE DAUGHTER: Devoted and caring, she has a very simple and honest personality with no pretense, no ambitions, except to find forgiveness. She has long ago given up any hopes for a life and happiness of her own.

(NOTE: The confusion over VIVAN is intentional, discovered as the play progresses.)

### Place

Somewhere in the nebulous South. A room in a small cottage overlooking a rose garden.

### Time

Anytime.

*Setting: A nearly bare stage. Center Stage a chair, and a suggestion of a window at either side.*

*At Rise: ANNA is sitting on the chair and VIVIAN is standing over her, combing and brushing her hair. Anna makes little gestures of annoyance and then cries out.*

ANNA: Stop it! Stop it this minute. Leave my hair alone. It's perfectly fine as it is.

*(ANNA makes little gestures of annoyance and then cries out, looking hurt, stops, but then brushes at ANNA's dress with her hands.)*

You've been at me all day, never a moment's rest. I'm going to bed and there's no reason to fix me up like I'm going to a ball. There hasn't been a ball in this town since Colonel Prescott. Keep your hands off my dress.

*(ANNA pinches her. VIVIAN backs away, then comes forward again)*

Did you lay out my nightgown and my pills?

*(VIVIAN turns to move away)*

Vivian: Yes.

ANNA: And a glass of water? Have you put a glass of water near my bed?

*(VIVIAN stops to think, then nods her head.)*

VIVIAN: Yes.

*(ANNA takes up a mirror and looks at herself)*

ANNA: Yes, I should think that was enough. Too much...*(looking)* Except that you've missed that little curl, that cowlick I've always suffered with all my life. You never seem to get that right, Vivian, no matter how much I tell you about it. How can I go to Colonel Prescott's ball with a cowlick?

*(VIVIAN reaches forward to stroke down ANNA's hair, but ANNA waves her away.)*

I'll do it myself. Perhaps then it will be done right. *(she stops and looks about, as though looking outside)*

What a warm day. I like to remember days like this with Daddy back home. You remember how it was? Out at the old house, the old remnants of the good days? I wonder if that old place is still there. That big old house with its great pillars. I doubt it was taken care of properly after we moved away. Yes, why is it I always think of the old memories on days like this? I'm an old woman and I'm dying. Say something. You never talk anymore.

VIVIAN: I will, Anna, if you'll let me...

ANNA: Lord, how you've changed. What is it that's come over you anyhow? I imagine you find contentment here taking care of me for our last years together. You must... *(as she reflects)* You'll be lost when I'm gone. I know you will. I would be if I were alone. But you were always the strong one, and the loud one. What is

it that happened that you changed so much? What will you do when I'm gone, Vivian? Tell me.

VIVIAN: I don't know. I'll still have my roses.

ANNA: What? What did you say? Speak louder. You are so timid, Vivian. Whatever possessed you to become so timid? You were loud enough and bold enough when we were young. Oh, you lorded it over me then, didn't you? Out at the old place...Eight years older than I, and didn't you just let me know it every minute...every game we played, every doll you owned, every chore we did for Daddy? *(pause)* Well, it seems strange going to bed while the sun is still up. Fancy that. But I must get my rest. You are so lucky, Vivian. Why is it you stay so healthy? Why, you look fifteen years younger than I...you, the older one. But then I don't remember. Are you going to stroke my hair all night?

VIVIAN: Do you ever hear from Patricia? Do you remember her?

ANNA: Patricia? Patricia? Seems that was a name Harry and I selected. A very pretty name I always thought. Yes. There was a Patricia once. I...I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

VIVIAN: Your daughter? You don't remember?

ANNA: No, I don't want to remember. I had a daughter. I was only sixteen when I married and had her. She ran away. She broke my heart, she and her man. A man from the North. We had a terrible argument and she left with her Yankee lover. I forgot her the year she ran away and I don't want to remember her now. What was her name? Never mind. The ungrateful little snob. Oh yes. She was a snob. Thought she was so much, too good for her family. Left us all...may be dead by now. But do I care? No. I don't care about any daughter of mine who runs away, not with a man from the North.

VIVIAN: *(wincing)* What if she came back?

ANNA: She'll never come back. Forget her. I don't want to talk about it. Where is my comb? I think I would like my breakfast now.

VIVIAN: It's evening, Anna. The sun is nearly setting. Wouldn't you like to prepare for bed?

ANNA: Evening already? Why, we just finished lunch. How dare you tell me it's evening? And where is my nightgown? If it's evening, I must be going to bed. I want my nightgown.

VIVIAN: Look at the sun. Would you like to watch the sunset? *(she helps ANNA to the window)*

ANNA: What are you doing? You don't have to lead me. I'm not helpless. I can get around. Try to put me in a wheelchair next, won't you?

*(ANNA makes a motion to pinch. VIVIAN evades her.)*

Where is there any sunset? It's morning. Don't you know morning from evening? What an ignoramus you are, and you eight years older than I. Why, you even forget you had cancer and we thought you would die...but I wouldn't believe it. Not you. You were too strong to die. Too strong and bent on your own way. Why should you get cancer? And it didn't take long before you were right back with us. When was that? When was that? I can't seem to recall.

VIVIAN: It was three years ago...Anna.

ANNA: Yes, you better call me Anna. Don't you dare use that other word. I know your tricks. You're up to your old tricks again, aren't you? You know she died after she left.

VIVIAN: No...Anna. Why do you think she died?

ANNA: She died as far as I was concerned. Where is the sun? I want to see the sun. Harry and I used to watch the sunset together. What did you do to my Harry? I never trusted you with him. You were after my man, weren't you? You had to have it all. Well, you didn't get him. He won't look at you, will he?

*(VIVIAN takes her hand and points)*

VIVIAN: No, he won't. There. Right there is the sun, right where your finger is pointing.

**END OF FREEVIEW**

**You'll want to read and perform this show!**