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## Nightswim

by

Julia Jordan

*premiered in August, 1998 at  
Actors Theatre of Louisville*

*Directed by Michael Bigelow Dixon  
Dramaturg: Adrien-Alice Hansel*

### Cast

Christina Anja Lee  
Rosie Hiliary Douglas

*Scenic Designer: Paul Owen*

*Costume Designer: Annalise Beckman*

*Lighting Designer: Eric Cope*

*Sound Designer: Dave Preston*

*Properties Designers: Ben Hohman and Mark Walston*

*Stage Manager: Bobbi Masters*

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*Nightswim was subsequently produced in April, 2002  
at the Humana Festival of New American Plays*

*Directed by Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj  
Dramaturg: Stephen Moulds*

### Cast

Rosie Kate Umstatter  
Christina Stacy L. Mayer

*Scenic Designer: Paul Owen*

*Costume Designer: John White*

*Lighting Designer: Paul Werner*

*Sound Designer: Colbert S. Davis IV*

*Properties Designer: Doc Manning*

*Stage Manager: Heather Fields*

*Assistant Stage Manager: Debra A. Freeman*

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## CHARACTERS

CHRISTINA: seventeen years old

ROSIE: seventeen years old

## Nightswim

*(Lights up outside Christina's house. It is midnight and her parents are asleep. Her bedroom window on the second floor is dark. ROSIE is in the front yard.)*

ROSIE. *(Whispers loudly.)* Christina. Christina!

*(CHRISTINA, dressed for bed in a ratty old t-shirt and underwear, comes to the window. She has not been sleeping.)*

CHRISTINA. What?

ROSIE. Come out and play

CHRISTINA. We're too old to play.

ROSIE. Wanna do something?

CHRISTINA. What?

ROSIE. I don't know, something.

CHRISTINA. Like what?

ROSIE. Wanna go climb the railroad bridge? Cross the river?

CHRISTINA. We're too old to climb the railroad bridge.

ROSIE. Go skinnydipping in the old man's pool?

CHRISTINA. He's always watching.

ROSIE. So?

CHRISTINA. It's undignified.

ROSIE. We'll go to the lake.

CHRISTINA. The police will catch us.

ROSIE. They haven't all summer.

CHRISTINA. We haven't gone all summer.

ROSIE. So they won't expect us.

CHRISTINA. It's cold.

ROSIE. That'll make the water feel warm, like swimming in vel-

vet.

CHRISTINA. There's no lifeguard.

ROSIE. So we can swim naked.

CHRISTINA. What if we drown like the Berridges' boy? Our bodies would get caught under the weeping willow in the water. No one would find us for weeks.

ROSIE. We won't go anywhere near that tree.

CHRISTINA. But there's no lifeguard.

ROSIE. You forgot how to swim?

CHRISTINA. No.

ROSIE. Let's go.

CHRISTINA. I'm tired.

ROSIE. Skinnydipping is like resting itself.

CHRISTINA. What if that rapist with the mustache and the beady eyes is out there?

ROSIE. He's in jail.

CHRISTINA. There could be another one. Beady-eyed rapists are a dime a dozen. A copycat crazy.

ROSIE. Black water, black night. He won't even see us.

CHRISTINA. Our skin glows like 60-watt bulbs at night.

ROSIE. The water will cover us.

CHRISTINA. He'll come in after us.

ROSIE. Rapists can't swim so good.

CHRISTINA. He'll catch us on the beach.

ROSIE. You can run can't you?

CHRISTINA. He has a fast car.

ROSIE. You can hide can't you?

CHRISTINA. He carries a flashlight. He senses fear. He'll find me.

ROSIE. You can fight can't you?

CHRISTINA. He's bigger than me.

ROSIE. You can scream can't you?

CHRISTINA. No one will hear me.

ROSIE. I'll hear you. Two against one.

CHRISTINA. What if there are two of him? Or three? Or a gang of crazies hiding under the weeping willow tree waiting for us.

ROSIE. We won't go anywhere near that tree.

CHRISTINA. What if there are two?

ROSIE. What if there are none?

CHRISTINA. I can't.

ROSIE. You're scared.

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CHRISTINA. Yes.

ROSIE. Admit it.

CHRISTINA. I do.

ROSIE. Say it.

CHRISTINA. I'm scared.

ROSIE. Don't be.

CHRISTINA. Why not?

ROSIE. 'Cause it's a beautiful night for a swim.

CHRISTINA. It is?

ROSIE. The water will be like swimming in black velvet because the air is cool. The lake will be all ours because everyone is locked up in sleep. We will swim naked because there is no lifeguard. And there won't be any crazies because I have a feeling. *(Beat.)* It's a beautiful night for a swim.

CHRISTINA. The police.

ROSIE. It won't be the same ones.

CHRISTINA. What if it is?

ROSIE. They change their beats.

CHRISTINA. What if they haven't.

ROSIE. That was last summer.

CHRISTINA. I saw them, a picture of them, in the paper today.

ROSIE. I saw it too.

CHRISTINA. They saved a mother's little girl. C.P.R. She called them heroes.

ROSIE. It's good they saved her girl.

CHRISTINA. Heroes.

ROSIE. They're heroes.

CHRISTINA. Heroes can do anything they want, you know. They give them the key to the city and stuff like that. They could catch us swimming naked and take our clothes and make us leave the water all naked and shine their flashlights on us and hold our clothes above their heads and laugh and say jump. You'll cry.

ROSIE. I will not cry.

CHRISTINA. I won't know what to do. I'll jump and they'll laugh and I won't know what to do. I'll jump.

ROSIE. I promise you, on my honor, I will not cry.

CHRISTINA. What will you do if those heroes come?

ROSIE. I will hide under the weeping willow branches that grace the lake.

CHRISTINA. You said we wouldn't go anywhere near that tree.

ROSIE. I'll swim to the middle of the lake and tread water until they leave.

CHRISTINA. Your legs will tire. You'll drown like the Berridges' boy.

ROSIE. I'm a strong swimmer.

CHRISTINA. They'll come in after you.

ROSIE. They won't get their uniforms wet. It'd tarnish their medals.

CHRISTINA. They could take off their medals.

ROSIE. Then they wouldn't be heroes.

CHRISTINA. They could take off their uniforms.

ROSIE. Then they wouldn't be cops.

CHRISTINA. They could take our clothes and drive away in their police car. Sirens and lights and them laughing.

ROSIE. We'll drive home naked.

CHRISTINA. Our moms will catch us.

ROSIE. They've seen us naked before.

CHRISTINA. What if it's our dads?

ROSIE. That won't happen.

CHRISTINA. What if it does? Naked? *(Beat.)* We'll be in trouble.

ROSIE. *(In a father's voice.)* 'NO MORE SKINNYDIPPING BEHIND OUR BACKS—SNEAKING AROUND—DOING WHAT-EVER-YOU-PLEASE—FOR YOU YOUNG LADY.'

CHRISTINA. Those are your favorite jeans they'd be driving off with. You'd never get them back.

ROSIE. I don't care.

CHRISTINA. Took you two years to break them in.

ROSIE. I'd hide them in a tree.

CHRISTINA. There's only the weeping willow.

ROSIE. I know.

CHRISTINA. They'll find our clothes again and they'll know they've got two naked girls again. And one will shine his flashlight on you and one will shine his flashlight on me. And the water that maybe was like swimming in black velvet when we were alone and moving will be cold when we're still and wondering what to do. And they will order us out and we will be naked and shivering and your tan skin will turn white and frightened. They'll see right into us. Your eyes will fix on them and you won't look at me. You won't tell me what to do and I'll be so cold. They'll say "Come on out now, girls." And the water

will fall away from your body with only hands and wrists, white elbows and arms to cover you. Your arms look breakable. And I'll follow you watching the water run down your back. The flashlights will glare down our faces, down our legs. They'll shine their flashlights one for each of us. They'll smile at us trying to cover ourselves. They'll hold our clothes above their heads and smile at us naked and say "jump." And you'll cry and I'll cry and I'll jump.

ROSIE. We'll walk out of that lake like we've got nothing to be ashamed of and we'll look them right in the eye.

CHRISTINA. We won't cry?

ROSIE. We will not cry.

CHRISTINA. When they hold our clothes above their heads and won't give them back and say "Jump"?

ROSIE. We will not cry. We will not jump.

CHRISTINA. When they say with grins on their faces and our clothes in their hands, when they say ...

ROSIE. *(Cutting CHRISTINA off.)* "Lucky for you."

CHRISTINA. "Lucky for you it was just cops that found you and not some crazy sicko."

ROSIE. "Murderous peeping Tom."

CHRISTINA. "Rapist."

ROSIE. "What are you two thinking about swimming at this hour with no lifeguard?"

CHRISTINA. "What if a storm came up all of a sudden and lightning struck the lake?"

ROSIE. "Why, you would be electrocuted!"

CHRISTINA. "What are you thinking about swimming with no clothes on?"

ROSIE. "You could catch a chill and die of pneumonia!"

CHRISTINA. "It's cold at night with no sun!"

ROSIE. And when they say, "Run along home now girls."

CHRISTINA. "Before we call your parents."

ROSIE. We'll just stare at them but we won't say a word.

CHRISTINA. We won't?

ROSIE. We won't stoop to their talk, talking nonsense. We'll just press them with our knowing eyes and they'll know that we know better.

CHRISTINA. We know all about skinnydipping at midnight.

ROSIE. Warm, black water, black sky, no flashlights to trash the darkness, one moon, some stars and a weeping willow tree. A per-

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end

fectly beautiful night for a swim.

CHRISTINA. Standing there naked we will not cry.

ROSIE. We will not.

CHRISTINA. I can't.

ROSIE. Why?

CHRISTINA. The floorboards creak, they'll wake up.

ROSIE. Tiptoe.

CHRISTINA. My parents have radar.

ROSIE. Climb out the window.

CHRISTINA. There's nothing to climb.

ROSIE. Jump.

CHRISTINA. It's a long way down.

ROSIE. Bend your knees when you land.

CHRISTINA. Catch me.

ROSIE. You're too old for catching.

*(CHRISTINA climbs into the window frame.)*

CHRISTINA. Just jump and bend my knees?

ROSIE. I don't like to swim alone.

CHRISTINA. It is a beautiful night for a swim.

ROSIE. C'MON JUMP.

*(CHRISTINA jumps.*

*Lights out.)*

END OF THE PLAY

# Commodity

STEVE MOULDS