



Video Story Transcript

Rosie the Riveter

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJxVUpvUBWs>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, I'm Judith Black.

Now during World War II, when men were serving on both the eastern and western front, who do you think made the boats, the guns, the airplanes that they fought with? The women on the home front. Was often called the Third Front. And this is a story about those women. There are actually three adventures in it and each Rosie deals with a different issue. The first Rosie with sexism, the second with Holocaust denial. But I want you to meet the third Rosie.

(Singing)

*All the day long whether rain or shine
She's a part of the assembly line
She's making history, working for victory
Rosie the Riveter
Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage
Sitting up there on the fuselage
That little frail can do more than a male will do
Rosie the Riveter*

Rosie rocked underneath the great wrought iron gate. It was the graveyard shift, 11 at night till 7 in the morning. But Rosie, she kept the pace and the spirits high. As a matter of fact, the only thing that didn't keep the spirits high was that night's set-up man.

“Hey, my man, Emmanuel, how you doing?”

“Oh, Rosalita. You're looking fine tonight, girl. You're gonna turn heads.”

“Oh, yeah, Baby, I'm gonna turn heads. Roundheads, flatheads, and brassheads.”

“Hey, Susie, girl,” Rosie asked Susie the same question every night and got the same answer. “Hey, Susie girl, how's college education helping you on the line?”

“Oh, Rosie. It's teaching me how to check my paystub for the right amount.”

“Girlfriend, I'm going to have to have you look at mine. Hey, Ho Trung, how's it going?”

Ho Trung, a slight talking east man was very shy and Rosie was careful to greet him every single night.

“Okay, ya'll, let's get to work.”

That night set-up man. During the war, it was the very first time that people of color, women could actually get well-paying technical jobs in the factories. And the bosses trusted them, they trusted them to do rifling, they trusted them to do file and polish, they trusted them to do chambering but leadership roles still only went to men. White men. And sometimes the guys that got those jobs, just didn't deserve them. That night set-up man was a long, lean boy with oily hair, pendulous lips and a nervous habit, and whenever he could get it, a cigarette hanging from those lips.

“Okay, you black and white and yellow and brown, let's get my little United Nations to work.” That always came after a number of racial invectives.

And Rosie would whisper, “Come on, ya'll. Let's remember who the real enemy is and show aw stuff.”

But that night set-up man, he was still like a cold wind at people's necks.

Well, during break time, Rosie kept the pace and the spirits up, “Come on, ya'll. Come on. We're going to hear the news as it has been seen and now will be reported, Ho Trung Nguyen.” She knew that Ho Trung, being alone in this country, went to see the newsreels each day. “How Trung, my man. What do we need to know?”

“Rosie, they say since girls come to work in factories, too much kissing and hugging.”

“Coo wee! They're making blue reels about the workers. What else?”

“They say at McDonnell Douglas Aircraft, they closed back room because girl found kissing with foreman.”

“Coo wee! Don't mix me up with our set-up man. We'd make some hot stuff.”

“Don't make too hot, Rosie. Make casing on fighter bomber explode.” It wasn't a big joke for Ho Trung; it was to the world. Everyone laughed and they were back at their stations before the bell went off. But that didn't stop the night set-up man.

“Come on, black and white and yellow and brown, let's get my little United Nations to work. Hey, Emmanuel, maybe if you wash your hands more often, things wouldn't slip through. Hey, Susie girl. Why don't you stay after shift? I'll teach you something they don't teach you in college. Hey, Rosie,” he knew better than to say anything to Rose. “Trung. Ho Trung, you with the slanty eyes. You, you! You see, you look like a Jap to me. You probably sellin' secrets.”

“No, not Japanese. Tonkinese.”

“Yeah, you look Jap to me boy, and I bet you’re taking them secrets. I’m gonna tell the boss. Probably fire you.”

“Need job to bring my wife and children here.”

“You’re talking back to me? Are you talking back to me?!” And he took one aggressive step toward Ho Trung. Ho Trung took a step back. He tripped, he fell, and his head missed a moving lathe by that much. And the set-up man just leaned over him. His foot starting to swing like it would when you wanted to kick a stone across the street. Until he felt a warm vibration right at the nape of his neck. And when he started to turn, the vibration intensified ever so slightly. But he knew. It was Rosie and a riveting gun. And he could imagine any hole going from the back.

“Oh, girl! You’re in trouble. You got to...”

“Help that man up, Mr. Mister.”

“Girl, I’m telling you. Girl...”

“Help him up.”

“Ho Trung.”

“Good, Now, dust him off.”

“Girl, ya...”

“I said, Dust him off, Mr. Mister.”

“You..”

“Good. Now you apologize to that human being...Now.”

“Sorry, Ho Trung. That was an accident. You know that, don’t ya? Ok. Girl, you and me, we are going down to the foreman’s office right now.”

“Fine. I am right behind you.”

And Rosie, she walked down that long shop floor. That riveting gun never leaving the nape of his neck. They walked up the two steps into the night foreman’s office and door, (*closing sound*).

Ho Trung looked around and he said, “I don’t know about any of you, but I could speak for Rosie.”

“Wait, Susie will come with you. I’ll talk for Rosie.”

“I, Patrick McPhee, I’ll talk for Rosie.

Emmanuel, “I’ll talk for Rosie.” And soon, all 22 people who worked on that riveting shop floor were lined up behind Ho Trung Nguyen and marching down the aisle there, until they got to the foreman’s door and they heard inside angry voices. But none of them were Rosie’s trying to defend herself.

“I’m telling you! I’m telling you if I’m your voice on that floor, that girl is going to cause anarchy! That girl, she, she thinks she is the boss! She...”

“Now, we’ve never had any trouble with Rose. She has incredible production.”

“I’m telling you unless want anarchy, this girl has got to go! And...”

For the first time in his life, Ho Trung Nguyen opened a door without knock'n. The foreman looked down and he saw 22 pairs of angry eyes. All riveted to his night set-up man. "Rose, I don't know what happened out there but I'm going to ask you to do me a big favor. Would you please, please go back to work?"

She stood a little too slowly, dusted herself off in the direction of the set-up man, looked down at everyone in that shop. "Come on, ya'll. We got a lot of time to make up for." And Rosie and that graveyard shift, they had the highest production levels at any factory during that war.

Well, people often ask when the war was over, did Rosie keep riveting? Well, most women signed a pledge that they give the guys who came back their jobs. So, lots of women went back home. Too many of them had to go back to the poor paying jobs that they had before the war. Some went on for training. But if you asked any of them, "What were you doing during the war?"

They'll proudly tell you, "Me? I was a Rosie."

(Singing)

*What if she's smeared full of oil and grease
Doing her bit for the old Lendlease
She keeps the gang around
They love to hang around
Rosie the Riveter*