

Spring Senior Project Issue 2018

The **MORPHEUS**

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Morpheus Staff

Kasandra Christner, Editor
Rachel James, Layout Design
Fletcher Grey
Tanner Glitcheff
Danielle Lester, Social Media
Molly Calaway

Contact Us:
morpheus@heidelberg.edu

Megan Almendinger

9 Women Everyone Should Know About

There are some pretty well-known women like Diana Ross, Amelia Earhart, Rosa Parks, Queen Elizabeth I, and many more. But, there are plenty more that deserve a place in our books and in our minds. We should know who these women are too. Here in no particular order are the 9 women who everyone should know about:

1. The Night Witches

The Night Witches is the name of an all-female Russian bombing unit. They flew 23,000 missions over Germany to bomb their Nazi butts. Their biplanes were very noisy and old, so a lot of the time their engines would give out mid-flight. How exciting! The women would climb out onto the wings and re-start the propellers. To add to their awesomeness, when bombing Germany, two pilots would distract the searchlights, while another would turn off the engine and glide the plane lower to drop the bombs. This fearless group of women had more balls than most men.

2. Nancy Wake

She was a New Zealand Allied agent and a British Special Operations Executive agent. In 1943 Nancy was at the top of the most wanted list for the Gestapo during WWII, with the price of 5 million francs on her head. Her nickname was “White Mouse” because she was so good at not being captured. When describing her tactics, she said, “A little powder and a little drink on the way, and I’d pass their (German) posts and wink and say, ‘Do you want to search me?’ God, what a flirtatious little bastard I was.” Even Nancy knew she was good at what she did. One of her many exploits during the war is killing an SS soldier with her bare hands. She did not want him to raise alarm during the raid they were carrying out. Like, damn! Who kills someone with their bare hands? Oh, wait... Nancy does.

3. Victoria Woodhull

This woman was the first ever female to run for president of the United States in 1872. Women did not even have the right to vote yet. She was only 34 years old and ahead of her time. Unfortunately, her presidential run may not have been successful, but her political views were revolutionary. She supported the women’s suffrage movement, welfare for the poor, and she was a vocal advocate for sexual freedom. In such a conservative country, she had the balls to stand out. With such controversial views, she was even depicted as Satan in many newspaper cartoons. Honestly, if Satan was the only thing they could compare her to, then it shocks me that her far superior mind lost to such simple minds.

4. Julie D’Aubigny

Julie was a 17th century French opera singer who was bisexual. She liked a girl so much that the girl's father sent her to a convent. Julie did not let that stop her though. She took the vows to get into the convent and seduced the girl she had a crush on. When she left the convent, she burned it down. First, fake vows and then a fire. This woman gave no f****. Julie was also known for seducing women at parties. Their husbands would get mad and challenge her to a duel. Surprise! Julie was an expert shooter. She killed 10 men dueling with them.

5. Lyudmila Pavlichenko

Known as Lady Death by the press, at the age of 25 Lyudmila was one of the deadliest female snipers ever. During WWII, this Russian woman killed 309 people and 36 other snipers. Her tactics were ruthless. She would tie cloth to trees to distract her enemies. She set up mannequins as decoys. She would shoot in the rain so that the sound was muffled. When she became really upset she would shoot her enemies in the leg, so they would cry out and alert more people to come in target range. Lyudmila was ruthless, but a true badass woman.

6. Ching Shih

Ching was a 19th century Chinese pirate who controlled the world's largest fleet to ever exist. She ended up controlling 1,500 vessels and commanding a crew of 80,000 sailors. After her husband died, Ching took over as captain of his pirate ships. She was known to be very strict. If you disobeyed orders or stepped out of line in any way the consequences were brutal. If Ching found out you were stealing from the treasury or if she even thought you were, your head would get chopped off. If you raped the female prisoners, then your head would get chopped off. If you were rude or stole from the allied towns, you guessed it, your head would get chopped off. Overall, her fleet defeated the Chinese Imperial Fleet, the British, the Dutch, and the Portuguese. She retired a very wealthy woman.

7. Chiomara

Chiomara was a Celtic princess around the time of the Roman Empire. She was captured by a Roman soldier who raped her and then held her for ransom to help salvage his image. Eventually men came with money for the ransom. While the Roman soldier was counting the money, Chiomara nodded her head to one of her men who brought the money. This was her indication to chop the Roman's head off. Such a subtle hint for something not so subtle. I love it! After his death, Chiomara wrapped his head in her dress and brought it back to her husband. Upon seeing her husband, she dropped the head at his feet and proclaimed that only one man would sleep with her and live. You go girl!

8. Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks is an African American woman we should all be grateful for. In 1951 at the age of 31 and after having her fifth child, Henrietta was complaining of a knot in her womb. Unfortunately, this turned out to be cervical cancer and during radium and x-ray treatments, tissue was taken from her cervix for testing without her knowledge or consent. This is not ok! The cancerous cells were given to Dr. George Grey who then cultured them into the HeLa cell line. This was the first immortalized cell line and has become one of the most important cell lines in medical research. Her family was never compensated for this and did not find out about this until 1975. Twenty years later... are you kidding me? This woman's cells have helped discover the polio vaccine and have contributed to several breakthroughs in cancer research. The medical field can't even compensate her family? Makes complete sense. Totally understandable.

9. Rosalind Franklin

She was a chemist and X-ray crystallographer (a fancy word for a 3-D model of a molecule). Rosalind received her Ph.D. in 1945. She is responsible for the x-ray diffraction picture and research that led to discovering the double-helix structure of DNA. Shoot, I can barely draw a double helix, so color me impressed. Sadly, she was never recognized for this. The Nobel Prize of Physiology or Medicine in 1962 was given to James Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins for discovering the DNA double helix. Why am I not surprised that a man won? This lack of recognition really is getting out of hand.

6 Men History Forgot About

Just like the women, there are men in history that we have never heard about. This is absolutely crazy! Why are our history books deciding who we should remember and who is unimportant? It's absurd and men who have made huge contributions in history need to be recognized for their efforts. Yes, men do get all the recognition compared to women when it comes to history, I get that, but I also think there are men who we should know about. Just because they are men does not mean we should forget them. So, in no particular order, here are 6 men that history forgot:

1. Henry Woodward and Matthew Evans

You thought Thomas Edison invented the light bulb? Ha! You're so wrong it's funny. All that Thomas Edison did was purchase some else's idea and take it as his own. The real man who invented the light bulb was a Canadian named Henry Woodward. Side note: his friend, Matthew Evans, also helped work on this invention with Woodward. These men built the first lamp with a shaped rod of carbon. They were laughed at for this invention, so naturally they needed money to have it take off. They purchased a U.S. patent for the electric lamp in 1876 and the rest is stolen history. So stop believing the crap about Edison. All he did was take Woodward's and Evans' idea. Cowardly and disgusting. So, let us all give a huge thank you to Woodward and Evans for giving us the CANADIAN invented light bulb.

2. Percy Julian

This man was the first African American man to receive his doctorate in chemistry, so why have we not heard of him? Oh, wait.... because racism is stupid and so are the people who think African Americans didn't have as much of impact on history as anyone else. Julian was the man that synthesized natural products to create a variety of medical drugs that changed history. For example, he synthesized soy beans to create physostigmine (treats glaucoma) and progesterone (prevents miscarriages). His work also laid the ground work for several steroids, cortisone, and birth control. Percy Julian was a brilliant chemist. It is crazy that we do not know about a man who helped create many of the drugs we all put into our bodies. Honestly, it is absolute bulls*** that we don't know about him just because of the color of his skin.

3. Edmund G. Ross

Another legend. Edmund G. Ross single handedly kept Andrew Johnson in office when the rest of the country wanted to impeach him. To think one man had such power is scary and yet so badass. Andrew Johnson could not figure out how to treat the South. Like, how do you think? Not sure why this was so complicated. Anyway... on February 24, 1868 the House of Representatives impeached

Johnson and he went to trial in the Senate a week later. For Johnson to be impeached there need to be 36 guilty votes against him. This is where Ross, a new senator from Kansas, comes into play brilliantly. Each senator votes and by the time it was Ross' turn there were 24 guilty votes and 11 votes assumed to be guilty, so all the Senate needed was Ross to vote guilty and Johnson was out. Ross went against everyone and voted not guilty. Boom! His one vote meant that Johnson remained President. The man, the myth, the legend. Edmund G. Ross.

4. Gregory Goodwin Pincus

Women, and probably men, need to give an immense thank you to Gregory Goodwin Pincus. He was the legendary man who invented birth control. Literally one of the most important pills in women's rights history! Why did I not know about this man? After a feminist campaigner asked him to consider creating such a pill in 1950, Pincus teamed up with a gynecologist named John Rock. As they say the rest is history. But, let's be real... Pincus needs to say a big thank you to Percy Julian for his innovations with the pill. But, no matter who helped create the pill, women especially need to know about this man. Bow down to him more likely because without Pincus, we would have babies running rampant and no one really wants that.

5. Roger Sherman

Have you heard of Roger Sherman? The man who helped establish this country. I didn't think so. Sherman is the man who helped decided how each state would be represented in the Senate. He proposed that it should be based on population so that each state could be equally represented. How nice of him. Making sure that no one was whining like a child over misrepresentation. The Constitutional Convention voted 5 to 4 in favor of his idea. Sherman created the way we established our country's Senate. Where is his recognition? For someone who signed every important document in this country (the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the 1774 Continental Association) he sure has jack squat to show for it and that is just pathetic. Our history books need to step up their game.

6. Frank J. Wilson

Did you know this man helped take down the notorious Al Capone? I bet not because history, films, and even rap songs give this accomplishment to Eliot Ness. In 1929, the government was tired of Al Capone's bulls*** and decided to take two routes so they could take him down. Option 1: catch Capone selling alcohol. If he was doing this, which he definitely was, then he would be going against prohibition, so bam! They would get him. Eliot Ness was in charge of this one. Option 2: Catch Capone through tax evasion. So. Much. Fun. I bet that's what Wilson thought too when this was assigned to him. So, what happened? Well three years later Wilson only had 22 accounts of tax evasion and Ness had 5,000 violations against Capone. So, guess who got remembered? The man who couldn't even have the charges stick to Capone in court. Simpler terms: Ness' part of the investigation didn't do jack. Maybe they should have used Wilson's work. It would have been solid evidence and we would know more about a man who wasted three years of work on a gangster.

5 Male Writers with Surprisingly Cringe Worthy Pasts

We all know that nobody is perfect. Everyone has an interesting quirk, a wired hobby, or just something that they don't tell anyone else. From Stephen King to Dr. Seuss, these writers all have skeletons in their closets. Some worse than others of course. So here, in no particular order, are 5 writers whose pasts are surprisingly cringe worthy:

1. Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens, an author best known for *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Bleak House*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. He is considered one of the greatest novelist from the Victorian Era. However, even a great novelist has a weird past time. More specifically, he enjoyed spending his time with the dead. In other words, Dickens had a fetish for dead bodies. So disgusting. He liked to go to the Paris Morgue and even said himself that "Whenever I am at Paris, I am dragged by invisible force into the Morgue. I never wanted to go there, but I am always pulled there." Basically, he can't help himself. Dickens would even spend holidays at the morgue. Screw family, why not spend Christmas with dead bodies? Even when he wasn't in Paris, Dickens would hang out with the Thames River Police. Overall, bodies fascinated this great novelist in a very weird way.

2. Hans Christian Anderson

The man who brought *The Little Mermaid* to life was not as innocent as the child story he created. Let's just put it out there. Anderson kept masturbation diaries. He was known to enjoy himself at dinner parties and even paid prostitutes to just talk to him. He would excuse himself and then you know...

He would even do this when some of his good-looking friends came over. I mean jeeze, there is a time and place for such things. His diary entries kept track of each of these individual pleasurable moments. Even going so far as to rate how each incident went. Honestly, a children's writer known for keeping a masturbation diary. Really?

3. Stephen King

One of the most famous and well-known horror authors. King is most known for: *Carrie*, *The Shining*, and *IT* just to name a few of his terror inducing novels. Fun fact, when studying at the University of Maine, he was arrested at a bar for excessive drinking. Clearly, a problem is forming. This alcoholic problem soon became more of a reliance for King when it came to writing. Need to write a good book? Let's grab the alcohol and drugs! Makes complete sense. Eventually this binge drinking became too much for King's wife and she went all intervention on his butt. King was scared straight and now no longer uses drugs and booze to help his creative juices flow. Good for him and let's hope his past won't come back to haunt him.

4. Dr. Seuss

Dr. Seuss is well-known to everyone. His children's books are universally popular, and many have even been made into profitable movies. However, what most people do not know, is that Dr. Seuss (aka Theodor Seuss Geisel) was very racist when it came to some of his early cartoons. In a 1929 cartoon for *Judge* magazine, Seuss depicts a white man auctioning off African American men captioned with a racial slur. Not so great. During World War II, he was known for writing anti-Japanese propaganda. He himself said, "If we want to win, we've got to kill Japs." Goes to show you that even a lovable children's author isn't so perfect and lovable after all. He even cheated on his wife. Oh, and she was dying while she battled with cancer. This affair led her to commit suicide. A racist and a cheater. What a lethal combination.

5. Lewis Carroll

Best known as the author of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll was not as innocent as the girl he created. In blunt terms, he was obsessed with young girls. The inspiration for his famous novel was a ten-year-old girl named Alice Liddell. Carroll had several risqué photographs of the young girl. Apparently, she was not the only one either. There were pictures and even nude painting of other young girls too. Carroll was the one who took these nude photographs and painted the nude paintings. Honestly, I don't care if nudity in art was common in his day, this is just gross, and he needs to reevaluate his life choices.

6 Female Writers with Surprisingly Cringe Worthy Pasts

Just like the men, there are also women writers who have some dirty secrets. Maybe they are out in the open about their past, or maybe they would like to keep it private. Some secrets are mild, while others are pretty extreme, but no matter what they are just like everyone else and their dirty laundry needs to come out of the closet eventually. So, here are 6 female writers with some interesting, and sometimes scary, cringe worthy pasts:

1. Maya Angelou

She is one of the most well-known poets, authors, and civil rights activist, but that does not mean Maya Angelou didn't have some rough times. Before she became so famous for her work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she was a prostitute. This life of sex began at the ripe ole age of 17. Angelou had a son and she needed to support him, so she became close with two lesbian hustlers and soon began to work with them. This went sour though because, shocker, the lesbian hustlers were taking all the money behind her back. Angelou's next move? She gets involved with a man named L.B. "Daddy" Tolbrook. Some advice: stay away from anyone with the nickname daddy. Just gross! Tolbrook was a man with debts and he convinced Angelou to work them off for him, if you know what I mean. Eventually, Angelou got away from this lifestyle with some help from her brother. Unfortunately, her son was kidnapped at one point and she had a pretty bad drug addiction. Who would have thought that such a lovely woman had to stoop so low and experience such s***.

2. Mary Shelley

Known for her famous gothic, horror fiction novel *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley will forever be remembered for her monstrous character. Shelley will also be known as the wife of Romantic poet and philosopher Percy Bysshe Shelley. The big problem with this relationship was that upon first meeting one another, Percy Shelley was married. Two years later when they met again, this marriage did not stop their relationship from progressing. Shelley and his wife were having problems, so cheating with another woman was no big deal, right? Mary and Percy even had a child together before his wife passed away. Crazy how such a well renowned woman like Mary Shelley could be the "other" woman.

3. Patricia Highsmith

Patricia Highsmith is an American novelist and short story writer. Her psychological thrillers, such as *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, are what she is most known for, which also led to 24 movie adaptations. I mean damn, what could a writer of psychological thrillers have wrong with them? Well I'm glad you asked. Let's see... her mother tried to abort her with alcohol before she was born, so naturally Highsmith eventually became an alcoholic. Then there were her social issues. Honestly, very relatable! She really didn't like to hang out with people and much preferred the company of

animals. When she did try to be around others, one of her friends described Highsmith as a “mean, hard, cruel, unlovable, unloving person.” Harsh. Other than her social issues she was the usual racist anti-semitic. This gal really does have the lethal combination of cringeworthy-ness .

4. Anne Perry

This lady really is a crime novelist for a reason. Anne Perry, formerly known as Juliet Hulme, murdered her own mother. Her parents were going through a divorce, so naturally you kill one of them. Well this is what Perry and her best friend thought so that they would not be separated when Perry’s mom moved. Perry and her friend took her mom for a walk, distracted her with a sparkling jewel, and proceeded to beat her with a brick 20 times. Holy s***. That really is all that can be said. There are no words because I can’t even comprehend how Perry’s mind was working in that moment. Fortunately, for everyone she was sentenced to five years in prison, but unfortunately, she’s out now and writing crime novels no less. What kind of woman murders their mother and then turns it into a career as a writer. A crazy psychopath that’s who.

5. Enid Blyton

She is an English children’s author whose books have been gracing the best-sellers list since the 1930’s. However, no matter how famous her books are Enid Blyton was an awful mother and terrible to her kids. Quite ironic. For a woman who wrote children’s books you would think she would be good with children, or at least her own. Boy, is that so wrong. Blyton was known for neglecting her two daughters and using them as props whenever she needed. One of her daughters even wrote a book about how terrible of a childhood she had. She wrote that her mom, Blyton, never visited the nursery where her and her sister played. Blyton lived in her own little world. How bad do you have to be as a parent that your own kids write a whole book about it. It really is mind boggling. Children’s author and not good with kids. It really makes no sense.

6. Flannery O’Connor

Flannery O’Connor was a writer of short stories and novels, as well as an essayist. She was known for being such an advocate against racism that it really shocked me, but not really because of the time she grew up in, that she was definitely racist. This is so shocking because she was not only writing against racism, but she actively criticized it and the South’s role in it. I mean what the hell. Her two faces are really starting to show. Brad Gooch wrote a biography on her life and he said that O’Connor was often making racist jokes and belittling her own friends who were Civil Rights Activists. Like, holy hell. You can’t preach about something and then do the complete opposite. So so so not ok. Being racist is wrong on so many levels, but lying about being racist, it really is the cherry on top of the cringe worthy cake.

7 Common Clichés That Have It All Wrong

Ever heard someone say something and thought, absolutely not. There are so many sayings, hashtags, and clichés in this world that it's hard to keep up with them all. Every time you hear something new or even something that has been said for far too long, screaming inside of the brain usually ensues. So why not get that screaming down on paper. Here are the 7 most common clichés that just have it all wrong:

1. “Diamonds are a girl’s best friend.”

Really? Are we still in the stone age? Women are not this shallow. I mean, some are and always will be, but come on. Do not speak for all women. Don't get me wrong diamonds are great! They're sparkly, beautiful, and a great gift for any girl. But.... We want more than material things! How about telling girls how intelligent and strong they are? Damn, what a concept. Let's stop looking at girls and women through only one lens. Diamonds are not our only best friends.

2. “Ignorance is bliss.”

Again, no. Ignorance is just plain ignorance. Do you know anyone who would want to be thought of as ignorant? I think not! I understand that this cliché means the person does not have knowledge of something to protect themselves in some way. Well, grow some balls and suck it up. Knowledge is power. As another cliché states “the more you know...” Ignorance will never be bliss in a world so dependent on knowledge.

3. “Everything in moderation.”

Go crazy! Don't ever do anything in moderation. If you want to pursue a career in English, then immerse yourself in it and commit to it. If you want to devour all the food sitting in front of you, do it! You want to watch the whole season of a new show on Netflix? Do it! Do anything you want and do it to the fullest. Don't meander around and take your time. Grab the bull by the horns and never ever ever do anything in moderation.

4. “Plenty of fish in the sea.”

Ever met anyone who is single? I have and let me tell you... this cliché is the worst. There may be plenty of fish in the sea, but what if all those fish are already taken? Or who said they were looking for a fish? What if the all the other fish died because of pollution? Honestly, so many questions. I advise you to never say this cliché to anyone. Just don't do it. Ultimately, we are not fish swimming in the sea. We are humans just trying to live and get through life. So stop comparing people to fish!

5. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”

An apple a day keeps no one away. I understand being healthy is important, but really?! Only an apple a day? It's honestly laughable. Sorry to break it to you, but even if you eat an apple a day, I can guarantee you will be visiting the doctor sometime in your life. Newsflash: even the healthiest of people can die from heart attacks or can get diabetes. Eating one fruit a day will do nothing for you. Change your whole lifestyle, then maybe. But, not doctor will be kept away by some lousy apple.

6. “Better safe than sorry.”

How about no. If you play it safe all the time, then what fun is that? Let's say you were given the opportunity of a life time: internship in Europe. The unfortunate thing is that you are afraid of fly-

ing. So, what do you do? Stay home and let that opportunity pass? Hell no! You suck it up and face your fears because this could be a life changing experience. How could you play it safe and not go on the plane? You would be sorry for the rest of your life. So, do not ever play it safe in life. Live life to the fullest and save being sorry for when you're dead.

7. **“You only hurt the one's you love.”**

Unfortunately, not true! You can hurt anyone. No one knows what anyone else is going through, so even a wrong glance on the side walk can hurt someone. People get hurt every day and it is not all because of someone they love. Coworkers and strangers can hurt you. There really are so many possibilities. This cliché just allows people to think that it's only bad if you hurt the people you love. Again, not true. It is important to not hurt anyone, no matter if you love them or not. Do not let this be an excuse to hurt others.

5 Quotes Better Than the Classics

Books, poems, and their authors have graced us with their creativity and knowledge for ages. Even if you are not an avid reader these epic words have entered your life at least once. However, this is the 21st century and we need to upgrade. These classics are great, but we could do better. So here are 5 classic quotes and their new, improved, superior counterparts:

Classic Quotes:

1. **“Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.”**

Alfred Lord Tennyson

I'd have to disagree. Have you ever felt the loss of love? Have you ever felt your heart being broken and then ripped out of your chest? If not, then I don't recommend it. Not a pleasant experience. So no, it is not better to have loved and lost. The pain you feel will never be worth it, so don't let Tennyson trick you into thinking it is.

2. **“He's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same.”**

Emily Brontë

Wuthering Heights

No. No. No. Be your own person! This is the biggest mistake and worst nonchalant advice ever. No young girl needs to read this and think that she needs to find someone who is the exact same as her. Don't get their hopes up. Welcome to the real world, where no one is the same. Everyone has their own likes, dislikes, personalities, etc. Do not ever think it is ok to rely so much and love someone so much that you lose yourself.

3. **“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - / I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.”**

Robert Frost

The Road Not Taken

Was anyone else really confused? Because same. Why is everything so complicated with these classic writers? Why can't you just tell me you were different from everyone else and this was good for you in the long run? Simple, straight forward, easily understandable. We don't need these confusing and over complicated quotes anymore.

4. “And in the end, we were all just humans...drunk on the idea that love, only love, could heal our brokenness.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby

Ignorance. That is what we call it now-a-days. To think love is the only thing that can heal us is stupid. Crazy even. Call it a cliché, but time, sleep, and food heal things too. Eating a whole carton of ice cream always helps with the feelings of brokenness. So, no! We do not all rely on love to fix us and we shouldn't. So screw the alcoholic Fitzgerald for thinking we do.

5. “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? / Thou art more lovely and more temperate.”

William Shakespeare

Sonnet 18

If someone tried to compare me to a summer’s day, I think I would be insulted. Am I sweaty? Red from how hot it is? Hair frizzed out because of the heat? These are the things I think of when I think of summer. Also, are you really going to call me lovely and gentle? Um, no. We are no longer living in Elizabethan England. I want to be told I’m strong and independent. Ultimately, don’t use such an insulting compliment.

Quotes Better Than the Classics:

1. “Be yourself only for yourself.”

Anonymous

This. This is something everyone needs to live by. Screw making others happy before yourself. Screw being yourself in hope that others like the real you. Screw it. Be your true authentic self because you can, and you should. Be yourself for yourself because in our world, focusing on yourself is important and necessary. Let alone, just be yourself only for yourself because you’re strong, confident, and resilient. No one else deserves to see your true self before you do.

2. “Love the life you live. Live the life you love.”

Bob Marley

Simple and straight to the point. I love it! Bob Marley is telling us something that all the old classic writers probably said in a long-drawn out paragraph. We don’t need all these words and similes and metaphors. Be simple. Simplicity is great, and this is what makes this quote so powerful. It catches you off guard with how straight forward it is. This idea of loving life and living the life we love is something we have always been told since we were born. So, how about we start doing this. Take the bull by the horns, as they say, get your ass off the couch and create this life full of love and happiness.

3. “I never look back, darling. It distracts from the now.”

Edna Mode

The Incredibles

Classic. Classic. Classic. This woman, or character, is who we all aspire to be. She adapts and this adaptation to life only makes her better. We all wish we could be as strong and non-caring about what others think as Edna Mode is. This quote is something to live by and it is our one step towards being a better us. If we let the past bulls*** bog our minds down, then how can we move forward? Oh, wait... we can't. So, take this quote, put it on your bedroom wall, and live your truest Edna Mode life.

4. “Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.”

J.K. Rowling

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

This quote will forever be a modern classic. I mean, how can you go wrong with Harry Potter? He gives such good advice and honestly, this is some damn good advice right here. In a world so full of crap right now, we need to start looking for the good. Without the good, then we have nothing. Don't let yourself or others have nothing. Find the light and turn it on.

5. “Everybody is a genius. But if we judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.”

Albert Einstein

Known for being a scientific genius, Einstein is also a genius at life advice. He truly gets that everyone is treated equally when it comes to education and societies expectations. However, this is one area where equality needs to stop. Not everyone is the same. Deal with it. Stop judging people for learning differently, dressing differently, talking differently, etc. It's complete crap that we do this to each other. Change needs to happen and even Einstein knew this 60 years ago.

References: They are all hyperlinked within their perspective articles. I hyperlinked everything to match the format of a typical online article. They are all listed below with the URL's too.

Pictures: Hyperlinked in the articles.

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Something to Pass the Time

by Josh Hilgenberg

This is consistently my favorite part of meeting new people.

“Well, I didn’t always want to. It’s funny, I have a hard time even remembering what I wanted to do when I was a kid. I just remember my dad always being there, being my biggest fan in whatever I did. When I needed help or was unsure about something, he was there, you know? I could ask him anything, even after I lost him.”

“Sir, could you fasten your seatbelt before we take off, please?” a motherly-looking stewardess asks me.

“Of course, sorry about that” I smile apologetically.

“No problem,” she smiles robotically “have a nice flight sir.”

As I buckle up, I look around to gauge the surroundings. It looks like I’ve attracted the person across the aisle, and the woman in front of me has her head turned our way. Meanwhile, the girl sitting next to me, or Sammi With Just An i as I’ll later find out, is totally enthralled, staring intently.

“Well, what happened?” the audience member across the aisle prods as I see him realize his own interest, adding “If you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind, it’s alright,” I assure him. “One night when I was young, my parents decided they wanted to take me to a movie. They always made family time, even when they were busy. Anyway, we left the theatre and Dad asked if he should call the limo. I didn’t want to. I was selfish. I wanted to spend more time with them and walk home, even though it was the middle of winter. They didn’t care about the cold, though, and neither did I, so we started walking home. We made a wrong turn and found ourselves in a bad part of town.” My eyes bore into the seat in front of me as if it’s a gravestone. “That’s when a man stopped us. He pulled a gun and my parents stepped in front of me without saying anything. The man wanted cash, but we didn’t have any. He looked at Mom’s pearls, though, and said they would suffice. She said no. They were her grandma’s, the ones she brought from the old country.” I sigh at this point. It has a tendency to slow things down before I deliver the final line: “So he shot them.”

Sammi With Just an i softly asks “Oh my God. So what did you do?”

“For awhile I was angry. I travelled and learned how to fight, thinking I’d never let it happen to me or someone I cared about. Then I remembered what I was leaving behind in my travels, and that’s when I came back. I used my parents org to start protecting people instead of just myself. Because that’s what I was doing that night. I was thinking about me and not the people I love. Loved.”

I kick myself for never learning how to cry on command, but all in all I can’t complain too much. I never expect a standing ovation. The quiet snuffles I hear around me are enough applause, and—now that I’ve had my fun—I retire backstage. “I hope it’s okay with you if I get some sleep. The melatonin is really starting to kick in,” I chuckle.

“I understand,” she says, nodding and smiling reassuringly. “I’m Sammi, by the way. Like,

Sammi with just an i at the end.”

“Goodnight, Sammi.”

On the opposite side of the Atlantic Like Sammi With Just An i At The End, pseudo-whispers “we’re landing soon!” and nudges me, waking me up.

“Thanks, Sammi,” I smile.

“No problem! I wanted to make sure you got breakfast before we landed.”

“How sweet of you,” I tell her, trying not to laugh at my exaggeration.

She twirls her finger in her hair in a way only I could find threatening and asks “so, um—are you, like, staying in Frankfurt tonight, or?”

“Oh, I wish. I’m taking the first train out to Mannheim once we land.”

A few hours later, my taxi pulls up to the hotel in Frankfurt. I take my bags into my room before I make my way down the street for lunch. The concierge asks if I’ll have the same wine to drink, but I pass this time. The city is flooded with skin tones like a department store’s swatch wall. I used to be afraid, having grown up in a small rural town breeding everything but diversity. Now I welcome it, hoping to find something new and different from my previous travels.

I try, for the first time, not using my phone’s map apps. I hate looking like a tourist, and frankly I need something to do for the next few hours. I find my favorite spot in a bittersweet fifteen minutes. It would’ve been nice to blow a little more time, but I’ve craved kebab for the last two weeks. I order my lunch, have a few beers, and study the passersby. I wait. I eat a few bites, and wait some more. What looks like a newlywed couple stops in the middle of the sidewalk and scrunch their noses at a phone screen. This is what I mean by looking like a tourist. Naive, afraid, and, most important, and most entertaining: gullible.

“Hallo!” I wave. I do business with Germans frequently. Imitating their accents comes easily when I say “can I help you with something?”

They laugh awkwardly and walk over to my table. “Yeah, we’re actually looking for a place to eat, but he’s a vegetarian,” the wife laughs and points at her husband, who laughs the same way as when you don’t quite understand the punchline.

“Oh, ja, ja. Here is very good. Do you like falafel?”

“Oh we LOVE falafel!” the wife looks at her husband again, “don’t we, honey?”

“Yeah, yeah, BIG falafel fans” he laughs “falafel fanatics!” he insists.

I make a half smile before I knock him off balance: “Fanatic?” I ask.

“Yep, we’re crazy for—”

“Honey, he doesn’t know the word,” she interjects. She turns from him to and explains patiently “It’s just a—a fancy word for when you love something.”

“Ah, okay, okay,” I nod in false realization. There’s a pause just long enough for me to become cognizant of my own boredom, when she says:

“Do you travel much? It’s our first time.”

“Ja, ja, here and there,” and before she has time to probe me any further “It was so nice to meet you,” I smile, standing up and gathering my trash.

“Oh, I hope we didn’t keep you! Have a great day!”

“You as well,” I say, holding onto my trash and walking away to avoid a handshake.

“Aufwiedersehen!” she calls as I walk off.

I pretend not to hear her as I look for gelato, or maybe a beer. Or both.

When I get back to the hotel room, I try to find a movie. At this point, I’ve seen everything on HBO enough times to have the lighting of every goddamn scene memorized. I turn the tv off and try to sleep, but I can only lie there and wait. For nothing. The jet lag is tugging me into the sheets, but I can’t close my eyes. I don’t have to be at the meeting until 9:00 tomorrow morning. I think about

Like Sammi With Just An i At The End for a bit and wonder why I didn't just tell her I come from a small town, work in computer programming, and frequently travel for consultation meetings. I hear myself think that and remember.

I call the concierge and tell him "I'll actually take that bottle of wine if you don't mind."

I wait a few minutes, turning on the tv to kill the time. The German version of The Simpsons is playing when the concierge arrives with my deep, red, R-Rated NyQuil.

"Danke," I smirk.

"You're welcome," he replies without a hint of an accent. As the door slams I turn around and get back in bed. The couple from earlier meanders their way into my mind. Would they even care that I'm American and not German? I could've told them afterwards. I wonder if we would've laughed together. I wonder if Sammi is still in the city tonight. I'm holding her hand when a noise rouses my conscious out of my heart.

"D'OH!" Homer cries, in preparation to wring his hands around Bart's neck. Seeing him cope with the frustration of his own manifestation, I'm surprised to find myself empathizing with a fat, yellow, cartoon man. Shuddering at the thought, I finally pop the cork on the bottle—a much more comforting sound.

I change the channel and pour a glass. I change the channel and pour a glass.

I change the channel and pour a glass. I change the channel and pour a glass.

I change the channel and—I've run out. I wait until I fall asleep. Other than a dress shirt buttoned all the way up, a pair of socks, and my Batman underwear, the light of the TV screen is the only blanket.

I wake in the middle of the night and loosen the tie around my neck. I try to take it off completely. It only seems to tighten, so I reluctantly, and half-drunkenly go back to sleep.

I wake up the next morning with just enough time to get dressed for the meeting. After a few years in the job, I learned to be efficient in my morning rituals, evident by my shaved head. I brush my teeth, splash water on my face, and call a cab before getting dressed.

"Hallo?" I hear from the hotel phone.

I simply reply: "Yeah, can you pick me up in front of the Hilton?" I pause before I add "please?"

I hear "Ja." before he hangs up the phone. I toss my phone back onto the bed and carefully slip my tie over my head before changing my shirt and putting on a fresh pair of slacks. My breath reaches a bit deeper in the moments before I slip the tie back around my neck. Every few weeks I consider going without one, but decide not to. I can't recall ever noticing any of the Germans without some sort of neckwear, and I don't want to risk losing the deal. I tighten the knot again, clenching my throat, and head out the door.

The cabby's waiting for me as I emerge from the front of the hotel, but I hear some raised voices off to the right. I look over and notice a father and son. Dad's pointer finger is enveloped in Junior's fist while the other hand holds a phone. He's only a few years older than me, if not the same age. I don't know which of them I envy more.

"I know, I know. It's coming, the cab is coming. I gave him the wrong address on accident. Yeah, we're probably gonna miss the flight."

I look at my watch. It's about a fifteen minute ride to the office where my meeting is and it's 8:42. Factoring in a few minutes for me to ride the elevator up means I'll be cutting it close anyway.

"Hi. Here's the address" I tell the cabby.

“Thank you,” he says reaching back for the business card in my hand.

I buckle up and wait a bit before I look into the rearview mirror and see the family behind me. I feel the guilt pinch my heart. Distracting myself, I say “You lived in the city awhile?”

“Twenty-five years.”

“You’ve got about twenty on me, then.” I chuckle awkwardly.

He grunts.

I check my phone, even though there’s no wi-fi. The lack of a notification is somehow just as disheartening as the fact that I still checked for one.

I stuff it in my pocket.

“Yep. I love this city.”

He grunts again. I’m both impressed and annoyed at the man’s willpower to totally avoid conversation. Typically I can count on an ‘O.K.’ at the very least. I actually find myself making mental notes of the way he’s treating me, hoping to reproduce his performance.

Then I come up with a game.

“I love all the diversity around here. Frankfurt’s really become a cultural melting pot now, you know?”

His lower lip curls as his chin pushes against the rest of his face in annoyance.

“It’s crazy how much there is to try around here, especially the food!”

His brows furrow.

“It’s almost like being at home!”

“No.” he says astutely, “No,” again.

I furrow my own brow in confusion: “What do you mean?” I implore, “I hope I didn’t offend you!”

“Germany is not like America. Germany better.”

I laugh and say “Okay, okay, didn’t mean to start anything!”

He grunts.

My smile fades.

We arrive at the office several minutes later, I pay him, and we say nothing to each other. I step outside and barely manage to shut the door before he pulls out.

The ride up the elevator feels long. I check my watch. It was only about a ten minute ride, which means two things. One, the cabby must have avoided the longer route to get rid of me, understandably. Two, I could have—the elevator dings and I’m forced out by a mob of businessmen and interns alike. I find our conference room.

The meeting follows its typical routine.

“Do we need this?” they ask.

“No,” I respond.

“Really?” asks another.

“No,” I reiterate. “I mean—yes, really, you don’t need this. It’s a scam.”

“Hmm,” they say.

“Here’s what you need,” I say, bringing up a link.

It goes on this way for hours. They fly me across the ocean, ask for a shopping list, I provide one, they throw it away, and ask for another. Then they have issues and ask me to fix what I know nothing about. I wonder regularly if it’s all a ruse, a game for the German elite, to figure out how far the American will be prodded off of the plank before he dives or fights back. The answer, unfortunately for them, is that I’d most likely spend so much time weighing the options of both that I end up in an eternal purgatorial state. At the moment I hear a chair scoot on the floor I’m considering asking why do you ignore my recommendations? Why do you bring me here? but instead I stand dutifully, shake each of their meaty hands, pocket my check, and leave.

The next cab ride is significantly quieter. I'm too exhausted to act, and am frankly dreading the next several hours before my flight home. I need to be at the airport around 1a.m. and it's only noon. Thirteen hours to kill.

"Where's a good bar?"

I like this place, surprisingly. It's different from the usual laziness I know my evenings by. Loud, blaring music. Dancing on the floor. A damn good gin and juice. It's strong and cheap, only 5 euro for a tall glass. I've put three or four of them down since I got here, not including the steins of beer I encountered earlier. The toxins slosh around in my gut. The lights flash in my eyes, but not bright enough that I can see my watch. I've made the mistake enough times that I stopped checking it, along with my phone.

Instead I look out onto the dance floor and see bodies writhing against each other. At first I'm happy for my barstool. It's sturdy, it's nearby the cash register so the bartender stops by frequently. It's an oasis amongst the waves of humans thrashing against each other.

I am the Titanic when my heart sinks.

The iceberg strikes me. I am not the unsinkable vessel conquering waves of society. I am the eel in the school of fish. I writhe in my own skin as I look back at the last few hours and count on my fingers how many people I've spoken to. I can count on less the amount of times I touched someone today outside of a business arrangement. I suddenly find myself longing to be part of the hivemind of drunks. Never more have I wanted to be struck by a stranger, to have any sort of skin against mine, no matter the intention. And never have I felt less in control of my body. I silently shout at my legs to move, but all I can muster is an off beat tapping against the rod on the stool. The gin isn't strong enough to ward off the specters of the last few days, and apparently the stench of my ego is strong enough to repel their physical forms away. I bore my eyes into the flashing bar floor and pray for the opposite. I look around and try to talk to someone. Anyone.

"Hi, how are you?"

They slide past, never making eye contact.

"Are you from America?"

They scream the lyrics of the song blaring through their ears. .

"My name's Simon" I plead.

They glance over their shoulder like a bug was in their hair.

My phone vibrates in my pocket, relieving me of my venture and signaling the time to call a taxi and get to the airport. I down the rest of my drink and leave. I hate this place.

When we finally board the plane, the alcohol and frustration suck out whatever energy I have left. I buckle my seatbelt, and lay my head against the cold, metal wall of the airplane. All I can think about is the pain in my throat. Hot coals tumble down my throat when I swallow after spending so much time yelling over the music in the club. But the real pain comes from the irony that I never really talked to anyone. In a cocktail of drunkenness and emotion, I fall asleep before my neighbor takes their seat.

I wake up to the distant smell of coffee. All I can see out of the window is darkness, and I find myself confused as to why someone would order that now at, after looking my watch, about 5 a.m. As the smell fills my nostrils, I realize it must be coming towards me. The only people awake are the steward and the man sitting next to me. A beard and a wide pair of glasses are the two features I notice immediately. A book lies on his flip-down tabletop, its innards exposed against the plastic surface. It's a hardcover with the sleeve removed and dog eared pages.

"Here's your coffee, sir," the steward says, smiling.

“Ope—thanks!” he replies, “ppreciate it.”

I recognize his midwestern roots immediately. He reminds me of my mom. As he reaches for his book I can’t help but ask: “You from Ohio?” nonchalantly.

He smiles and says: “Indiana, actually. You have family around there?”

“Yeah. Yeah, my step dad’s from western Ohio.”

“Ah, okay. I can’t say I’m familiar with the area.”

I should let him get back to his book, but instead: “what are you reading?”

“It’s nothing, just uh. Something that reminds me of home, ya know?”

“C’mon what is it?”

He smiles nervously and picks up the book, turning it over in his hands. He passes it to me reluctantly, as if dangling a child over a crocodile exhibit. Rightfully so, come to think of it, if he knew my tendencies. I hold it and turn it over. The corners are bent, there’s a watermark going down the front cover, and wafting the pages is similar to opening a bag of coffee beans. I ponder my next move. I finally glance at the title. The gold letters shine in the light of the moon. Suddenly, instead of coffee, I’m overwhelmed with memory.

“You’re kidding,” is all I can manage, with a smile.

He smiles back and says, “yeah, I know, it’s kinda odd, but—”

“No, no, I love it. I used to read this all the time, actually.”

“No way! Yeah, it’s a homesick book for me. My mom used to read it to me all the time.”

“That’s crazy, mine did too,” I tell him, “She was great at voices,” I pause and realize what I said “She is great at voices, sorry.” I laugh nervously. I feel like I’m in seventh grade again, standing on the opposite side of the makeshift cafeteria dance floor as the girls. Except I don’t want to hover my hands over this guy’s hips, or even thrust my genitals in his direction—I just want to talk to him. My gut lurches, processing the remaining alcohol and the accompanying butterflies.

“No, you’re fine! Mine did too.”

“That’s awesome!” I reply, “Do you mind if I hop out and use the bathroom?”

“Ope, yeah, no problem.”

I purge and feel miles better. I plot out a strategy that leads to me asking for his phone number. With the remaining time, I drift into my apartment back home. My friend and I are watching a movie—we laugh at the acting, we yell about the story’s implications. We order pizza. Another night we go out to the bars together. Another day we meet up for lunch. We meet more people at—

“Please get ready to fasten your seatbelts as we prepare for our final descent.”

“Fuck.”

I realize I have to move quickly. I look to the slot where the toilet paper should be and see that it’s empty. Of course. Luckily, this isn’t the first time that I’ve dealt with this situation. I reach for the paper towels and tense up for the coming pain I’m about to endure. I wash my hands, mostly dry them, and gallop back to my seat.

I’m met with disappointment. My new friend has fallen asleep. I slide past him discreetly and sit down, buckling up. Suddenly I’m met with a problem. If I wake him up and go on with my strategy, I risk looking desperate. Was I even gone that long? What if he was annoyed by me and faked sleep to keep me at bay? I can’t say that it’s not something I wouldn’t do, or haven’t done. Had I even done anything that bothersome? Were my questions too assertive? No.

Okay. Forget that. Move forward. He has to wake up eventually. When he does, I need to be ready. How do I make a point about wanting to keep in touch without coming off as romantic? Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit. I hear the landing gear initiate.

“Good morning! We are arriving at our destination now, and it’s a crisp Detroit morning. So remember your jackets! Thank you for flying with us, and we wish you safe travels.”

Travels! I can ask if he has a layover and try to get breakfast with him. I come to my realiza-

tion at the same moment that I notice him stirring. I decide that I'll ask him on the bridge between the plane and the terminal, opting out of bothering him right after waking up. We grab our things and I insert myself into the line to deboard.

"Hey, so I was just wondering if you had a layover?" I asked.

People bumped past us. My friend didn't answer.

"Hey," I asked again "did you have a—"

"Yeah, I'll be at baggage in a few. Yeah," he laughs, "I'll stay on until I see you."

I look at his ears closer and stupidly realize my mistake. I stop walking in the opening of the bridge. My neighbor keeps walking, not noticing me, or the people that bump into me.

~

"Sir, could you fasten your seatbelt before we take off, please?" one of the stewardesses asks me.

"Yeah, sorry about that," I reply.

I buckle my seatbelt and take a breath. I turn to my neighbor.

"Hi," I said smiling, "I'm Simon."

Little Women: Bringing Broadway to The Berg

by Kenzie James

Little Women

Bringing Broadway to The Berg

Based on Louisa May Alcott's American classic, this Civil War story of love and family remains relevant on modern college campuses.

Praised by critics for its ability to successfully adapt such a well-known story to the stage, *Little Women* is still produced internationally. This classic story transforms into a magical and captivating musical that transcends the full spectrum of human emotion. Through a captivating story, this show is packed to the brim with hope, personal growth, heartache, and eternal love. The original production starred Sutton Foster, who received Tony, Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk nominations for her stunning performance.

The story of Louisa May Alcott's life inspired the story behind *Little Women*. Following the adventures of Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy March the audience is guaranteed to experience a performance deserving of tears and laughter. Jo is a writer trying to sell her stories for publication, but the publishers are not interested -- her friend, Professor Bhaer, tells her that she has to do better than the garbage everyone else writes about and write for herself. Not entirely sold on the idea, Jo gives his advice a try and weaves the story of herself and her sisters growing up in in Civil War America.

In just under a month Heidelberg University's Theatre department will bring this glorious musical to life in their own Gundlach Theatre. The director, Steven Svoboda, has been assembling a star-studded cast and crew that has been working diligently to make sure this production reaches its full potential. With arguably the most talented cast in the department's history, faculty members, students, members of the community, and even professionals who have worked on Broadway are coming together to work around the clock on this production.

Little Women will debut first for high school students from the area that will have the honor of previewing the show prior to its opening night. On November 23rd, Gundlach Theatre will open its doors for a special preview night performance for the students of Heidelberg University. Officially, the show will welcome in audience members to the opening night performance on Friday, November 24th. All performance showtimes and ticket sales information can be found at gundlachtheatre.org. Audience members are sure to connect with a performance that soars with the sounds of personal discovery and young America finding its voice.

Little Women

Bringing Broadway to The Berg

Going behind the curtain to at the work being put into Heidelberg's upcoming production.

It's one week before opening night, and two floors up in Founders Hall on Heidelberg's campus, the costume shop is buzzing with activity as finishing touches are being made on the costumes before they hit the stage. Hanging from the ceiling are students harnessed into metal carts rolling along and adjusting lights. Students can be seen half on stage and half under the stage in hidden trapdoors preparing every inch of the stage for showtime. The entire building of Founders Hall is buzzing with energy and busy hands preparing for opening night in only seven days.

Students are working around the clock in order to ensure that everything is ready to go come show time. Technical Foreman and theatre student Sam Stohlman, when asked about his position, said "this is a tremendous responsibility that often comes with extremely late nights in the theatre working to get everything done. While the job is often filled with setbacks it is incredibly rewarding when everything is finally working perfectly come show time." That is just one position in the crew.

Many students are being required to step up in more than one position as well. "Working in multiple departments for a show is hard work, but the outcome surpasses the work. The many different sides of theatre i have learned from one show has been extraordinary" Connor Applegate, Senior Theatre Major, said. Walking into Founders you're likely to see students busy at work at almost any hour of the day and night.

Students that previously didn't know how to sew are spending hours in the costume shop working on the numerous alterations needed, which numbered in the hundreds at the beginning of this process. Others are down in the theatre preparing every single light to be angled at just the right spot before going into their grueling technical weekend.

Tech weekend is going to consist of twelve hour days for these students. Running through every single technical element will be an exhausting process but it is essential to the productions integrity. The students will run through the show at a snail's pace, pausing to hold their position for minutes on end, cueing up every single light, sound, and projection cue that occurs in the show. With a list of cues counting into the thousands it's easy to see the long weekend this cast and crew has ahead of them.

With only days left to go before opening night these students are pushing themselves to the finish line, and the end result is definitely going to be a sight to see. Show dates are Thursday-Sunday, November 16-19 and can be reserved online at gundlachtheatre.org.

Below is the first official look at the full cast list for Little Women the Musical:

- Jo March - Lo Erin Jackson
- Beth March - Kristina Kamm
- Amy March - Kaylea Bowers
- Meg March - Erikka Breidenback

- Marmee - Savannah Overly
- Aunt March - Dani Hummel-Sass
- Theodore Laurence - Gavin Hubbard
- John Brook - Logan Kittaka
- Professor Bhaer - Sam Stohlman
- Mr. Laurence - Dr. Greg Ramsdell
- Mrs. Kirk - Emma Penrose
- Clarissa/Ensemble - Kyrsten Lilly
- Braxton/Ensemble - Connor Applegate
- Rodrigo/Ensemble - Ethan Miller
- Knight/Ensemble - Joe Boehler
- Ensemble - Laila Gernert
- Ensemble - Austin Buckhalter
- Ensemble - Haley Schreiner
- Ensemble - Kenzie James
- Ensemble - Connor Ware
- Ensemble - Chad Wilkins

See you at the show!

Little Women

Bringing Broadway to The Berg

Broadway levels of expertise and New York City professionals are leaving their mark on Heidelberg students and Tiffin, Ohio.

The Gundlach Theatre stage has been increasing its level of professionalism at an accelerating rate, and the upcoming musical is no exception. In fact, this could arguably be the largest leap towards bringing a Broadway level production to Heidelberg that this campus has ever seen. Aiding in that leap are the helping hands of multiple professionals. With professional designers working on costumes, lighting and set design, every element of this musical is expected to shine with polished perfection.

Two of the professionals are both graduates from the Yale School of Drama. The first is Nikki Delhomme, an astounding costume designer and artist. The second is Chaun-Chi Chan, who has graced the theatre with her lighting design previously for The Laramie Project performed last fall. Third is set design specialist and Ohio native Rachel Robinson.

Thanks to the work of Nikki Delhomme, students will be wearing costumes that have been built from scratch or rented from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, meaning some of these costumes have actually made it on Broadway. Students have also been given the opportunity to see the entire artistic process behind a costume designer's work. Nikki brought in her initial pencil sketches of each character in to show the cast the product of her brainstorming. The students are then able to see Nikki's process go from research, to countless sketches, to numerous paintings and finally to the finished products. "She brought us sketches so we've actually heard the stories behind the costumes" student Gavin Hubbard said. On top of learning the artistic process before the fabric is unrolled, students were also given the opportunity to attend sewing workshops hosted by Nikki in order to learn how to perform costume alterations.

Chi has also brought an incredibly educational aspect forward in this production. Having a lighting designer who has worked on Broadway come work with undergraduate students is an invaluable opportunity. Sam stohlman said "Chi has taught me how to be prepared for things in the real world". Not only have these professionals taught students helpful information about their specific skillsets, but they are also invaluable tools for networking in the theatre world. Heidelberg theatre students dream of working in the world that these professionals are currently living in, and earning the stamp of approval from one of the professionals gives students opportunities for letters of recommendations, and incredibly noteworthy references, for their future endeavors. In the small world of theatre who you know can open many doors for you.

Rounding out this star studded team of professionals is Ohio native Rachel. It is Rachel's personal artwork that will be projected onto the stage during the production and it is her keen eye for detail that designed every element of the stage. Rachel is another returner to campus after her initial work on The Diary of Anne Frank set just months ago. She has been able to elaborate on the skills she taught students during her last visit here and push the crew to create even more beautiful pieces for the stage. Along with networking these professionals offer invaluable advice for students that aspire to make it in the world of theatre. Rachel's experiences in particular have been incredibly helpful in advising students because she got her start in small town Ohio, as well. It is motivating for the

students to see the success that can come to someone with very similar backgrounds as them. It encourages the students to keep striving for their dreams.

Students have worked harder than ever before on this production because as Gavin put it “we’re motivated to match the production quality these specialists have brought us.” Freshmen Kay Collins had the daunting task of stage managing this large production and added her own statement, “we pulled crazy hours in the theatre in order to get it all done. Being the stage manager, it was interesting to work with professionals and see their work ethic and how they manage to time manage to ensure everything gets done.”

With incredibly experienced professionals inspiring the students of Heidelberg University, and with the countless resources Director Stephen Svoboda continues to bring forward, there are no limits in sight for the students investing their time in Gundlach theatre.

Little Women

Bringing Broadway to The Berg

Up close and personal with one of the Broadway professionals currently visiting Heidelberg University.

Nikki Delhomme took time out of her busy schedule to work with the students of Heidelberg University on their production of *Little Women*. Nikki has been a freelance costume and scenic designer since 2006. Before that she attended Carnegie Mellon for her undergraduate education followed by enrollment to Yale for graduate studies.

Nikki had never previously worked on this production nor had she ever seen it perform. So this specific show offered a lot of firsts for her. Nikki had very positive thoughts towards the show once she dove into it, “it’s a perfect time in our climate to be telling Jo’s story, and showing her strength. It’s rare, but nice when women and their ideas are in the spotlight”. She had a true understanding of the show’s importance and why it fit into the season’s theme of Women’s Empowerment.

Learning the entire process from “page to stage” as Nikki calls it, was a completely new experience for Heidelberg students. Normally the costumes onstage in Gundlach come from donations and frequent shopping trips to Goodwill to dig up some treasures. Renting elaborate costumes from a company based out of NYC was a new beast altogether for the students. To get to that point the students were walked through Nikki’s extensive process of: reading the play, meeting with the director, researching the time period, sketching and painting initial drafts, then more meetings with the director, meeting with a production staff, working out a budget, finalizing the designs, renting/shopping/pulling any items that they won’t be making from scratch, then conducting a series of fittings and appointments for alterations. Along with learning specific skills such as cross-stitching and hemming the Heidelberg students gained invaluable information and expertise from Nikki’s time on campus.

After leaving Tiffin Nikki immediately jumped into three new projects. Back in NYC she is in the design phase for Sam Chanse’s, *Trigger*, Ken Weitzman’s, *Seal Boy*, and Emily Bohannon’s, *Water On The Moon*. She stays busy in her field because she loves “building conceptual worlds and the process that it entails with drawing and painting”. When asked what makes the work so enticing for her she responded with, “there is a lot of change and newness to being a theatre artist, it keeps my life very fluid and forces me to adapt quickly, which I love. It’s a reminder that we are truly groundless, that nothing is stable but change”.

Theater Review: 'Little Women,' The Musical

This musical adaptation of the classic novel by Louisa May Alcott was brought new life with stunning professional elements.

By: Kenzie James

On November 16th, Gundlach Theatre in Tiffin, Ohio opened its doors for the first preview night performance of *Little Women The Musical*. The preview night was held for students of Heidelberg University to be able to attend the last dress rehearsal for free at 7:00 pm. Following this performance the cast and crew had a weekend of four different showtimes in front of them. The first was a 9:00 am performance for local high schools, followed by 7:00 pm showings on the 17th, 18th, and a 2:00 pm matinee on Sunday the 20th.

This musical was a modern adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's classic 1869 novel *Little Women*. Alternatively set in Concord, Massachusetts and New York City we were allowed an inside look at one family's trials during post war America. The family dynamics focused on one mother, Marmee March, taking care of her four daughters Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy while their father is away at war. The story began in New York city but turns into a flashback of two years prior in Concord Massachusetts. The sisters are all worried about having money for Christmas when Jo declares her aspirations to become a successful writer and make all their finest dreams come true. Through experiences of traveling to Europe, attending balls, becoming a published novelist and falling in love, these women all depict different aspects of what it was like to be a woman in this time period.

Along with minor human errors causing problems onstage, there were also larger errors made by the cast. Particularly a couple actors played their characters in ways that were either underwhelming or did not complement the type of characters they were supposed to convey. Marmee March was supposed to be a mother struggling to raise four young daughters while also shielding them from her personal anguish at the uncertainty of her husband's safety while away at war. However, the actress playing the mother lacked a maternal nature and presented herself onstage more similar to the sisters than a parent. For instance when Amy burns Jo's novel Marmee has a moment alone with Jo afterwards and we expect her to offer a comforting shoulder. What we actually got was Marmee raising her voice at Jo and seeming almost angry in her intention. Instead of empathizing with her daughter Marmee appeared exhausted of her. Along with the displaced anger there were multiple times that Marmee laughed and tittered with the sisters, rather than distancing herself from them as an adult. The missed opportunities to show authority as a mother and times where she acted as the sisters were created a flaw in the portrayal of Marmee's age. In summary, her acting missteps undermined any chance she had at being perceived as a mother of four.

The second poorly portrayed character was Laurie, short for Theodore Laurence. He was the March girls' wealthy next-door neighbor and a high-spirited young man about the same age as Jo. However on stage he portrayed himself as significantly younger than Jo. In trying to portray a high-spirited character the actor made choices that resulted in a very anxious and restless image. Rather than seeming excited Laurie seemed almost frenzied and neurotic. The actor often flailed his arms around at his sides spastically rather than moving them with intention.. This made him appear as a little kid who has consumed too much sugar, not someone attempting to win the affection of the mature Jo March. In the reality of the story Laurie has business opportunities and college awaiting him, multiple factors that show a need for a level of maturity in his character. Frankly, this actor was exhausting to watch on stage. When he wasn't acting in the same manner of the youngest sister, the spoiled Amy, he was struggling to hit his high notes. Many of his songs required him to sing in high keys that clearly looked uncomfortable for the actor and produced less

than beautiful singing. Fortunate for the actor, his character was rather laughable throughout the entire musical and the audience was able to laugh off his poor singing as an element of the character rather than a lack of skill and practice on the actors part.

In contrast with the low-points in the production there were certainly redeeming elements as well. The most compelling factor in this production was the grit and resolve of the cast and crew. The audience found out during the director's opening speech that when everyone arrived to prepare for the evening's production, Gundlach theatre had flooded and several areas backstage were under as much as four inches of water. Along with the flooding there was significant water damage to equipment, including the piano that was hand built for this show and had to be played on stage. However, these young actors hid all of the madness that occurred behind the curtains and took the stage with a grace that did not tell of the damage their production underwent. It was moving to see young professionals fight through adversity and still put on a show for their audience. The quick fixes that needed to be made in order to continue the show were made seamlessly. The actress that was supposed to play the piano acted as if she were truly playing, while an orchestra piano played the music for her offstage.

Not all of the acting was bad. There were characters who performed rather brilliantly as well. The eldest sister Meg March conveyed her character in such a seamless manner that there was not a single noticeable moment in which she broke character. Even when she was exiting off stage or partially concealed behind an object she stuck to her characters physicality and emotion. The duet that she sang with her love interest, and eventual husband, Mr. John Brooke was arguably the highlight of the show. These two actors truly worked at building their love story through every flirtatious glance, each hesitant hand they placed on one another, and especially in the emotion in their duet. The song not only brought tears to the eyes of the actress playing Meg, but it brought tears to the eyes of audience members as well.

This show was overall quite enjoyable to watch. The technical aspects of the show exceeded expectations. The giant screens that hung from the ceiling rolled on a track that allowed them to move around the stage in a way that clearly signified changes in scenery. Not only did these screens transform the shape of the stage, but they truly took on new life when images were projected onto them. When the sisters were each standing behind a screen, casting a silhouette, there was also a giant silhouette of each of them being cast onto their respective screens. Even when there were no props onstage other than a bench the use of projections on the hanging screens could depict an entire room that successfully conveyed to the audience where the actors were located. This technical element also allowed to chapter slides in between scenes that signaled to the audience the different locations and times. This element took what could have been a confusing plot to follow and made it comprehensible and beautiful.

Complemented by stunning lights that utilize color to enhance the moods being acted out on stage this show was a technical masterpiece. When Beth was dying and singing her final song a somber blue hue enveloped the stage. Tying up the bow on beautiful technical elements were the stunning costumes. Large ball gowns twirled around the stage and helped to bring the time period to life in an incredibly authentic manner. The drawback within the technical elements unfortunately was an effect of the best technical element, the sliding screens. The screens were manually walked on and off stage by the actors, which meant that if an actor missed their mark even slightly it was blatantly obvious. If a screen was even a couple inches off its mark it caused a visible break in the projection. As minor as a flaw as this is, it is a critical one because it defies the magic created by the screens and projections. As soon as a gap can be seen the audience members are immediately made aware that it is merely a screen and projection, rather than believing that the characters onstage are truly in the March parlor.

The technical elements were also a huge positive in the shows favor. During the largest song

in the production fairytale creatures emerged unforeseen from trap doors built into the stage floor. Just viewing the show it was clear to see the countless hours that went into bringing this production to life. Not a single item on the stage appeared as if it were completed through a shortcut. Even the floor of the stage was laid with planks of wood and painted to appear as a beautiful hardwood floor. The attention to detail seeped into every scene of the musical and brought an authenticity to the show that was unexpected for a small school theatre department. The dedication and resilience of the cast and crew is what tied all the beautiful elements together and showed that this production was put on by vastly talented professionals.

Overall there were certainly a few blunders in the production. It would be unfair to fault the entire production for the missteps of individuals, and the overall production was impressive. The show was a feat that succeeded in achieving its lofty expectations. Heidelberg's theatre department was able to reinvent a classic musical in a way that brought tears and laughter to their audience. This production was absolutely worth the money to go and see. Given the opportunity I would recommend, not only seeing this specific production, but also attending any production that this talented ensemble of people are apart of. The department has made huge strides in the quality of work that they are bringing to the stage, and you'd be a fool to miss what elaborate production they're going to take on next.

Wonderland: Trust Issues

by Lexi McClimans

My twin sister and I stood in the middle of the woods with a stranger. All three of us were completely insane. We had to be. Alice stood to my left, clutching a large gold coin in her hand. The coin had a top hat on one side and a pocket watch on the other side, and we all believed this coin would transport us to a magical land because my senile grandmother told us so.

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My gram left Alice and I three things when she died: a gold coin, a journal full of impossible drawings and stories, and a letter shoved into envelope. The letter read:

*“Alex and Alice,*

*I know the things I left may not make sense, and the only to explain is for you to try them out yourselves. Take the coin and the journal somewhere away from wandering eyes, flip the coin, and jump. Your journey starts there. My journey is written on the pages of that journal. It’s time for you to write your story now, Alex.*

*Before you two start this journey, go to the address listed on the back of this envelope at the date listed. Hopefully, you’ll meet a young man; you need to bring him with you. He has a role in this story. I wish I could say you can trust him, but things aren’t always what they seem in Wonderland, so you’ll need to figure that out for yourself.*

*I love you girls more than you’ll ever know.*

*Gram”*

The letter was addressed around the same time Gram was admitted to a home because of her Alzheimer’s. Alice and I were skeptical, but we went to honor Gram’s memory more than anything. Gram thought it was important to set this up before her mind forgot, so the least we could do is check it out.

We went to the address listed and waited. A tall, caramel-skinned man, maybe a year or two older than myself showed up after we had waited for twenty minutes. He looked just as surprised to see us as we were to see him. I hadn’t expected for anyone to show up. I was hoping no one would show up. That would mean this was all just another one of Gram’s delusions. I felt shitty for thinking that way, but the alternative, this alternate world being real, scared me.

I rose from the park bench I was sitting on, “I’m... Alex,” I said, hesitant to give a stranger my name, “Who are you?”

The, admittedly, handsome young man looked around, seeming nervous as well, “My name is Jack.” He paused, as if he knew how weird what he was going to say sounded, “I got a letter from a woman met as a child. She—she was a volunteer,” he stopped, nervously running a hand over facial stubble. “She told me to come here. To meet you.”

~~~~~

The three of us had become a little more familiar with each other since then, but Jack wasn’t very forthcoming with details, so I held my own details.

“This is ridiculous,” I looked at them, waiting for someone to prove me wrong. Alice gave me a ner-

vous smile, and Jack—who I'd been watching like a hawk, trying to gauge if I could trust him—just shrugged and smirked, looking mischievous. I narrowed my eyes at him.

“Are we doing this or not?” Alice asked, waving the coin around.

I gripped Gram's journal filled with sketches and notes of a magical, impossible, world. I nodded and looked to my right—Jack nodded. I grabbed Alice's hand tight and took Jack's hesitantly. Alice balanced the large coin on her left thumb and flicked it high into the air. *Here's to being nut-balls*, I thought nervously. It landed in the grass with a dull thud. We waited, the three of us completely silent.

Nothing happened. I breathed a sigh of relief, “Oh, thank g—”

All at once, the ground around the coin opened up, pitch black, and we were falling.

And falling.

I landed on top of something hard, I groaned.

“You could at least buy me dinner first,” said a familiar, arrogant voice. *He sure gets comfortable with people quickly*, I noticed, annoyed. I slowly opened my eyes to see I had landed on Jack, my head and arms sprawled out on his torso. I scrambled to my feet, purposefully pushing hard on his stomach as I pushed myself up. He groaned, and I hid a satisfied smile.

“What was that for...” Jack trailed off. I spun in a circle. This place—Wonderland, Gram had called it—was incredible. We stood in an open field, woods surrounding us. Trees and plants of all shapes, sizes and colors painted the beautiful scenery. It was breathtaking.

Alice echoed my thoughts, “This is...”

“Crazy,” I finished, trying to stay rational. I stared at a large, colorful mushroom at the edge of the woods.

“It's...beautiful,” Jack said.

I studied the woods more, and a shiver ran up my spine. There was tension in the air. The woods weren't all bursts of color, some parts, deep in the woods, were almost devoid of all color and light, “I don't think we should go in there.”

“Surprise, surprise,” Alice droned. Jack gave her a questioning look. “Alex likes to suck the fun out of things,” she so helpfully explained. *And Alice doesn't like to exercise her brain, I thought*.

“Fine,” I said, “go on ahead, but don't ask me to rescue your ass. It may look pretty, but it's not safe.” I felt on edge. I stood with my feet square and my arms and hands loose, ready for anything.

Both Alice and Jack inspected the woods more intently, their faces filling with surprise when they saw the darkness of the woods, just on the edge of our vision.

Jack gave me a questioning look this time.

“Beautiful things are often the most dangerous. Failing to recognize the smallest detail can kill you.” I said, giving him a pointed look. Jack opened his mouth to reply, but we all froze when we heard rustling in the brush near the edge of the woods.

“It's them,” whispered an unfamiliar voice.

“Nonsense, it cannot be. They are much too early,” whispered another.

Jack, Alice, and I all looked at each other, wide-eyed. *What should we do?* Alice mouthed to me. I pressed my forefinger to my mouth and motioned for them to follow. We inched closer to the sound, slowly. As we crept forward, two figures came out from behind one of the large white mushrooms with purple polka-dots. I couldn't speak. Two rabbits, standing upright, about waist high, appeared. One rabbit was black; it wore a red petticoat over a white button-up with a navy blue

bowtie. The other rabbit was white; it wore a navy blue petticoat over a white button-up with a navy blue bowtie. I had no words.

“Not everyone is so habitually late that it is written into their DNA like you,” continued the black rabbit with an eye roll.

“I’m not *always* late,” argued the white rabbit. “You think being on time is late.”

The black rabbit wasn’t buying it. “Name one time you haven’t been late. Just one time,” he countered.

I exchanged confused and shocked looks with Alice and Jack. Alice gave me a look, urging me to say something. I responded with wide eyes and shrugged. Jack stepped forward. “Uh, guys? Who, or what, the *hell* are you?” Direct and rude seemed to be Jack’s style.

“We’re rabbits,” responded the black rabbit. His voice was so deadpan and condescending I almost couldn’t stop myself from laughing. The two rabbits shared and exasperated look.

“Well, no shit,” Jack replied huffily. “What are your names?”

“I’m Mr. Black,” said the white rabbit.

“And I’m clearly Mr. White,” said the black rabbit.

I was even more confused. “But why are you Mr. Black...?” I began. I felt as if my tongue was tied in a literal knot.

“If I’m actually white in color?” Finished Mr. Black. I just nodded, confusion and shock holding my vocal cords hostage. “Well that’s a bit racist. Don’t you think so, Mr. White?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. White, “completely racist.”

“I—I wasn’t... I didn’t mean to...” I trailed off. I looked to Alice and Jack, neither of them looking particularly helpful. Jack’s caramel face reddened with suppressed laughter. I gave him a sharp look.

“Why would you expect anything in Wonderland to make a speck of sense? Have you not heard the stories?” Asked Mr. Black.

Mr. White nodded, “Always expect the unexpected, but if the unexpected is expected maybe you should expect the expected.”

“What?” I asked, not even sure of what I didn’t know. Suddenly, the two rabbits pulled out gold pocked watches on gold chains and flipped them open. “Oh dear,” said Mr. Black.

“Now you’ve gone and made me late as well,” complained Mr. White.

“Yes, of course. It is always *my* fault,” Mr. Black huffed as they both headed back into the woods. Just before the pair was out of sight, Mr. White said, “Oh, Jack, I believe your brother is here. He is very eager to meet you, *Knave*.” Then, they ran off into the woods.

Knave? I looked to Jack, gauging his reaction. His face was a mix of confusion, shock, and emotion deeper than I thought him capable. “My brother...” he murmured, confused but hopeful. I reached my hand out to comfort him, but let it drop immediately. *I don’t know this guy. I don’t know if I can even trust him*, I thought, *I don’t need to fix everything*. My lack of confidence in people was always at war with my impulse to help.

Shaking off the shock, again, I tried to think the situation through.

“Let’s just follow them,” suggested Alice.

I rolled my eyes. “Do you know what’s in those woods, Alice?”

“No, but—”

I cut her off, my temper boiling, “No, you don’t. Do you know how to defend yourself if something were to attack you in there? No, you don’t. I don’t even know what to expect in there and we have nothing to protect ourselves with other than our fists and feet. You just don’t get—”

“I have a couple pocket knives,” Jack suggested. As he pulled two decent sized knives out of the pocket of his cargo shorts, a small, black cloth pouch fell to the ground. I stooped to the ground immediately, not thinking anything of it. “What’s in here, Jack?” I asked. He looked at the cloth,

nervous. I clenched my hand around the cloth, “What is in here? Jack?” I asked slowly, deliberately.

He made a grab for the pouch, looking nervous, but I kept it from him. “Fine, I’ll look myself.” I unraveled the pouch, revealing the tools to pick a lock.

“So your, what?” I asked. “A thief?”

“What?” Alice’s voice cracked.

I gave Jack a lethal look. “Give me the knives.” I couldn’t trust him, so I felt better having all the pointy objects away from him.

He opened his mouth to argue, or explain, but then his face fell, defeated, and he threw the knives on the ground next to me. I picked them up and slid them into the back pocket of my black jeans.

“I—It’s hard to explain. It’s not a big deal.” His chocolate eyes flicked nervously, pleadingly between me, Alice, and the ground.

“Try.” I said.

“I used to play around with it when I was younger. I hadn’t seen it in years before this morning. It was left under the windshield wiper of my car with a note, saying, ‘Remember who you are, Knave.’ I didn’t really understand what it meant, so I just shoved it in my pocket and headed to meet you guys.” He looked embarrassed, ashamed. His eyes studied a patch of white grass at his feet.

He finally looked me in the eye, “It’s not like you think,” he continued, “I was in a foster home, things were tight. The people in charge didn’t care who was or wasn’t getting enough food, shampoo, soap. I taught myself how to use them, how to fend for myself and others...” He trailed off, shrugging. He looked vulnerable, something I didn’t think he was capable of.

A growl, low and threatening, came from the opposite end of the clearing. We all whipped around, looking for the source of the sound. There was nothing in sight. We all slowly backed away from the sound until we reached the edge of the woods.

“Should we hide in the woods?” Asked Alice, her knuckles were white again. I shook my head.

“Well, what do you suggest we do then, Al? Wait for that *thing* to come say hello?” Jack asked sarcastically.

“No, asshat,” I said, grabbing the coin from Alice. “And don’t call me Al.” I flipped the coin onto the ground in front of us and waited. Nothing happened. I looked to Alice, confused. She shrugged her shoulders.

“Maybe it only works if I do it? I mean I’m the one named Alice here.” She said with a familiar, airy tone. I rolled my eyes so hard I saw my brain. I handed her the coin and took Gram’s journal from her. She flipped the coin onto the ground and we waited, again. Nothing happened, again.

“Shit,” I said. We were running out of options. I opened the journal to a random page in the middle of the book, hoping to find something that could help. “*Shit!*” I repeated, frantically flipping through all of the pages.

“What is it?” Asked Jack. Alice was still trying to figure out why her magic touch wasn’t working. “It’s all gone. All of the notes.” The pages were all blank. All of the notes my gram took were gone. Our Wonderland Manual disappeared.

“That’s not good,” Alice *intelligently* commented as she continued to examine the coin with disdain in her eyes.

“Ya think, Einstein?” I snapped. I flipped to the cover page, hoping for something, anything that could help. Nothing. The back of the cover page, the first page, it was all blank like the rest of the journal. I looked at Jack, the book open in my hands, “It’s all gone. There’s nothing left to help us.”

He looked down at the book, "What about that?"

I looked at him, confused. He pointed at the first page, where a few lines appeared:

**You can run from danger,
but you can't run from fate.**

"That wasn't there before," I said, "What does that even mean? Fate? This is ridiculous." I'd never believed in fate before and I wasn't about to. As I reread that one line began to disappear, slowly.

"Did you see that?" Asked Jack.

I nodded, surprised. Slowly three more letters scrawled themselves onto the page:

Run.

"What the hell?" Jack's voice was a mixture of confusion and anger.

We heard another low, menacing growl. It was closer. I shoved the journal into the back of the waistband of my jeans and slipped the pocket knives out of my pocket. I handed one to Alice. "Run," I echoed.

We took off into the woods. The explosion of color was disorienting. It all seemed like an endless mash of color. There were tall brown trees with blue veins running through the bark, short purple bushes with black berries. The colors were endless.

With no idea where we were going, we just ran. As fast as we could for as long as we could. The ground was uneven, roots, vines, and smaller mushrooms were scattered around. Alice struggled with this, Jack and I had to keep catching her, picking her up and urging her to continue on. She whined, unsurprisingly, but I could see the fear in her eyes. Fear kept her going. Fear kept all of our feet moving.

It felt like we had run for hours before we finally stopped just before reaching another dark patch in the woods. We all halted, weak and worn. I hunched over with my hands on my knees. Jack's chest rose and fell violently as he stood with his arms resting on his head. Alice sat against a pitch black tree on the edge of the dark, dying woods, her arms slack at her sides. We were exhausted.

I looked at Jack, finally remembering a question I had earlier. "Why did the rabbit call you Knave?" I asked, still out of breath.

He shrugged faintly, "No idea. I don't even know what that means."

"The Knave of Hearts," Alice said softly, still trying to catch her breath as well.

"What?" Jack and I echoed. My legs wobbled, struggling to recover. I sat down, and Jack followed my lead.

"The Knave of Hearts," Alice repeated. "He was in Gram's stories. In the original, I think he stole from the Queen of Hearts."

I laughed, sarcastically, "What a coincidence."

"I'm not a thief," Jack growled.

"Anyway," Alice continued, "the Knave was also seen as the Queen of Hearts' right-hand-man in other, later stories. How do you not remember this, Alex? Gram went on and on about this place."

"Well, I thought it was just a bed-time story. I didn't think any of those stories were important, let alone true," I admitted.

"How do you expect to rule this place if you don't know the history?" Alice asked, haughtily. Her expression had changed; I wasn't sure what it was, but something about the shift in her behavior was unnerving. This was extreme, even for Alice.

"Rule it? What are you talking about Alice? We aren't here to *rule* anything. We ended up

here on an insane whim, because we owed it to gram to at least try, and now we're trying to figure out how to leave." Something was wrong with her; she had a terrifying hunger in her eyes. My trust in her wavered.

"What if I don't want to leave. What if I want to stay? Get to know the place?" Her jaw was set.

Something odd, almost menacing, in her tone told me to let it go. "Okay, whatever, Alice. Either way we need to get out of these woods." I studied her for a moment, wondering what was wrong with her.

I looked to Jack, "Any ideas? I have no idea where we are."

"Your guess is as good as mine," He said, sounding tired. "I know you don't trust me, but I've never been here before, and I definitely don't know who this queen is." He looked defeated. I pushed away the voice telling me to give him a break.

I stood up, dusting off my pants. A growl sounded from behind Alice. It was dangerously close. She scrambled to her feet, trying to stand behind me and Jack, who moved to my side. She held the pocket knife like a pencil; I took it from her and gave it to Jack. I loosened my joints, ready.

A large muzzle poked out from behind the tree Alice was resting on, teeth barred in a growl. It slowly walked into full view. It looked like an oversized wolf. It was almost as tall as I was; its long, shaggy fur was like snow. I could see its large muscles contracting with every step. Its teeth were long and razor sharp.

I motioned for Jack to move opposite of me. To split its attention. We moved in a wide, half-circle. Alice hid behind a tree. *Thanks for the help, sis*, I thought. I held the knife in my hand as if it were an extension of myself, ready to use it. My steps were deliberate, careful not to trip on the roots or mushrooms. The creature's eyes followed Jack, leaving its back exposed to me. Clearly it saw him as more of a threat. I was glad it underestimated me.

I slowly moved closer, waiting for Jack to move its attention completely from myself. The creature's large tail was as thick as my arm and almost as long as me. It twitched like a cat ready to pounce on its prey. Careful not to get in the tail's path, I lunged for the creature's hind leg, slicing at the tendons there. It let out a high-pitched whine immediately followed by a growl. It glanced back at me, whipping its tail across my face before I could move away.

It felt like being smacked with a metal pipe. It knocked me off my feet. I fell, sprawled across a mushroom half my size. It took a moment for me to shake off the impact and the disorienting sting on my face; I rolled to a sitting position slowly. The creature was lunging at Jack with its teeth, slashing with its paws. It caught Jack's arm, slicing deep. Jack stumbled back, pain distorting his face.

I had to do something. I had to help. I scrambled to my feet, mushroom bits covered my clothing. I looked at the mushroom, remembering a story. I snatched a softball sized piece of mushroom. "Time to play Wonderland's game," I said, determined.

"Hey! Over here!" I yelled as I chucked the mushroom chunk at the back of the creature's head. I bent down, grabbing another chunk. "Why don't we leave the fighting to the pros, huh?" I asked, trying to bait it, hoping it understood me.

It turned around, considering me. Suddenly it started running. It came right for me, teeth parted. A growl ripped its way from the creature's chest. It took everything I had to stay still as this massive thing charged me. I planted my feet, holding for the right moment. Just a few yards away from it, it opened its mouth wider, ready to devour me. *I hope this works*, I thought as I threw the mushroom down the creature's throat.

Those seconds went by like hours. The creature made another stride, barely a foot away

from me. It halted violently. It looked around, confused, then it shrunk to the size of a house cat. I sighed with relief. “Why don’t you pick on someone your own size now?” I asked. It whined again and limped away, slowly.

Alice appeared from her hiding spot, “How did you know to do that?” She asked, incredulously.

“I thought I remembered Gram saying that eating certain things—a certain berry, mushrooms, cake—it shrinks you.” I said with a shrug.

“No!” She exclaimed. “Eating things can also make you *bigger*,” she said, wide-eyed.

My stomach dropped. That could have been catastrophic. “Oh. Learn something new every day, right?” I said with an uneasy laugh, trying to mask my panic.

“Talk about luck,” Jack said with a grimace. He was holding his left bicep. His hand was covered in his own blood.

I went to him, “Thank you for helping.” I was only slightly irritated at my sister’s cowardice.

He nodded, “I’m not the monster you think I am,” he was angry and in pain.

“Yeah, yeah. Maybe I was wrong about you. The jury is still out on that. Shut up and let me help you.” I ripped the long sleeves off my shirt. As I tried to tie the cloth around the long cuts down his arm, a low cackle came from just inside the dark section of the woods.

A shadowy figure started to clap, “Bravo, Brava. Wonderful performance,” said an eerie male voice. “I’m thoroughly entertained. Though I have to admit I was rooting for the Bandersnatch. A beautifully vicious beast.”

The figure stepped into the light, revealing a replica of Jack. I was shocked. They were twins; Jack had never mentioned it. This man stood, six-foot-two. He had the same light caramel skin as Jack, same chocolate eyes, same full lips. He was built similar—lean but muscular. They looked identical, but then they didn’t. This stranger’s eyes were intense, gleaming with an eerie darkness. He was twitching, his forefinger tapping on his thigh.

“Brother,” he said, “so pleased to see you. I hope life hasn’t strangled you too much.” He said with a wicked smile. “I want you at the top of your game when I kill you,” his eyes burned with hunger not unlike Alice’s did before. “Metaphorically, of course,” he added with a menacing chuckle. Jack was clearly shocked. Whatever he’d been expecting, this wasn’t it. “Charlie...?” Jack greeted, his voice sounding young.

“Charles. Knave. It doesn’t matter. It’s time we go to the castle. The queen is waiting. I’m tired of waiting. It’s time the pawns start moving. Come along.”

“Oh, a castle?” Alice inquired. The hunger was back in her eyes.

“Oh, yes,” replied Charles. “A grand castle. There is always room for more.” There was a devilishly triumphant look in his eyes.

“We’re not staying, Alice,” I said.

“You can’t control me, Alex. I’ll do what I want,” she argued.

“What is your problem, Alice?” She replied with a defiant look. I chalked it up to Alice being Alice, but I wondered.

I felt an urge to open my journal. I walked a few paces away from the other three as Alice questioned Charles about the castle. I slipped the journal out of the back of my pants, looking at the first page. It read:

Only the strong-willed will remain the same.

I slipped the journal back into my waistband. I wasn’t sure what it meant, but I had a feeling it had something to do with Alice’s behavior.

We had no other way to navigate the woods, and we still couldn’t go home, so we followed insanity through the woods.

To be safe, I nonchalantly asked Alice to let me hold onto the coin.

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The obsidian castle had soaring ceilings. It was unlike any structure I'd ever seen.

Charles led us to a large, open room, which had a set of stairs leading up to one large red throne. He left us with the petite woman sitting in the throne. She had long, white hair and eerie black eyes. She was wearing a blood red dress with black thigh-high boots.

"Welcome, peasants," she said haughtily. She waved an irritatingly royal wave. I felt the urge to roll my eyes but resisted. I looked to Jack and Alice, gauging their reaction. Alice looked as if she were meeting a role model she hoped to surpass one day. Jack looked like he was pleased with the view for an entirely different reason. I couldn't hold the eye roll.

"I'm the Queen of Hearts. I rule Wonderland," she said, all too pleased with herself. "I assume one of you is Alice, the other Alex," she said pointing to us. I felt exposed. "And you are the Knave," she said, eyeing Jack.

"My name is Jack," he corrected her. His jaw tensed.

"All the same, dear," she said unconcerned, "you'll be by your brother's side eventually."

I thought of what the journal said. "Only the strong-willed will remain the same." I bit the inside of my lip. I wasn't sure I knew what it meant, but I was afraid I did. I just hoped the three of us could make it home before it was too late.

"What do you want?" I asked, cutting to the chase. The less time this took the better.

She gave me a condescending look. "I want my teammates of course. My pawns, my knave," she said gesturing to Jack. "Every queen needs her servants. Someone to do the dirty work while I claim victories from the comfort of my throne," she said haughtily. Her smile was wicked, her eyes determined.

"What makes you think I'll do anything for you? Or any of us for that matter?" I challenged. *Does this lady think I just fell from the sky to be her slave?* I thought. Jack crossed his arms, set his jaw. He was on my side. I was relieved I could trust him, at least for the moment, but I was worried I wasn't sure I could say the same about my sister.

Alice spoke up, "I think we should hear her out. I'm interested." Her eyes were as wicked as the queen's smile. I was shocked into momentary silence.

"Feel free to stick around, my dear," the queen looked at Alice like a spider would look at an insect caught in its web. "As for you two, if you aren't willing to be a team player, I'll just have to... behead you," she finished casually, as if she were merely ordering a burger.

"You're crazy!" Jack said, his eyes wide.

She laughed, "Not as mad as the hatters, though." It was clear, if we were against her, she had no problem with eliminating the threat. "Do I have your final answer?" She asked, her face filled with excitement, enjoyment.

"Let's not lose our heads here," Alice let out a surprisingly sinister laugh.

My stomach dropped. "We're not doing this, Alice. We're not her pawns," I said.

"You're not seriously considering this are you?" Jack asked her. He sounded just as incredulous as I felt. Alice simply shrugged and smiled.

"Guards!" The queen yelled. "Take them! Off with their heads!" She only moved her forefinger to condemn us.

Ten uniformly dressed men with a red heart painted over their right eye ran into the room, heading towards us. We had to leave.

Clearly this world needed help, but I also needed to keep my head.

I looked to Jack for suggestions. He examined the room quickly. "That's the only way out," he said.

“I know. Any other ideas?” I asked him, my eyes on the men coming towards us.

“The coin?” He asked, uncertainty coloring his voice.

“I guess it’s worth a shot,” I said. I had no idea if it would work, but it was our only option. “Follow my lead.”

I flipped the coin behind me, away from the guards. I grabbed Alice’s wrists. She struggled against me but followed. Jack headed towards the coin. Again, seconds felt like hours as we waited to see if it would work. Just as my heart began to sink, the portal opened up. Jack looked back to make sure I was coming; I nodded. “Geronimo,” he said as he jumped into the portal.

“Let’s go, Alice!” I said.

She didn’t budge. “I’m staying, Alex. You can be the golden child at home, and I can be *queen* here.” Hunger. It was taking over her features.

“Get them!!” Yelled the Queen of Hearts.

The guards were getting close. “We have to go!” I pleaded.

“No,” Alice responded, her voice was final. That relentless hunger in her eyes told me I couldn’t change her mind. I’m not sure I even knew who this Alice was. I couldn’t trust her. I couldn’t protect her.

I had to hope I could save her.

I jumped. I was falling.

And falling.

# Ghosts

## by Rachel Peters

“Get your ass up!” I shake my brother in a fury. He must have turned his alarm off again. I thought his Sleep-Like-a-Hibernating-Bear mantra would have ended once we grew out of our teen years, but I guess it was never an adolescent thing. It’s just a Troy thing.

He swats at me and pushes some of his long black hair out of his face. “What time is it?”

“Eight fifteen. The appointment’s at nine, and it’ll take us about twenty minutes to get there.”

“Mmkay. Get out,” he says as he flings the covers off and heads towards his closet. The wood floor creaks under me while I walk into the hallway and shut the door behind me. I hope I didn’t wake Dad up.

I already dressed, ate, and brushed my teeth. I woke up at seven and couldn’t fall back asleep. I don’t know when I started to become such a morning person, like Mom. I sit at the top of the stairs and stare at her picture down below, next to the front door. It’s not really a headshot, but she wasn’t much of a dresser, and her face stands out the most in the picture. She’s turning to look at the camera, just a hint of smile on her face. Dad took that picture shortly after they ran off and got married. He liked it so much he got it enlarged and framed. Mom thought it was too big and embarrassing, but I mean, it’s a really nice picture. I can see why he wanted to hang it up. Everyone always says I look exactly like her. And I guess that’s true. I have all her features – the long and dark board-straight hair, the stern cheekbones, the soft eyes. She just wore them prettier than I do. Even when she got a few grey hairs. Even during chemo, when so much of it fell out.

She looked wrong in her coffin. Like it wasn’t really her. All that chunky makeup made her look more like a mannequin made to look like her, if that makes any sense. I close my eyes and make myself forget the image. I don’t know why I see it in my head sometimes.

Troy waddles down the stairs past me (yes, waddles – he *really* isn’t a morning person) and heads into the kitchen. I stare after him for a moment. Maybe this is why Dad wanted us to schedule the appointment with his therapist. It’s not that I don’t need it. I probably do. But Troy has just been so different lately. He doesn’t poke fun at me or tug at my hair. I mean, it could be that he’s just matured past that all of a sudden, but he doesn’t smile at anybody, not even that new girl I’ve seen him with. Not even Gabe, who’s been his best friend for as long as I can remember.

Gabe’s another thing I have to worry about.

\*

“Remind me – what day do you graduate?” I asked Gabe a couple weeks ago. We were sitting on his porch – he was editing footage on his laptop.

“May sixth,” he said. “And I’ve been looking at apartments.”

“Cool.”

“I was thinking ... maybe you could come with me to see some of them.” He looked at me then, a question in his eyes. God, his lip pouted a little. I don’t know why he’s so cute. I’ve known him for so long I really should be immune by now.

“Oh. Um ... I’m not sure about that yet,” I told him. I pulled a loose strand of hair behind my

ear and looked at the porch steps in front of us.

“Your dad really isn’t okay, is he? I mean, I know it’s still fresh. It’s still fresh for me. I loved Maya. She was like my mom, too.” A violent-sounding bang echoed from inside the house, catching our attention for a couple of seconds. His father. Well, or the poltergeist. Tough call. Gabe lowered his voice and scooted closer to me. “I honestly don’t know what I would have done without you all. Now that I’m so close to leaving, I don’t know how I would have lived with this for so long. But as happy as I’ll be to get out of here, I really don’t want to go anywhere without you, even if it’s just across town.”

A little spark flared inside, warmed my heart deep in my chest, and I could finally bear to look at him. “It’ll just be like half a year longer,” I told him. “I want to make sure Dad’s okay first. He just started therapy.”

“That’s good. And I understand, Angie, I really do. I don’t want you to feel bad about this or anything.”

I did anyway.

“It’s just finally happening,” he said. “Everything. I’m getting out of this shithole, I’m getting a degree, and this documentary’s almost finished.”

The documentary. The culmination of his life’s work – proving the nearly unexplainable existence of paranormal phenomena. I squeezed his arm and looked at him for a moment, and he looked at me. He and I didn’t have to say anything, even though he’s always been chatty. We read each other.

*I wish Troy didn’t have to drop out of college to help pay Mom’s medical bills.*

*I know.*

*I’m happy you’re getting your happy ending, though.*

*I know.*

*Troy’s happy for you, too.*

Gabe nodded. “Your dad will come around. Troy will come around. The death you’re facing might seem like such a different situation than, well, this,” he gestured to the footage on his laptop, “but it’s another thing that everyone will face and rationalize differently.”

I sighed and leaned into his shoulder. “I just want to make sure everyone’s taken care of, you know? At least while we’re all ... Well, while we’re all like this.”

“I know, Ange. I know.”

\*

I jolt when I hear the floor creak behind me and turn myself around. Dad. He blinks away some of the morning haze and asks, “What are you doing?”

“Waiting on Troy The Loud Cereal Chomper to get done eating.”

“I’m done,” Troy calls from the kitchen. I stand up and smooth out my flowy green blouse. About time. I’m about to remind Dad where Troy and I are going, but when my eyes meet his, they’re glued to the wall straight ahead. Mom’s picture.

I chew on my lip. He glances at me, then at the picture, as if he can’t pull away, and then back at me again. But it’s like he’s not looking at me, and it’s not just his morning daze.

“Therapy?” he asks.

“Yep.”

Dad clears his throat and walks past me, past Troy without saying goodbye.

For a moment, I want to scowl at my mother’s picture, but I instantly hate myself for being such a bitch and feeling like that. It’s not her fault she got sick. She never wanted us to worry about her, let alone mourn her. So I’m going to be pissed off at God instead. That’s what I tell myself whenever I feel that sudden rage. It only comes in short bursts anyway.

I hurry down the stairs and grab my brown leather purse off the rack next to the front door,

and Troy and I head to his car.

“Ugh, why does your car still smell like High School Quarterback Troy?” He just starts the car like he can’t hear me, and I crack open a window to relieve some of the locker-room stench. If he doesn’t want to speak this morning and prefers to take my insults in silence, then I guess I won’t talk either. Well, I’ll talk to the therapist, anyway.

Before, Troy and I were always on the same wavelength, for the most part. Our twin thing, according to Mom. I miss that. But he’s in pain, so I give him space. I even scoot closer to the window. (And not just because of the smell, because I’m starting to go noseblind.)

Troy was born first. I followed after just a few minutes. You’d think, as the older twin, Troy would act like I’m his little sister and either take care of me or patronize me accordingly, but our relationship has never been like that. In some ways, it’s simpler. In other ways, more complicated.

Right now, it feels complicated. Tense. But I know his silence doesn’t have much to do with me. The past year has really bogged him down, between Mom fighting cancer and her dying. The problem with him is he doesn’t half-ass anything. When he played high school football, it was do or die. He picks up a book to read in the afternoon and he doesn’t put it down until it’s done, even if it’s some seven hundred page heavyweight. Whenever he dates someone, the whole fucking universe revolves around her. And when he gets sad, he gets *sad*.

Most of the time, I’m the one who finds a way to help. But now, I can only do so much. There’s only time. And time tends to crawl by when you’re hurt.

We finally pull into the parking lot and get out of Troy’s rusting green Ford. It’s only one of three cars in the parking lot – I guess I expected more, like a family doctor’s office. Troy walks ahead of me but waits up after he gets inside. He gives me a kind of perplexed look, like he doesn’t know what to do in this space. I don’t know why he’s confused. It’s not like this is hard to navigate. I quickly scan the room and see a woman typing at her desk, behind a little counter. I approach her and tell her who we are.

She looks like she’s about middle aged, and I think she’s grimacing, but that might just be how her face is naturally. She hands me some paperwork for both Troy and me to fill out. We rush through that semi-boring, semi-soul-bearing crap pretty quickly: My actual name is Angelique, I am twenty-one years old, I am not allergic to anything, and I do not use illegal drugs but thanks for asking, etc. I skim through all the wordy stuff. Our appointment starts in about two minutes so we don’t really have time to read through all of it. After I give the woman our stack of completed forms, she walks around the counter and leads us down the hallway on the left. I suddenly feel kind of nervous. I don’t know why. I look at Troy to gauge his reaction. He’s as expressionless as ever.

A smiling lady greets us in a doorway and the antisocial secretary leaves. Much better. “Oh, I can tell you’re Roy’s son,” she says immediately.

“The hair,” Troy and I say at once.

“Yep! I’m Lisa Stevens, it’s great to finally meet you two,” she tells us as she shakes our hands. “Come take a seat.”

Troy and I both sit in the caddy-corner loveseat near the window. It’s really bright in this room from all the sunlight coming through the white curtains, but the walls are a nice blue, so I don’t think it’s awful. It’s comfy.

“I know you two have been through an awful lot in the past few years with your mother, and I’m deeply sorry you’ve had to go through so much.”

“Thank you,” I say.

“You can send my condolences along to your older brother, if you want. His name is Mark, correct?”

“Yes.”

“And he’s how old?”

“He’s quite a bit older than us. He’ll be thirty-two closer to the end of the year.”

“Is he seeking services elsewhere?”

I shake my head. “No. It’s not something he’s interested in. I asked.”

He told me therapy was for crazy people, and that he wasn’t crazy, but I’m not about to tell her that. Mark’s always making stupid comments. Besides, he works things out in his own, woe-is-me way anyhow. Whatever works for him, I guess.

“One thing I want to make clear, though, is that while you are more than welcome to talk about your dad whenever you’d like, I can give input, but I cannot reveal any specific information from my sessions with him.”

I nod. “Yeah, that’s fine.”

“I have some paper and a pen here that I might scribble on from time to time, but I don’t usually write much. I know I look kind of old, but my memory’s sharp. Well, when it comes to my clients anyway. Where I put my car keys is always a different story. But anyway. I guess the first thing I want to ask is why did you two decide to come here?”

I look at Troy and he looks at me. *Is he going to talk, or should I?* I talk. “Well, our dad recommended it. Says it’s been really helpful for him.”

“Would you say that you two have had a hard time coping with your mother’s death?”

I purse my lips. “I mean, I guess. Wouldn’t anybody?”

“They would. Everyone deals with everything differently. Twins are usually more similar than they like to let on, but I want you both to know that if you want to come separately in the future, I will support it.”

My shoulders tense up. I never thought about doing this by myself. This was supposed to be a thing for both of us. Troy might not even go if we both don’t go together. He might not prioritize himself.

“Out of curiosity, why did you want to come together?” she asks.

I bite my lip. It’s going to be so obvious that I was the one who arranged this after Dad suggested it. Troy just went along with the idea for whatever reason. Maybe she won’t approve of that. Maybe that’ll make it seem like we really shouldn’t do this together. Maybe –

“Angie arranged it,” Troy says quietly.

Lisa nods once, makes a couple quick scribbles on her paper, and looks at me.

So I tell her why.

\*

Troy has always been easy for everyone to get along with even though he sometimes has really strong reactions to things. I didn’t notice it as much when we were little. It’s hard to notice funny little things like that when you’re a kid, because at the time, it’s just “normal” and you don’t question it.

I started to question it when I was about ten. It was a really nice day outside. June. School had only been out for a week or so.

Our house was in the country, and we had a huge yard. Gabe was at our house, like usual. He and Troy just got done playing some video game I didn’t care about, and they were about to go outside, a football in hand.

“Hey, Angie, you should come out here with us,” Gabe said. I looked up from my little portable DVD player. I had been watching one of my mom’s *Gilmore Girls* seasons – she let me watch that show even though I was too young to totally understand it all. Gabe was always inviting me to do stuff with them. Sometimes I’d worry that it bothered Troy when I’d join in, but he never complained. I think he always knew how much Gabe loved me, like everyone else – everyone except me,

for the longest time.

“And do what? Throw a football around? I wish our soccer ball hadn’t deflated,” I said.

“I got one at my house – we could go get it.”

“But that’s, like, a country mile,” I said. “And you never let us just play in your yard, so we’ll have to walk all the way back here.”

“Your house is better.”

“It’s just as good,” I told him. “I don’t know why you have to be so stupid about it.”

“No, our house is better,” Troy said. I didn’t know about Gabe’s dad back then.

“So, are we playing soccer or not?” Gabe asked.

It sounded like fun. The weather was beautiful. “Oh, all right.”

Gabe’s house was like five houses down the block from us, and the houses were all pretty spread out. We hollered at Mom and Dad that we were leaving for a bit, but we’d be back after we got Gabe’s soccer ball. Even though I was annoyed and confused by Gabe’s hatred for home, I didn’t mind the walk. The temperature was perfect, a balmy seventy-five degrees. Besides, I was never a lazy kid. None of us were.

\*

“Ange, no offense, but what does this have to do with anything?” Troy asks.

“Let her get to her point,” Lisa tells him. “I feel like this is going somewhere.”

I give her a small smile and continue.

\*

There were these two kids we went to school with across the street from Gabe’s house. They ended up moving during middle school, but for the time being, we still had to deal with them once in a while.

They weren’t nice to Gabe. Granted, a lot of kids weren’t very nice to Gabe until he started to put on some muscle in high school and got that damn near hypnotizing jaw line. But I remember that these brats across the street were especially consistent in their little attacks. A lot of it was pretty minor in the grand scheme. Snatching a book away from him while he was reading it. Taunting him for his interest in ghosts (which they knew about because he was constantly reading about them). The occasional roughhousing. You know, kid stuff. But of course, it all felt like a really big deal at the time.

We didn’t see them. They crept behind us while we talked. One moment, we were walking, and the next, one of them basically tackled Gabe, and Troy bashed a couple heads together. Except he didn’t stop. I mean, now he’s a hulking brute, but at the time, Troy and these kids were all about the same height and weight. All just average-sized kids. But he was so angry that he just kept throwing punches when they were down. Things were starting to get bloody.

Gabe and I grabbed him by the arms and pulled him off, but Troy didn’t look much like Troy anymore. More like a deranged coyote. The neighbor kids’ mom was screaming bloody murder across the street. Our parents both started running towards us. Gabe went home.

Troy was mostly calm for the rest of the day, but tense. I just didn’t understand why he snapped so badly. I understood why he got mad, I just didn’t know why it had to make him crazy and ruin his whole day. Mom sat on the kitchen counter, like she often did, and she was eating a granola bar.

“What’s the matter, baby?” she asked.

It took me a little while to find the words. I wasn’t good with words then. “I don’t know. I just don’t know why Troy freaked out so much. I mean, that stuff happens to Gabe a lot, and it’s not fair, but it’s been hours ago and Troy’s been acting weird all day.”

Mom nodded. She picked a few fallen granola crumbs off of her lap and ate them.

“So like ... why is he so...”

“Intense?”

“Yeah.”

Mom smiled. “That’s just his way. I think he’s the type of person who feels things strongly. An Aries thing.”

“I’m an Aries.”

“Yes, but in different ways from him. Like I’ve always said, you two complement each other pretty well. The twin thing. You’re calm, like me and Dad. Not lethargic like Mark, though. Troy’s kind of like my dad. But the thing I want you to remember is there are going to be moments where he’s going to freak out, but you have the power to calm him down and push him in a healthier direction.”

“I do?”

She smiled, crumpled up the granola bar wrapper, and tossed it in the trash. “Yep. You balance him out when he’s worried, I think.”

I sat with her for just a few more seconds before I took off to go find Troy and see if he wanted to play a video game before we went to sleep.

\*

Troy, Lisa, and I sit in silence for a moment. I hear the clock on Lisa’s desk tick.

“She said that?” Troy asks me, his voice low.

I make eye contact. His eyes are the same brown as mine, just a different shape.

“Does this shock you, Troy?” Lisa asks.

Troy shrugs. “No. I don’t know. The Aries thing, no. She and I talked about that before.”

“So does this conversation Angie had with your mom make you feel anything?”

Troy doesn’t say anything. I can’t read his expression.

“Let me make sure I have this straight,” Lisa says. “You feel like you have to look out for Troy?” Lisa asks me.

“Well ... yeah.”

“Especially since your mother told you to, and now she’s gone, and ... you feel no one else will?”

“Yes.”

“How’s your relationship with your father? That’s a question for both of you. And remember – I can’t tell you anything he tells me in his sessions with me specifically and I can’t tell him anything either of you say in here, either.”

I glance at Troy, but he’s looking at the floor again. Fine. I’ll go first. “Well, he’s a good dad. I ended up turning to Mom for things like advice more often when I got older though. You know, girl stuff, which included boy stuff. But I mean Dad and I were still close as I grew up. Just different ways.”

“What kind of ways?”

“Um ... I don’t know. Sometimes we’d do stuff together. Usually with Mom and Troy, too. But sometimes we’d go to basketball or baseball games. A concert once in a while, if it was one of the few artists we all like.”

“Would you say that most of your memories with him are happy?”

“Yeah. Things are just really different right now since he’s sad all the time.”

Lisa looks at Troy as if to confirm, but he’s still staring off into space. He’s starting to irritate me. Lisa purses her lips; I can tell she’s thinking about whether or not she should drag him into the conversation just yet, or whether or not she should ask if he wants to schedule a separate appointment. So I jump in with the first thing that comes to mind.

“I’ve had the same boyfriend since high school. Gabe, Troy’s best friend. He’s graduating

from college pretty soon, and he wants me to get an apartment with him. I don't think I want to."

"Do you live in an apartment on your own now?"

"No. Financially, things were really tough when Mom was sick. And we wanted to be close with her. So Troy and I are still at home."

"You don't think that moving out of there will help you move on?"

"Well ... It might help me, but I can't leave Dad like this. He's a mess. He needs a close support system, and –"

Troy scoffs. "Oh my God." He rolls his eyes.

"Is something wrong, Troy?" Lisa asks.

He ignores her and just looks at me. "You're making him worse."

I blink and instantly feel a headache starting to wreak havoc in my skull. Where did *that* come from? "What? That's ... no, I'm not. How could I possibly be making him worse? If anything, *you're* making him worse. At home, you're either working out or sucking face with What's Her Name on the couch."

"Yeah, minding my own business, going about my life, dealing with all this bullshit. Sometimes Dad and I go out and grab lunch together, and it's fine."

"When have you been getting lunch together?"

I can tell Troy's chewing on the inside of his mouth. He's pissing me off. So I just repeat the question. "When have you been getting lunch together?"

"When you're out with Gabe. Sometimes Mark comes, too."

My head is pounding. My heart is fluttering in a bad kind of way. "And what exactly am I doing to make him worse? Making sure he's okay? Trying to spend time with him?"

"YES!" he bellows. The veins in his neck are starting to pop out a bit. He looks hostile and out of place in this bright-ass room. Lisa tries to get a word in, but Troy's not having it. "Don't you get it? You're suffocating him! You hardly ever give him room to breathe. And it's already bad enough that you look *exactly* like her! Dad will be fine, or as close to fine as he can be, but then you walk into the room and it's like he's looking at her ghost! You need to back off!"

Troy's breathing like he's just run a marathon, but I don't remember the last time I've taken a breath. I feel like I can't talk. "What?"

"Think about it, Angie – it's fucked up."

"You don't know what you're talking about." He's lost his mind, trying to blame everything on me. Absolutely lost it. "That doesn't even make sense. Dad's just – he's just..."

"You're always trying to find things for him to do and asking him if he's okay, or if he wants you to do anything for him, and it's just – it's too much."

"How is it too much? I can't just ignore the situation!"

"There's a difference between ignoring a situation and reminding someone of it every single day."

Wait. I remember what happened earlier this morning. The way Dad looked at the picture. Then at me. Then at the picture. That look on his face.

*But it's like he's not looking at me, and it's not just his morning daze.*

No. Troy's wrong.

Sometimes I hear Dad talking and laughing with Troy, so I smile when I walk in, happy that they're finding happiness. But when I walk in, it's not as happy as I picture it when I'm listening on the other end of the hallway. I always thought they just sounded happy, but it wasn't wholly real to begin with. But if he's spending more time with Troy and Mark, then Troy might actually know more about Dad's feelings...

No.

“He’s better with you and Mark, isn’t he?” my voice sounds small. Like I’m a little kid again, trying to figure out her twin brother as if trying to solve a difficult math problem.

Dad’s given me that weird look so many times since Mom died. I try to scan my memory. Try to remember a time he’s looked at Troy like that. At Mark. At Gabe. At anyone other than me or my mom’s picture by the door. And if I ever ask him about how he’s doing or if he needs anything, I get the same sad look, just amplified a little. And Troy ... Troy never lies. Never.

Oh my God.

Oh my God.

I’m an idiot.

A sob chokes out of me, and I bury my face in my hands. All I’ve done is make everything worse.

“Well ... shit, Ange,” Troy says. I can tell he’s still irritated, but I see he’s beginning to retreat. He probably didn’t think I’d cry. He even puts his arm around me in a half-hug – I can’t even remember the last time he’s hugged me. His arm feels different. Heavier from all the exercise-directed attempts to feel better these past few months.

“I’m going to schedule you two for separate appointments from now on, if you both wish to proceed,” Lisa says. She sounds sad. I try to wipe some tears away to look at her, but instead of trying to figure out what she thinks of my outburst, all I can focus on is how her graying hair looks against her dark skin. She’s a nice lady. I know she isn’t judging me, but I also know that she’s empathetic, and she’s trying to reach out to me. I can’t meet her eyes.

Maybe this wasn’t a good idea after all.

“I will,” Troy says. “Ange?”

I finally sit up straight and put my shaking hands in my lap. I wonder if these are what my mom’s hands looked like when she was my age, when Mark was about three and she had no idea that Troy and I would someday be born. That her own daughter would become her ghost. That I would haunt the people she loved most. That I would suffocate them.

“No,” I say. “I just need ... I don’t know what I need. Not this. Not right now anyway.”

“Angie, look at me,” Lisa asks firmly. I obey. “If this is how your father is reacting to you, as much as I hate to say it, the response is valid, although it hurts you. Sometimes, people need space, even when they’re sad. You have to make yourself content in your own way, and he will have to make himself content in his own way. You’re his daughter – he probably knows he can reach out to you if he needs you at this point.”

I don’t say anything. I sit there struggling to breathe, so Lisa hands me a pink tissue box. I blow my nose. The noise sounds loud and nasty.

She and Troy plan to meet at the same time next week, and they decide that after that first meeting alone, he’d return every two weeks.

“Please, don’t hesitate to give me a call if you change your mind, Angie,” she tells me.

“Okay.” I probably should say thank you, but my words fail me. She smiles at me anyway before she stands up and directs us back into the main room. Troy and I don’t say anything when we climb back into his gross car. I catch him glancing at me a few times.

\*

A few days before my junior prom, I was sitting on my bed, back propped against the wall, hugging my knees and crying. A teenage nightmare. I’d heard Mom walk in a few minutes ago, and I’d finally looked up and began to talk.

“I don’t know what to do,” I said. “I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

“What *feels* wrong?” she asked.

“Everything,” I said. “I think I really hurt Gabe earlier. I snapped at him for being bitter about me going to prom with Bryan. Troy hates me.”

“Your brother doesn’t hate you. He loves you. And he also loves Gabe. And, honestly ... I think you love Gabe, too.”

The words should have sounded so wrong, but they felt true, even though I knew they shouldn’t have been. I cried harder. “This is such a disaster. I’m a disaster.”

“You’re not a disaster. You’re mismatched.”

I laugh even though I don’t think it’s funny. “Yeah, no shit. I spent so much time thinking I was supposed to be with Bryan. Gabe was always just Gabe, nothing else. I feel like I haven’t even seen who he really is until the past six months or so. I can’t believe no one ever told me about his dad, and that fucking ghost or whatever it is.”

“Do you feel sorry for him?”

“Well, yeah, but ... I don’t know. I just didn’t expect things between me and him to change. That’s all.”

Mom put her back against the wall I leaned on, and put her head on my shoulder. “You know, you have the opposite problem Troy has.”

I chuckled. “Which one?”

“He feels too much, you think too much. And when you think too much, you start doing weird shit. You do things that make you feel bad, and then you accidentally do things that make others feel bad because you get caught up in what you believe is a logical plan. You’ve gotta work on that, honey. Quit trying to control everything and just let life happen, even when it’s not how you always pictured it.”

“You’ve gotta work on this ‘I’m always right’ bullshit. It’s annoying.”

“I know.” She gave me a hug and stood up, but as she walked toward my bedroom door, I asked, “Do you at least think Gabe will forgive me?”

She didn’t smile, but her eyes got brighter somehow. “I think so. And I think Troy will, too. If nothing else, time heals everything.”

\*

The past couple weeks have been busy. Gabe graduated yesterday. Troy’s helping me tape the rest of my boxes shut in my room, and Gabe just headed out with an armful of stuff.

“So, you’re sure this place isn’t haunted?” Troy asks.

“Positive,” I say. “We looked through all kinds of old records. Gabe’s techie friends set up some cameras there overnight last week – it’s all clear.”

“Not sure how he’s ever going to sleep at night in such a weird environment.” We share a quick smile and I tape one last box shut.

“It sounds like he’s going to be travelling to the ghosts pretty soon anyway. He won’t have much of a chance to miss them. I can’t believe people are inviting him places now. The documentary isn’t even out yet.”

“It’s crazy.” We both stand up, each carrying a box. I start to head into the hallway, but Troy stops me. “Angie, I don’t want you to worry about me.”

I nod. I’m not sure what to say to him. I’d be lying if I told him I wouldn’t.

“Thanks for getting me all set up for therapy.”

“You’re welcome.”

Gabe comes jogging past us, ready to grab more of my stuff. “Babe, I love you, but I don’t understand why you have so much shit.”

“What can I say? I’m worthy of spoiling.” Troy rolls his eyes and the three of us make two more trips dropping stuff off in my car. When I slam the trunk shut, Gabe asks, “That’s it?”

“That’s it,” I say.

“Praise God. I’m just gonna run to the bathroom quick before we go.” He power-walks up

the porch stairs past my dad, who's been sitting on the step reading all morning. Troy and I approach him and wait for him to notice us.

"Shit. I'm going to be late for work," Troy says. "I didn't realize what time it was."

"Don't get fired," I tell him and gesture toward his old car.

"God, wouldn't that be fucking *awful*," he jokes. "Alright, I'll see you and Gabe in a few days, Ange. Love you."

"I love you, too."

He waves at me and Dad, who finally bothered to clip in his bookmark and stand up, and Troy drives off in a frenzy.

"He's so good at going the speed limit."

"Kind of like you," Dad says.

I smile and look at him. He's aged a lot since Mom's diagnosis. His eyes are wider, like my brother Mark's, and they sag a little underneath. I've come to appreciate the smile lines. I know they'll crinkle when he's cheerful again.

"I'm sorry, Dad."

He kind of looks like he wants to ask what for, but he knows. I know he knows. He looks like he's about to cry when he says, "I know. I'm sorry, too."

"I want you to be okay."

The breeze picks up, blows his long black hair past his face. "And I want you to be okay, too. I think you're going to be fine though. Chasing some ghosts with Gabe."

Gabe opens the front door and smiles at me and Dad. "Ready?" he asks both of us.

I tell him I am. Dad tussles Gabe's hair like he's a homely, nerdy kid again, and Gabe gives him a side hug and says goodbye. We're only moving a half an hour away, so it's really not a dramatic occasion. He heads off to his car, but I linger for a moment, looking around not only at Dad, but the house. It hasn't been kept up very well since Mom got sick, so it's a little sad looking. The landscape is nonexistent. The shutters need painted.

"Bye," I finally tell him.

He wraps me in a hug for what feels like a long time, and when the embrace is over, I think I see a little bit of the haze lifted from his expression. I'm not sure, though. When I pull out of the driveway behind Gabe and see my home getting smaller and smaller in my mirror, I feel a presence lifting, like the air is easier to breathe. Almost like how Gabe's old house feels after an exorcism and cleanse.

# Widow

## by Kate Rose

The feeling of grass tickled the arches of her feet. How long had it been since had last felt these blades against her bare skin? Perhaps even longer than she had been locked away. She was never much of an outdoors person, though.

The open field ended abruptly at the edge of the woods. Through the trees, she could see the skinny gravel road that lead her back to Lynchburg.

*The last thing you need is to get caught in somebody's headlights and get dragged back.*  
She cautiously continued her journey guarded by the canopies of the trees.

With bloody feet she approached what appeared to be a town square. It was nothing like home, although a lot can change in twenty years. She imagined that the people who frequented the shops that she was walking past owned farms somewhere down the road. To them, this was civilization. To Rita, it looked more like a movie set.

She walked up to the window of what looked like it could be clothing store, but she was unsure. The mismatched display didn't help, either. A dress on a mannequin staged between an unfamiliar metal contraption and a rocking chair caught Rita's eye. It was a rather frumpy getup. She imagined one of those farmers' wives would wear this with pride as she pulled a fresh-baked pie from the oven before pulling on her galoshes and helping the kids tend to the pigs.

Despite what it looked like, it was probably far less uncomfortable and conspicuous than the hospital gown she had worn on her hike here. On a whim, she tried the doorknob. She had already started working through her plan of smashing the window when the door opened.

*What, are the country folk too busy mucking stalls to commit a crime?*

She had no idea what time it was, but it was dark when she escaped, and it was still dark as she entered the shop. How long would it be before somebody noticed that she was gone? She imagined the caretakers' faces when they would see her empty room, complete with a perfectly made bed and laughed quietly to herself.

There were no lights on, so she figured the unlocked door was either the result of an extremely trusting or forgetful shopkeeper. With the newfound opportunity to avoid committing a petty smash-and-grab crime, she left the window display as it was, and walked over to a clothing rack next to the tacky metal sign on the wall telling the farmers to "Take home something nice for the lady of the house!". She pulled a garment from the rack and held it up, looking in the mirror leaning against the wall.

*You're not trying to win a fashion show, Rita. It's... 'country bumpkin chic'. All the rage.*

She put the hanger back on the metal pipe and fumbled with the strings of her gown. After buttoning up the hideous housedress, she crumbled up the square of fabric that she had previously been wearing and lifted the lid of the trash can by the register. Remembering what sent her to jail the first time, she closed the bin and walked over to the tools section and pocketed one of the lighters instead. She looked down at her bare feet.

*Jesus Christ, Rita. You look like your feet got run over by a lawn mower. Sensible housewife from the ankles up, victim of a freak accident from the ankles down.*

Rita turned around, returning to the clothing section only a couple feet away. She pulled a box of shoes down that were her size. Slipping them on, she glanced back over at the mirror.

*And here comes Rita Sanford wearing a stunning, eye-catching beige! What a practical choice for this season!*

After putting the empty box back on the shelf, she curled her toes in the fresh leather pumps. She couldn't remember the last time she wore real shoes. She quietly pulled the door shut and continued on her way, whatever way that was.

~

As she started walking, she winced in pain. She couldn't tell if it was from the cuts of the stray branches of the woods or the utilitarian pumps that needed to be broken in. On top of that, her legs felt like lead. She would give anything just to get some rest.

*It doesn't matter where you end up, just get as much distance as possible. The farther away you are, the less likely they'll be looking for you there.*

She tromped through the deep ditches of the country roads. As cars passed, she ducked down. Although her feet, bloodied from her barefoot ventures and blistered from the new shoes, begged her to flag somebody down for a ride, the rising sun reminded her that morning meds would be distributed in the coming hours.

~

"M-Mrs. Sanford," a shaky voice called from behind the door, which was barely cracked open.

Rita sat upright in her bed.

"Medication."

A small tin cup appeared on her end table by the door. The door quickly clicked shut. The fear of what she might do next possessed the caretakers to risk their jobs as they no longer stayed in the room to check that she was actually taking her medication, like they used to when she first arrived.

~

Holding the leather abusers in her hand, Rita breathed a sigh of relief when the grass turned to pavement beneath her feet. Sidewalks, close neighbors, street lamps – her surroundings grew more familiar to those of her previous life. She began to wonder how far from home she was and whether or not she wanted to go back.

There was only one person in Westburn that still possibly cared about her.

*He's probably gone by now – especially after you dragged the poor bastard through hell and back.*

Besides, she didn't even know how far away from Westburn she was. She knew the asylum was somewhere within the state, but she could be on the other side of Tennessee for all she knew.

~

Rita looked up from the sidewalk and realized she had walked her way into town. She still wasn't entirely sure what time it was.

*Should've stolen a watch while you were at it.*

The sun was up, but the gas station she was approaching was a ghost town. She cautiously checked her surroundings to make sure no one would witness her next actions.

*One call is all you need. Suck it up, buttercup.*

She walked over to the payphone that was hung on the wall by the corner of the building and bent over hoping to scrape up some dropped change.

She put the dirty coins into the slot.

"Hello, it's Mrs. San – Rita."

"Yes, it's really me... No – please, I swear this is not a joke. Don't hang up." she whispered

harshly into the receiver.

“I’ve missed you too, Charles.”

“I don’t have time to explain. I need your help...” Rita paused.

“I need you.”

~

The bank door closed behind her as she tucked the bill into the top of her dress. It was far more than she needed for a bus ticket, but she wasn’t going to argue. Rita headed towards the bus station, still not entirely sure of what her plans were. As she boarded the Greyhound bus, she found a seat towards the back and slipped off her shoes once again. Her feet throbbed as she leaned her head against the window.

*You’re doing it again, Rita. The same shit that landed you in the loony bin last time.*

As the bus pulled away from the station, Rita began to doze off.

~

“Where is my husband?! If he knew what you are doing to me here he’d shut this shithole down!”

The caretakers looked appalled. She showed no recollection of the events that took place earlier that year.

“Mrs. Sanford. He’s dead, don’t you remember?”

One even had the courage to remind her that she was the one who killed him.

“Save it, lady. You know exactly why you’re here. You’re lucky you’re here and not on Death Row where you belong.”

~

“Next stop, Westburn.”

It was dark again by the time that she was getting off the bus. From her initial impression of the city, she could tell that not much had changed in the years since she left. A man stood under the flickering light of a lamp post wearing a trench coat and a wide-brimmed hat holding a sign bearing the name Mary Blake. He held out his arm and she hesitantly took hold of his hand.

The car ride was silent and uncomfortable. Neither one of them said anything. Rita painfully reminisced on the nights they spent talking until the wee hours of the morning.

*Sure, most of our conversations revolved around my husband’s death and trying to make you believe that I had nothing to do with it, but anything would be better than this deafening silence.*

They pulled up to his house. Other than a new coat of paint, it looked just like she remembered it. He got out of the car and opened her door for her.

*Chivalrous, as always, Mr. Detective.*

There were beer bottles scattered on every surface and newspapers littered the floor. Perhaps more things had changed that she thought. Charles took notice of Rita’s apprehension about her surroundings.

“Sorry about the mess. I didn’t really have time to clean up. This is the first time I’ve had company in... a while.”

The stutter in his voice reminded Rita of when she had first met him. He was the newest member of the force at the time. Her case was probably his first. It wasn’t necessarily successful, either. She often wondered what consequences he faced from her games. He fell hard for her tricks, but so did she.

They sat in awkward silence for some time. Rita obsessively stirred the coffee that he brought her. Charles looked like he might be counting the stripes on the wallpaper. Neither of them wanted to talk about what had happened since they had last seen each other. Rita avoided

eye contact and reckoned Charles was doing the same. They were both shards of their previous selves. If they were to look each other in the eye and acknowledge it, they would go spiraling in hope of regaining the last comfort either of them could remember.

Rita couldn't resist the temptation to look up from her cup. Charles was unshaven and looked like he hadn't had a good night's sleep in years. For Rita, there was no secret to her demise. The papers told all. It was a national scandal: *Gold-Digging Wife Offs Her Husband and is Caught Red-Handed, Murderous Medicine: How Massengill's Recalled Remedy Played a Role in the Sanford Murder Case, "I Can't Remember a Thing": Sanford Pleads Insanity*. But what happened to him?

None if it mattered when Charles snapped out of his wallpaper hypnosis, though. They looked into each other's eyes and understood everything they needed to know.

Charles was rougher than Rita remembered him. This was definitely not the shy detective she had effortlessly manipulated almost twenty years ago. This wasn't even the gentleman who had opened her car door and brought her coffee that she was with just an hour ago. Whether it was good or bad, he had clearly gained some experience since she last saw him.

As Charles walked towards the fridge to grab another beer, Rita tip-toed over the papers and clothes on his floor to find the bathroom. She splashed some water on her face and then stared into her own reflection in the medicine cabinet mirror. What had she just done? She didn't quite know if it was deprivation of human touch or the leftovers of her feelings for Charles that led her to do it, but she knew that it was a huge mistake.

*He'll probably go and tell the guys at work that he's back to banging the infamous Rita Sanford after their nineteen-year break. 'I barely got her in the door and she was already ripping my clothes off.' Asshole.*

Nobody could know she was back in Westburn. Not even Charles.

She tiptoed towards his bedroom. As she passed through the living room, she saw that Charles was already fast asleep in the armchair.

*Glad I wasn't expecting a round two...*

She picked up a dirty sock off the floor and used it to open the top drawer of his dresser. She found exactly what she was looking for. It was in the same place he put it away nineteen years ago before sliding under the covers with her. His bed wasn't even made.

She confidently strode back to the living room, aimed for his right temple, and pulled the trigger.

~

The flickering neon sign of the local Rexall reflected on the wet pavement as Rita briskly walked into the drug store. During her search for hair scissors, her eyes were drawn to a row of bright yellow boxes on the shelf. Miss Clairol Hair Color Bath. Topaz – champagne blonde. Maybel-line. Revlon. Creams. Powders. The young man at the counter was too busy flirting with a younger customer to pay any attention to her frantically shoving products into the excess fabric of her dress. She headed to the bathroom at the back of the store, checking the lock twice before she began to spread out her haul. Hair covered the sink as she began chopping. She took a closer look at the Miss Clairol box seeking guidance on how someone with no professional training was supposed to change the color of their hair.

*"Does she... or doesn't she?"*

Rita rolled her eyes at the obnoxious slogan before she pulled the instruction sheet from the box. Her scalp burned after a few minutes, but she could see the brown strands lightening already. After checking the lock on the door again, she slipped off the hideous dress that she had grabbed from the cornfield town square. She took the scissors that had done wonders for her matted, overgrown locks and made some cuts in the dress. First, she was a hairdresser and now she was a tailor.

What other career would she explore in the Rexall bathroom this evening?

She covered her greyish complexion with the thick cream and heavy powder. The rouge really made her look less like the sun-deprived zombie the asylum had turned her into. She added the final touches, putting on mascara and lipstick. Despite the stranger staring back at her in the mirror, she was really beginning to feel like herself. It had been so long since she had done any sort of primping. She hadn't realized until now how much she missed it.

Her hair reeked of Miss Clairol, but it definitely looked better than the greyish-brown mop she had entered the bathroom with. With shorter hair and a shorter dress, Rita left the bathroom. Walking briskly to avoid anyone from seeing the outline of the cosmetics smuggled under her dress's waistband, the clerk finally noticed her now that she more closely resembled the other customer at the counter.

"Can I help you find anything, miss?"

*Miss? Damn, the Miss Clairol must be working then.*

"No, thank you. Just window shopping."

*Idiot. Window shopping at Rexall. Maybe you belong in the mad house after all.*

As Rita left the store, she realized a mistake far more fatal than her verbal slip up with the cashier. She had nowhere to go now that she shot her only ally in Westburn. She headed towards the only other place that she knew had an open door at any hour of the day or night. A favorite amongst truck drivers and vacationers alike, Speedy's Diner rarely served a local.

She tapped her freshly-painted fingernails on the counter as she pretended to be looking over the novel of a menu. What was she going to do now? The leftover money from Charles' wire could only take her so far. She needed to earn some cash and find a place to stay. She was on her third refill of the sludge Barb the waitress tried to pass off as coffee when she decided to order some food. She had been sitting there so long that she felt she owed Barb an order of pancakes as rent. Besides, she didn't want to be the person that asks the waitress to break a bill over ten cents worth of coffee. A truck driver who was sitting a few seats away from her got up to leave and left his newspaper behind. Rita eyed the paper and then looked at Barb to see if this was an acceptable thing to do. After a nod from Barb, she opened the paper and desperately started her job search.

The *Female Help* section was larger than she expected, but overwhelmingly disappointing. She thought for a moment about how she'd rather be dragged back to the asylum than be an Avon lady. From the looks of Barb, being a waitress didn't seem like a fulfilling career, either. She turned to the *Domestic Help* section. She imagined an opening for a cushy live-in nanny position where she'd get paid to live in a mansion. Then she remembered she hated children and snapped out of it. The first ad on the list caught her eye.

"WANTED sleep-in maid. Good wages. Interviews September 3 at noon. 1229 Marigold Lane."

The position sounded promising, but Rita couldn't think of how to casually ask Barb what day it is. She flipped to the front of the paper. It was dated September 1st, 1958.

"Is this today's paper, Barb?"

Barb picked up the paper.

"No, it's from yesterday, sweetheart... Rough night, I'm guessing?"

Rita understood that the average patron should know what day it is, but she wasn't in the mood for the sass from Barb.

*You know, Barb. It was a rough night. I shot a guy earlier this evening. You're next if you keep it up.*

After inhaling the first real solid food she'd had in years, besides the occasional green Jell-O when she could stomach it, Rita paid and got up from the counter. Her lipstick tube slid loose and

fell out of her skirt and onto the floor. She made eye contact with Barb as she picked it up and scurried outside.

Another popular stop with truck drivers was the motel a mere hundred feet from the back lot of Speedy's. She booked a room with the last of the cash she had tucked in her dress.

*Well, Rita, if you don't land that job tomorrow, you're screwed. You'll have to work the corner to feed yourself.*

Rita then imagined her life as one of the prostitutes that also frequented the motel behind Speedy's. However, after having seen the size of the truck drivers and the meals they ordered, she decided it was a job best left to the professionals. She pulled off the dress before sliding into bed. It was bad enough that she was going to an interview in a dress that she stole and then altered in a Rexall bathroom, she didn't need it to be wrinkled on top of that.

After returning her room key, she asked the man at the desk to see a map, hoping that Marigold Lane wasn't too far from the motel. Her feet still hadn't recovered from her hike in a brand-new pair of beige pumps.

"How long do you think it would take me to get to... here," she pointed at the map.

"No more than a five-minute drive, I'd say."

"What if I were to walk there?"

The man looked at her as if she had asked how long it would take to fly her pig there.

"Depends on how fast you walk, lady. Half an hour?"

Forty minutes and several pep talks later, she arrived at 1229 Marigold Lane. As she walked to the door, another applicant was being welcomed in. She was unprepared for what she was about to see next.

John Massengill, President of Massengill Pharmaceuticals, the company responsible for the famous recalled cough syrup Elixir Sulfanilamide– the weapon she had used to kill her husband. As she suspected, upon entering the living room she was greeted by none other than his wife, Louise Massengill. It was Louise's brain, pickled from far too much punch at a party, that came up with the idea to poison their husband.

*You're lucky there's so many people around, Louise. If it were just you and me in this room, I'd kill you right on the spot, bitch.*

Rita remembered the cold winter morning when she arrived on this very doorstep with her suitcase packed and ready to leave.

~

"What you did is wrong, Rita. *Very* wrong. I would think you'd understand why I didn't go through with this silly plan of yours, but instead, you went off and killed your husband and now you're mad at me because I didn't follow suit. Do you even have any remorse?"

Rita dropped the suitcase at her feet as she coldly stared at Louise on her imaginary soap box.

"I don't actually want my husband dead, Rita. I didn't think that you did, either. That is, until now. If it soothes your twisted little mind, I was *this* close to making one of the biggest mistakes of life under your poisonous influence, but then I began to think about what I was actually doing – something you clearly failed to do. What the *hell* is wrong with you, Rita Sanford? Did you think that this was the only way to solve all of the petty problems in your unhappy little life? Did you really think that your life would be any better knowing that you murdered an innocent man?"

~

Despite trying to suppress her anger, she couldn't help but let her mind wander to the trial.

~

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

“Proceed, Mrs. Massengill.”

“I met Rita Sanford in January of this year at a New Year’s party my husband and I were throwing. Our husbands are close friends, but I hadn’t seen her around before that evening. She sought me out in the back of the house – I was taking a break from all the noise of the company. After a few drinks, we began to complain about our husbands. You know, as most married women do when they get together. She began to get this wild look in her eyes. She then proceeded to tell me her fantasies of having all the luxuries of her husband’s wealth without all of the obligations of marriage. If I’m being honest with you, Your Honor, it really sounded lovely the way that she was describing it – like there wouldn’t be a worry in the world... that is, if our husbands were dead. I made the mistake of telling her about the gallons of recalled Elixir Sulfanilamide that were in the house packaged to be returned to the manufacturer. She convinced me to give her a bottle. Honestly, I just wasn’t thinking... I was just in a haze. I’m thinking the only reason I agreed to such a convoluted plan was because I wasn’t keeping count of how many drinks Mrs. Sanford pushing on me.

The craziest part of this whole story is how she almost convinced me to do it. I actually put the poison into my husband’s dinner the next day, with the thought of taking him out of his misery. I watched him collapse into his chair tonight, defeated. I watched his face crumple as the reporters started pounding on the door... She really had me believing that he’d be better off dead, Your Honor. But then I remembered the reports that John read to me about people who lost their lives to that drug, what it does to their body. The pain, the suffering. I couldn’t knowingly put another person through that, especially not the person who needed my love and support more than anything else at that time. Once I was able to snap out of the spell that Mrs. Sanford put on me the night before, I threw out John’s dinner and insisted that we go out to eat. Your Honor, I just feel so terrible. If I would have just realized how truly sick she was, I could have done something about it earlier, gotten her some help... before she went and took the life of Mr. Sanford.”  
Louise wiped a tear from her eye.

~

Rita had to clear the rage from her mind – now was her time to shine.

“What’s your name?”

“Mary Blake.”

The interview went faster than she imagined. She hadn’t prepared at all, but she had a knack for making up stories on the fly. As she waited in the dining room for all of the interviews to be completed, Rita couldn’t help but think about how shaky things must be between the Massengills, even after all of this time. She found it surprising that they were still married, even though John knew that she almost killed him on a whim.

John walked into the dining room and made an announcement.

“I’d like to thank all of the applicants at this time. Miss Blake, you may stay. Everyone else, safe travels.”

*Irresistible charm, works every time.*

“I personally was not overwhelmingly impressed by your interview, Miss Blake. However, my wife insists that you are the perfect match for our household.”

*How ironic.*

“You’ll start today. Minimum wage to start out. Let’s consider this a trial phase, shall we?”

~

Rita’s time with the Massengills lasted well beyond the trial. As the months passed, it felt to the Massengills that Mary Blake had been with their family for years. She did far more than the cooking and cleaning that she was hired on to do. She became one of Louise’s dearest friends and

confidants.

“Mary, have you seen the papers yet today? Psycho Sanford broke out of Lynchburg! I can’t even imagine what she’s plotting to do next...”

*Oh, Louise, if only you knew.*

John wasn’t initially a fan of Mary, but she managed to change that soon enough. In fact, he grew to like her more than he wanted to admit.

“Mary, you don’t have to go straight to your room, if you don’t want to, you know. Sit down, have a drink. We want you to feel like part of the family, not just an employee. Tell us more about yourself, Mary.”

These fireside chats after dinner were just the beginning.

“Mary, Louise and I are going to my brother’s house tonight for dinner. I called him last night if they’d be willing to set another place at the table, so you’re more than welcome to join us if you’re interested.”

Rita could hear the slight uneasiness in his voice. His rambling speech asking her to go to dinner with them sounded rehearsed, it was almost as if he were asking her on a date. Of course, Rita already knew that he was going to ask her – she could hear him talking about it last night with Louise.

~

“John, are you *serious*?”

“I just thought it’d be a nice gesture, Louise. I know how lonely this house can get. Besides, like I told her the other night, she’s becoming part of the family.”

“A little bit too quickly, though, don’t you think? I mean, you’re introducing her to your folks sooner than when we first started seeing each other!”

“Louise, are you jealous of Mary?”

“Me? Jealous? You’re *kidding*, John. If you want to bring the *maid* to dinner, then go right ahead! I don’t care.”

~

This wasn’t the first time that Louise expressed her unhappiness with Mary’s presence in the house. As the year came to an end, John invited Mary to join him and Louise at the company Christmas party.

“Well, if you’re inviting her, then I’m not going. No one’s going to bat an eye at the dress that I bought for party if the blonde bombshell is also on your arm.”

“Louise, you know that’s not true. Besides, Mary started with us so soon after she moved here that I’m almost positive that we’re her only friends. It’d be a nice opportunity for her to get out and socialize for once.”

“You mean *you’re her* only friend. I don’t even know how you get along with her, to be honest. She’s obnoxious. She always has the *perfect* story for every situation. I bet you none of that stuff even happened – she’s fake.”

“Louise, for Christ’s sake, it’s Christmas Eve. Give it a break.”

“Oh, I’ll give you a break. From me. Have fun at the Christmas party with the maid. I’m sure your colleagues will think it’s *real* classy.”

They did. Mary couldn’t walk into a room without grabbing people’s attention.

“Wow, John. I swear I see you with your maid more often than your wife. If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you’re giving her more than just her wages!”

John laughed the comment off at the time because it wasn’t true, yet.

~

This wasn’t the first time that Louise dropped her plans with John at the last second because he wanted to bring Mary along. Perhaps it was this time outside of the household that brought John

and Mary so close to each other. Then again, Louise hardly left her room anymore because she was so distressed over her loss of control in the house.

One night, John came home late from work. Mary usually would chat with him while she cleaned up his empty glasses from the end table on a night like this, but that night he uncorked his emotions completely.

“Mary, I just don’t know what to do about Louise. She’s really gone off the deep end lately, lashing out every time I mention your name. If I’m being entirely honest with you, things haven’t been great between us for years. I don’t care if she was drunk or not, finding out that that your wife wants you dead really puts a stopper in your relationship. It’s times like these that I can’t help but wonder if she’s still plotting my murder. You know that’s why we don’t share the Master bedroom anymore, right? I couldn’t sleep next to her anymore after the Sanford case.”

For once in her life, Rita was unsure of what to say to this, so she reached for John’s empty glass, and unexpectedly found that his hand already there. Eye contact was made as they both instinctively pulled their hands back. Things between them were uncomfortable for a few days. Nevertheless, these late-night conversations continued.

As time went on, these evening therapy sessions no longer took place downstairs in the living room by John’s favorite chair. They would stay up chatting in John’s room until the sun would start peek through the blinds. They had kissed on a number of occasions, but John didn’t overthink it. He trusted her more than his own wife whom he hadn’t gotten a spot of affection from in years.

Rita, on the other hand, would skip back to her own room after these evening meetings. She was well ahead of schedule. She had originally figured this part of her plan would take years to accomplish.

Louise barely left her room anymore. It was like Mary was everywhere. Sure, she couldn’t help it for the most part because she lived with them, but she started to make significantly more public appearances than Louise ever did. She attended family events and was accepted there as if she was some long-lost sister. Nobody seemed to think twice about this odd companionship, except Louise. On top of that, everything that Mary did was driving her crazy.

“Mary, I’ve barely finished eating. You’re in such a rush to clear the dishes, it’s like you have something more important to do.”

“Mary, easy on the garlic next time, okay? We’re not trying to ward off vampires.”

What unsettled Louise the most, though, was Mary’s nervous habit of tapping the tip of her shoe on the ground when you talked to her, like she was getting ready to do a tap number. She did it so often that the toes of her shoes were all scuffed. The only other person Louise had seen do this, and the only other person who strangely infuriated Louise like Mary, was Rita Sanford. The night that Louise gave Mrs. Sandford a piece of her mind about her sinful actions, Rita practically dug a hole in the floor with her annoying tapping. Louise then imagined how they probably had to patch the floors in Rita’s room at the Lynchburg Psychiatric Center before she ran off. How could they lose track of such a lunatic? Louise couldn’t imagine Rita Sanford being inconspicuous enough to not have been caught yet. She was one of those people that just demanded everyone’s attention upon entering a room.

They weren’t even trying to cover it up anymore. Louise knew deep in her bones that John and Mary were more than just friends. Louise had to suppress her rage as she watched Mary slink into her husband’s room.

~

“Mrs. Massengill, just tell us where the other body is, alright? It’s getting late.”

“She did this! That’s why you can’t find her!”

“So, you’re telling me that she just happened to be excessively bleeding while she murdered your husband?”

“She must have cut herself on purpose to try and frame me for this.”

“I don’t imagine she would have gotten very far bleeding that badly and wearing nothing but her left shoe in the light of day. Especially in this town.”

“That’s exactly what she wants you to think!”

“Look, we’ve talked to all of your husbands’ colleagues. We read the diary. We found the dress under the floorboards. Just because your husband took her to the Christmas party instead of you, doesn’t give you a reason to go off and kill them. Ever heard of a divorce? You might get a few dirty looks for it, but at least it won’t land you in jail.”

“Look, please, just listen! That stupid slut Mary Blake killed my husband and made it look like I did it. She’s the one that deserves to be behind bars, not me! Wherever she is, she’s got my husband’s wallet.”

“Did you already forget about what we found in the fireplace? I don’t think anyone is accepting leather and paper dust as payment.”

“That must have been a fake. Don’t you see? She killed my husband and ran off with all of his money, kind of like...”

By the time Louise made the connection, it was too late. After screaming until she lost her voice about how Mary Blake was really Rita Sanford, Louise Massengill was already on her way to the Lynchburg Psychiatric Center.

~

Rita counted the money left in John’s wallet. Maybe she shouldn’t have waited so long after his trip to the bank last week. As she stepped off the bus, she kept an eye out for the nearest Rexall.

# 2071

## by Kory Wise

Alexeev set her bowl of stroganoff on the coffee table and jumped up, gaping at her television. Her duties as the Bangladeshi president did not allow her much time for respite throughout the day, but she always tried to make time during her lunch hour to casually eat in peace. Her tranquility didn't last long today. The newscasters on TV were digesting the hour's latest headline — a senator had just released a video announcing his resignation from the Senate. He cited the corruption in the government as the reason for his decision to step away to lead the rebellious terrorist movement now wreaking havoc across Bangladesh. The news anchors were digesting the political implications of what had just happened; it was unprecedented in their newly reorganized democracy. Alexeev already had a few ideas of what she would do next, though.

Immediately, she rang for her assistant. The young woman answered after the first ring.

“Yes, Madam President?”

“Matrona, I'm on my way back down to the office. Get Senator Vasiliev on the line at once.”

“Of course, Madam.”

Alexeev was practically sprinting to get back down to her office, not caring how many staffers she knocked over in the process. Her disgust could be heard in the rapid *click-click-click* of her heels as she made her way down the marble staircase. How could Vasiliev do such a thing? Elected to serve his people, and he chooses to betray them and their government instead. She would make sure he was arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law, but first, she needed some answers.

Her office door slammed shut behind her, and she positioned herself in front of the holo-recorder that sat atop her desk. The blinking red light meant Vasiliev was already on hold, so she pressed the button to resume the call. After a few seconds, the aging man's face materialized before her.

“Alexeev.” She could tell he had been reluctant to take her call. “I figured you'd be calling.”

“Uncle Borya...how could you?!” she stammered, fighting to hold back the tears she felt welling up in her eyes. Her father wouldn't show any sign of weakness in this moment, so she mustn't, either. “How could you do this to Bangladesh — to my father — to me?!”

“Please, just hear me out. I had to do what's best for Bangladesh.”

“Best for Bangladesh?! What about our *family*? You've betrayed us, after all we've done for you...”

“Alexeev, please.” His initial trepidation had turned into sadness. “Your father's done nothing for anyone except himself. All the elections he's interfered in have resulted in presidents who'd report back to Mother Russia and let him govern from afar. He's a self-serving man, and you know it.”

“Don't tell me you've bought into the fake news the terrorists have been spreading about him.”

“It can't be considered fake news just because you don't want to hear it. I have proof that —”

“No, you're wrong. He's a good man. Think about all he's done for us. Yours was the only

senatorial race he'd ever gotten involved in. He genuinely cared about you, Borya, and now you've betrayed him...your brother!"

"Listen to me. The rebellion is a noble cause. There's good reason for them to fight."

"They've killed thousands of innocent people! And for what? Just to prove a political point? They're murderers! *You're* a murderer..." The words felt like acid coming out of her mouth.

Borya was silent longer than Alexeev expected him to be. Slowly and deliberately, looking right into her eyes, he said, "There have been some unfortunate civilian deaths, I admit, but if we can inspire other countries to rise up and overthrow Russia, millions of other deaths can be prevented."

Alexeev couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her uncle was a terrorist, through and through. The man she had loved so much, the one who had been there for her, raised her when her father was busy with work obligations, was now a stranger. She knew she couldn't continue this conversation without the wall holding back her tears falling to pieces. Reaching for the button to end the call, she said, "I'm going to tell my father about this at once, and you'll be executed for —"

"What if I told you that your father's planning a genocide of the people of Bangladesh?"

She couldn't tell whether it was her hand or her heart that stopped first. For a split second, she actually believed what Borya was telling her, and she felt ashamed for it.

"I'd say that you're a filthy traitor and I don't believe a word of what you say. This is just another ploy for you to recruit people to your cause, and I'll have none of it."

"It's true, though, Alexeev. Bangladesh is the only country with a powerful, organized rebellion. He wants to make an example out of us — some way of demonstrating what happens to those who go against the rule of law. He hopes that by wiping us off the map, he can rule the rest of the world through fear."

If Borya had actually been in the room with her, she would have spit in his face. To say such vile things about her father, the man to whom they all owed so much...truly the uncle she had loved was gone.

"There's been whispers of some kind of microscopic robots," he continued, "that can kill us from the inside out. We have no way of confirming this or stopping him without help from the inside, though."

She started blankly into his eyes. "Do you honestly expect me to believe that bullshit?"

Her uncle looked away from her for the first time, dejected. "I don't know. I just wanted you to be prepared for what may be coming."

"You can't scare me into doing your dirty work." She leaned in closer to the hologram. "And if my father wants to make an example out of you terrorists, I'd be more than happy to let him do so."

Borya looked back at his niece. She could see a tear running down his face. "So be it. I just pray that you won't be next. I love you, Al."

Silently, Alexeev cut off the call.

Three weeks later, Alexeev was at the Kremlin. She had a meeting scheduled to talk to her father about the reorganization of voting districts that he was planning in Bangladesh. He said that these new districts would give her citizens more of an equal representation in their Senate. These formal state meetings used to make her anxious. This was only the third she had been to since her father had given her the Bangladesh presidency for her thirtieth birthday last year, but she was beginning to get the feel for them. Everything about this one was like the last two, with the usual fancy food, long wait times, and stuck up people slowly getting under her skin, except for one thing. All of the televisions in the building were turned off.

Normally this place was buzzing with media analysts consuming every drop of news that they

could get, presumably compiling it into reports to give to her father at the end of the day. They were all still at their posts, but they acted as if they knew nothing newsworthy was going to be happening. This struck Alexeev as odd because her comm hadn't stopped buzzing since the moment she arrived there. It was distracting her to the point that she had had to turn off the government-issued one to focus on her meetings. That meant the buzzing that she was still hearing had to be coming from her personal one, and only a select group of people had the ability to access its frequency.

She was currently waiting in a lounge for her father to arrive for their scheduled appointment; he had been delayed for a couple of hours handling some other business. The aides that had been tasked with handling her were using the downtime to check their own comms, so she pulled hers out of her bag. Her stomach dropped when she read the messages that were waiting for her.

Excusing herself from the aides, she wandered the halls of the capital in a stupor, not believing what she had just read. She walked until somehow she had ended up in the old study that she used to play in as a child. She fell down into one of the armchairs and turned on the television.

"Breaking news out of Bangladesh this afternoon," the anchor was saying. "Senator Borya Vasiliev, the man who resigned from the Senate two weeks ago to lead the Free Bangladesh movement, died today of an apparent stomach virus. No word on how he contracted the bug, but it was apparently fast-moving. According to a statement from the terrorist group, he showed no signs of illness yesterday, and they suspect foul play."

The anchor's words hardly even registered in Alexeev's mind. She was filled with such anguish and shock that she was practically paralyzed in her chair. She didn't know if she would ever be able to move again.

Was this her fault? Could she have prevented Borya's death? Maybe everything he told her had been true, but she had been too blind to realize it...

Impossible.

This was just an unfortunate coincidence. It had to be. The state media wouldn't report information that they couldn't verify to be true. Besides, maybe this was for the best. In a way, Borya deserved to die. He betrayed the family and his country. Perhaps with him out of the way, the rest of the rebellion would fall apart. Borya's death, her father — they were both completely unrelated.

But were they?

She'd had no reason to ever doubt her uncle in the past, so why would he lie to her now? And why would he throw away his career for such a drastic lie that hurt her so deeply? Maybe he had good reason to believe the things he told her about her father, even if his sources weren't entirely accurate.

Then again, she'd never had any reason not to trust her father, either. He'd been nothing but good to her over the years. Without his guiding hand, it was hard to say where she would be today.

She had to talk to him. He would be able to relieve her fears, just like he had when she was a little girl. There had to be a good reason for all of this.

"Hi, Father!"

President Fyodor Vasiliev was an imposing man. He wasn't large in stature, but he exuded a presence of power and control that made his guests feel smaller than they were. Except for when his daughter came to see him.

Fyodor stood to greet her, hugging her like she was still eight years old.

"Alexeev, my dear, so good to see you!"

"You, too, Father." She squeezed him back tightly, feeling some of the emotions she had experienced over the last hour start to slip away. How could she have ever doubted him? Her uncle's words still echoed in her mind, though. "I'm so sorry about Uncle Borya. You must be devastated."

He leaned back from her slightly so he could get a good look at her face. "You heard?"

She looked back at him, confused. "Yes, of course. It's the top headline out of Bangladesh right now."

He let go of her and walked behind his desk. "That's unfortunate. How'd you find out?"

Alexeev felt her heart skip a beat. "What do you mean?"

"I had ordered all the televisions off so that you wouldn't find out while you were here. I didn't want to cast a somber shadow over our meeting today." He took a seat and gestured for her to do the same.

She did so reluctantly. His reasoning made sense. They were here to discuss their plans for Bangladesh, and he didn't want anything to get in the way of that. Still, it was odd that he wouldn't want her to know about her uncle's death as soon as possible. "I stumbled across an old TV in the study while I was waiting for you."

"I see." He quickly typed something onto his data pad before looking back at her and smiling. "Well, it is a sad development. I was hoping we'd be able to help him work through his midlife crisis and convince him to return to the Senate. Looks like fate had other plans, though."

"Yes, I guess so." This was it. Her chance clear up this mess and make sense of everything Borya had told her. "I called him the other day after I watched his resignation announcement."

"Oh?" Fyodor didn't look surprised.

"I needed answers as to why he would betray the family. He tried to explain his reasoning to me, but he'd clearly been brainwashed by all the fake news in the country."

"What do you mean?"

"He told me he'd resigned because he heard you were planning a genocide of the country. Apparently, you have some sort of robots that can kill people from the inside out, or something."

He was peering deeply into her eyes. "You don't believe him, do you?"

"No, of course not." She didn't, did she? Borya was a terrorist, after all. She shouldn't trust him, but he was still her uncle. In some ways, he'd been just as much of a father to her as Fyodor had. "But I have to admit, it's weird that he caught a stomach virus so soon after his resignation."

"I'm sure it's just the poor conditions they have at their terrorist hideouts," he said, waving his hand dismissively.

Should she press on, pushing him for more concrete information? "Yes, I'm sure that's it. I have to know, though, Father — why would Borya say those things? Why would he throw everything away for a lie? He'd never lied to me before, as far as I know."

"Alexeev, I can tell you're shaken by all this." He pushed a button on his data pad. "Look, we'll never be able to decipher Borya's motivations. He's gone, and he took his story with him. But listen to me," he placed his hand on top of hers, "Have I ever lied to you before?"

Before she got a chance to respond, his comm rang. It was his assistant.

"Sorry, I have to take this." He answered the call. "Yes. Mm-hmm. No, I understand. I'll be right there."

"What was that about?" she asked.

"There's a problem in one of the other countries that I need to deal with. I'm sorry, Al, but I'll have to postpone our meeting until this evening. Maybe we can talk over dinner, if you're free?"

"Yes, that sounds good. I'll be there."

He smiled at her before walking out of the room. She sat there, pondering his last question. *Had* he ever lied to her? A couple of days ago, she would have said no. But he had been evasive in their meeting, not even answering her questions. His lack of empathy for his own brother had rat-

tled her, too. It was almost as if she didn't know the man who had just walked out of the room.

Clearly, one of the men in her life hadn't been who she believed him to be. She just couldn't decide which one it was.

Alexeev was walking the halls of the Kremlin again, trying to kill some time before dinner. She passed the staircase she had fell down as a child, breaking her arm, and spent some time reminiscing in her old childhood bedroom. She hadn't spent much time in there as a girl, other than when she was sleeping or being punished. She had much preferred to either spend time with her dad, watching him work whenever she was permitted, or play by herself in the quiet study.

That's where she found herself again now. There was just something about the silence of the room and the stacks of old books that put her at ease. She looked at the bookshelf she had imagined was an office building for her dolls and ran her hand over the table she had used to build a fort.

Once she grew tired of the nostalgia, she turned back to the TV in the room, hoping the news would have an update on her uncle's death. She pressed the power button, but it didn't turn on. She stood up to check the wires in the back. Maybe they had —

“Alexeev!”

The shout almost made her jump out of her skin, and she jerked her head around to see who was at the door.

Kai Petrov had served the Vasiliev family since before Alexeev was born. His roles had ranged from political advisor to babysitter, and now he served as a personal assistant to the president himself. Though he and Alexeev hadn't always seen eye to eye when she was growing up, they had developed a mutual love and respect for one another as the years went on. Today, she thought of him as her oldest friend. And possibly the key to her dilemma.

If there were anyone who knew her father better than she did, it would be Petrov. He had been by Fyodor's side through it all: the conquest of Mongolia, all of her father's elections, the reorganization of so many governments. This could be her chance to finally quell her fears.

She had to proceed carefully, though. Outrightly asking Petrov if he thought her father was capable of murder could be considered treasonous at worst, incredibly rude at best.

“What's wrong, Al? You look like you've just seen a ghost.”

She shook her head to bring herself out of her stupor. “Sorry, Kai. You just scared me when you came in the room. I was trying to get the TV to turn on to see if there is any more news about Uncle Borya.”

“What do you mean? Did his terrorist cell lead an attack today?”

Alexeev shook her head somberly. “No, Kai. He died this morning. They say it was a fast-moving stomach bug.”

“Oh my god...I'm so sorry, Alexeev. I don't know what to say. Does your father know?”

“Yes, we spoke briefly about it earlier. He didn't seem too shaken by it.”

“That's your father for you. He shuts down when he gets too many stressful things on his plate.” He placed his arm around her shoulder, trying to comfort her. “There's probably a lot on his mind right now, especially with the election in Poland coming up and everything that happened with Borya throughout the last few weeks.”

“The terrorist movement thinks it was foul play.”

“Who would have any sort of motivation to kill Borya?”

“I'm not sure. I talked to him right after he resigned, though. He told me some things that make me think the terrorists might be right.”

Petrov was looking at her carefully. “What sort of things?”

Alexeev could feel sweat starting to build up on her upper lip. Had she gone too far? Was Petrov in on whatever plan Fyodor might have? Would he tell her about this conversation? Or should she tell him what Borya had said and watch his reaction? If he seemed upset, she could brush it off and tell him she never believed Borya for a second.

“Something about microscopic robots that get inside the body and...” she paused. Petrov looked nervous. “I don’t know. It was probably just more fake news he was trying to spread,” she finished.

“Did he mention who was developing this weapon? If it’s true, there could be severe international implications.”

This was it. If she told him the truth, there would be no turning back. She thought that she might be able to trust him, but the events of the last few hours had her questioning her trust in everybody.

“He said that it might be coming from the Kremlin, but he wasn’t sure.”

“Do you believe him? Who would have authorized such a weapon?”

Alexeev could tell Petrov was probing her, but she didn’t know the reason why. Was he gathering information to take back to Fyodor? Something in his eyes, though, told her that he was looking for a reason to trust her, too.

“I don’t know,” she said slowly. “Who’s the man with enough authority to do so?”

“I can think of only one person.”

“Do you think that person would be capable of doing such a thing?” She wished she could tell him to blink twice if they were on the same page.

Without saying a word, Petrov walked over to the door and closed it quietly. Turning back to Alexeev, he said somberly, “Yes, I do.”

She let out an exasperated breath. “Do you mean —”

“I’m taking an awfully large risk by telling you this, but I think you’ve seen enough to believe what I say.”

Deep down, Alexeev didn’t want him to continue. She knew that the next words to come out of his mouth would change her world forever, but she had to know the truth.

“I believe your father’s been developing a super-weapon,” he said.

Alexeev felt as if the floor she was standing on had crumbled beneath her feet and the ceiling had fallen on top of her. She didn’t want to believe it. How could the man she loved so much have done such a horrific thing? There were two separate images of Fyodor in her mind that she couldn’t reconcile. One the one hand, there was the man who had been by her side all her life, guiding her and molding her into the woman she was today. On the other, there was a stranger, a ruthless dictator who was willing to do whatever it took to expand his power — even if that meant killing his own brother.

“I’ve been waiting for someone else to realize it for years,” Petrov continued, “and if I’ve read this situation wrong, know that I’m not afraid to turn you in for treason.”

“No, Petrov, it’s alright,” Alexeev said, taking a seat. “I believe you. I wish I didn’t, but I do. I’ve seen far too much today to think you’re lying to me.” She wanted to burst into tears, but even now, in the midst of her world crashing down around her, she must not cry.

“I’ve been gathering clues about the weapon for years. I didn’t think it was anywhere near ready, though. And I never thought he would test it on his brother first.”

“That means everything Uncle Borya told me was probably true,” she said, thinking out loud. “He told me Father was planning to wipe out all of Bangladesh. He wants to make an example out of us so that all the other countries will be too afraid to rise up. Do you think he’d actually use it on civilians?”

“I wouldn’t put it past him, Al. I’ve seen a lot in my years working for your father, most of which I’ve never spoken about to anyone. He can be merciless.”

“Is there anything we can do to stop him? We can’t allow him to wipe out these people. If he does, there’s no telling what he’d do next.”

“Let’s find out,” Petrov said as he helped her out of the chair. “My clearance codes should be able to get us into your father’s computer mainframe. If there’s anything about the weapon there, I’ll find it.”

Alexeev gestured to the door. “After you.”

Petrov’s office was smaller than Alexeev expected it would be. Considering the number of years he’d worked for her father, it seemed like he should be stationed in something bigger by now. The trusted assistant had been working for nearly forty-five minutes, and Alexeev was beginning to lose hope that he’d be able to find anything of use to them.

“I think this might be it.”

Alexeev jumped out of her chair and ran over to his desk. “What’d you find?”

“The folder was unlabeled, but inside is a list of various ‘operations.’ None of them sound like anything special, but they might be worth looking through.”

“Read some of them to me.”

“There’s Operation Mammoth, Operation Sputnik, Operation Commissar, Operation Karina...”

Hearing that name again made Alexeev’s hairs stand on end. “Stop. That’s it.”

“What? Operation Vodka?”

“No. Operation Karina.”

Petrov looked up at her, confused. “How do you know?”

“Because that was my mother’s name.”

Her friend nodded his head, not totally understanding, but willing to trust Alexeev’s judgement. He typed for another minute or so before slamming his fist angrily on the desk. “Damn it!”

“What is it?” she asked warily.

“It’s asking me for a biometric signature. I can’t get in without his fingerprint, voice, or freaking eyeball! There’s nothing I can do.”

Alexeev swallowed hard. This was her moment. Her chance to step out of her father’s shadow and do the right thing. “What if I got one of those things for you?”

Petrov stared at her in disbelief. “What do you mean? You can’t just scoop out his eyeball and bring it to me!”

She shook her head. “No, but I have a dinner meeting scheduled with him in an hour. If I bring you something that he touches, could you lift his fingerprint from it?”

The older man nodded slowly. “Yes...yes, that should work. I should be able to place it on the scanner and get us into the system. Then we can shut down the nanobot operation.”

“Alright.” Alexeev stood up, resolved to fulfill her next task. She had a job to do, a responsibility to serve and protect her people at all costs. She just never imagined she’d have to protect them from her father. “I’ll go get ready. I’ll send you a message on your comm when I have what we need.”

The restaurant Fyodor had told Alexeev to meet him at was, naturally, the finest dining experience Russia had to offer. The stroganoff served here was some of the best in the country. When

Alexeev arrived, her father was already seated at the presidential table. As she approached her seat, she started to feel herself get smaller and smaller. Maybe he was using his mind games on her, exuding his power and control to make her feel weaker?

He stood and pulled out a chair for her. “Thanks for being so willing to reschedule our meeting, dear. I’m thrilled I have an excuse to enjoy a fine meal with you.”

She smiled politely back at him. “Thank you, Father.”

Fyodor resumed his place in his chair. “So, about these new voting districts — I really think they’re going to benefit the people of Bangladesh...”

He began to list reasons for the changes he was proposing, but Alexeev wasn’t really listening. She just nodded her head whenever her instincts told her it was appropriate.

She stared at the man across the table from her, a stranger in her father’s body. On the surface, she saw the man she had known all her life. The man who had held her when she’d broken her arm — twice. The man who had groomed her and molded her into the woman she was today.

For the first time in her life, though, she realized that’s all she knew of him — surface-level facts, the things he’d allowed her to know. It was the man behind the mask that she hadn’t known until earlier that day. She’d been fooled just like the rest of Russia.

“What do you think, Al?”

She snapped out of her stream of consciousness and nodded her head again. “I hear what you’re saying, Father, but to be honest, I have some concerns.”

“Oh, what are they?”

She pulled a data pad out of her purse and passed it to him, holding her breath until he placed his fingers on it. “I’m worried about the representation of the lower class in Dhaka City. The way you plan to divide their neighborhoods into separate districts will almost totally eliminate their say in elections.”

Fyodor flipped through the information on the screen, pretending to analyze it thoroughly. “Alexeev, these people can’t contribute anything useful to society, so why should their voices matter? If we’re lucky, they’ll be weeded out of the country within the next few years, and we won’t have to worry about them anyway.” He passed the data pad back to her.

“I think they should have a say in their government.”

Her father seemed shocked. “What is this weakness I see? To feel so much attachment towards those beneath you...I raised you better than that.”

His words cut like a knife, but she knew it wasn’t her father talking. That man had been a figment of her imagination, an idea he’d constructed to shape her into something he’d be able to use to enforce his will upon the rest of the world — a tool for his own political gain. She had never meant a thing to him.

Little did he know the sword he’d crafted was now turned against him, pointing right at his chest.

She pressed a button on her data pad before sliding it back into her purse. “You’re probably right, Father. I don’t think we’ll have to worry about these plans much longer. They should work fine as they are.”

He smiled broadly at her. “There’s my girl! I’m glad you agree. Now, what do you want to —”

Her comm started ringing. She looked down to see who was calling, even though she already knew who it was. “Sorry, I have to take this.” She answered the call. “Yes. Mm-hmm. No, I understand. I’ll be right there.”

She looked back at her father. “I’m so sorry, but there’s a problem that I have to go deal with. I hate to ask, but can I take a raincheck on dinner?”

Fyodor actually looked disappointed at this turn of events. “Of course, Al. I know you’re a busy woman. I’ll begin preparations for the redistricting process tomorrow.”

“Sounds good.” She gathered her things and rose, shaking his hand as custom required. She took another look into the eyes of the man she had once loved so much, and she felt nothing there. “Goodbye, Father.”

As soon as she had turned her back to him, she felt herself begin to cry. And she allowed it to happen for the first time in years.

“Breaking news out of Russia late this evening! Nearly eighteen months after Fyodor Vasiliev’s removal from office for war crimes, his daughter Alexeev Vasiliev has been elected as the nation’s eighth president!”

Cheers erupted in the room in which Alexeev and her team had been watching the votes roll in. All the months of hard work had paid off. She had managed to earn the nation’s confidence all on her own, without anyone meddling in the election for her. She had done the right thing, and they trusted her.

She looked at the picture of Borya that was hanging behind her desk.

*This one’s for you, Uncle.*

She turned back to gaze at the rest of the people in the room with her, people now once again looking at her in their hour of need. She wouldn’t let them down. It was time to undo her father’s mistakes.

It was time to make things right.

Romeo and Juliet: A Social Media Retelling  
By Tiana Young

## Romeo and Juliet: A Social Media Retelling

For my senior capstone project I have constructed a social media retelling of the Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet*. Through this I wanted to express the way the story would be told if the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* would have the modern day technology access that people have today. I provided the characters with the ability to text, Snapchat, Facebook, Tweet and ask questions on Yahoo Answers.

I made this project with the idea of my education major in mind. This is due to the fact that *Romeo and Juliet* is something that I will probably be teaching my future students. With this project I took the play out of its Shakespearean English and after making the language modernized, it can now be used as a scaffold to assist my future students in the reading of this play. With this in mind my audience is my future students so in the hopes of drawing out interest in the content, I drew out the absurdity and humor of the story *Romeo and Juliet* by taking away the romanticized aspect and revealing the true story underneath.

Part of doing this was me exposing how ridiculous the ages of the play are. In the play Juliet is thirteen years old as the nurse makes a point of stating she has not yet become fourteen. And while it is never specifically stated what age Romeo is, it is assumed that he is slightly older than Juliet, usually placed at fifteen or sixteen. On the other side, Count Paris, the man set to marry Juliet, is much older, possibly no younger than twenty five. This is one of the things I really wanted to play out as I made the first encounter between Paris and Juliet especially uncomfortable as I believe it should be.

Another way in which I exposed the ridiculous aspect of this play was by focusing very deeply on the time frame in which everything takes place. In my project I envisioned making

sure that my students understand that the whole play takes place in only five short days so while analyzing the story I made sure to note all areas in which the time was mentioned. Areas such as these helped me to make a chart in which I could almost precisely pinpoint all of the time frames in which things were happening. While having my students read the play I hope to point this out to them as well as the day of the week is usually very obvious but there are many subtle hints to the time of day, such as when Juliet sends the nurse to find Romeo, Juliet stated that "The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse. In half an hour she promised to return" (Shakespeare). When the nurse finally does stumble upon Romeo and Mercutio, Mercutio stated "the dial is now upon the prick of noon" (Shakespeare) showing that it was then noon and it took the nurse three hours to find Romeo.

To truly take all of the elements out of the story I went line by line and translated the play. I then went through again and analyzed each section closely to decide what was essential to the storyline and what was not. That being said I did decide to exclude the prologues, as they just outlined what would be told later and other bantering between the servants as this did not lend itself to the major storyline. I adapted the characters to make their personalities shine through more throughout the retelling. With this I made Lord Capulet's aggression more noticeable as he is a character that gets heated very easily and always jumps to being very aggressive and threatening towards whatever character he is talking to. I also decided to make the Nurse more foolish and scatterbrained but also more humorous. As these changes allow people to better understand them as characters.

Finally, there is the most important aspect of my project, the actual social media elements themselves. As I mapped out the each scene of the play I started considering how I would decide

what social media would go where. I then decided to do this by process of elimination by imagining each scene in each social media. I then ruled them out by what I could not do with that social media, for example, I couldn't make conversation on a snapchat as it is just a picture. So then after eliminating what just would not work, I began to think of how each one would add an advantage to the scene, such as I could portray a conversation on Facebook but it would then be public and all of the interactions between Romeo and Juliet are supposed to be private. This then usually left me to one or two different options and it then came down to which format the information would look the best in. Through this project I hope to portray *Romeo and Juliet* in a way that is both new and interesting and hope that many people can take something more away from the story with this.



## Juliet Capulet

[Wall](#)
[Info](#)
[Photos](#)
[Boxes](#)

### Basic Information

**Hometown:** Verona, Italy

**Sex:** Female

**Birthday:** July 31, 1584

**Age:** 13

**Relationship Status:** It's Complicated

**House:** Capulet

[View photos of Juliet \(371\)](#)

[Send Juliet a message](#)

[Poke message](#)

### Information

**Hometown:**

Verona, Italy

**Birthday:**

July 31, 1584

**Age:**

13

**House**

Capulet

### Personal Information

**Activities:** Spending time with Nurse

**Interests:** Sitting in my room reading, Twitter

**Favorite Movies:** Twilight, A Walk to Remember, Dear John

**Bio:** Life's what you make it - Demi Lovato

### Contact Information

**Address:** The House of Capulet

**Contact Person:** Nurse

### Friends



Lady  
Capulet



Lord  
Capulet



Friar  
Laurence



Nurse



Paris



Tybalt



## Romeo Montague

[Wall](#)
[Info](#)
[Photos](#)
[Boxes](#)

### Basic Information

**Hometown:** Verona, Italy

**Sex:** Male

**Birthday:** March 12, 1582

**Age:** 15

**Relationship Status:** Madly In Love

**House:** Montague

[View photos of Romeo \(192\)](#)

[Send Romeo a message](#)

[Poke message](#)

### Information

**Hometown:**

Verona, Italy

**Birthday:**

March 12, 1582

**Age:**

15

**House**

Montague

### Friends



Lady  
Montague



Friar  
Lawrence



Nurse



Mercutio



Benvolio

### Personal Information

**Activities:** Hanging with my friends, Going to Parties

**Interests:** Girls

**Favorite Books:** Romance Poems

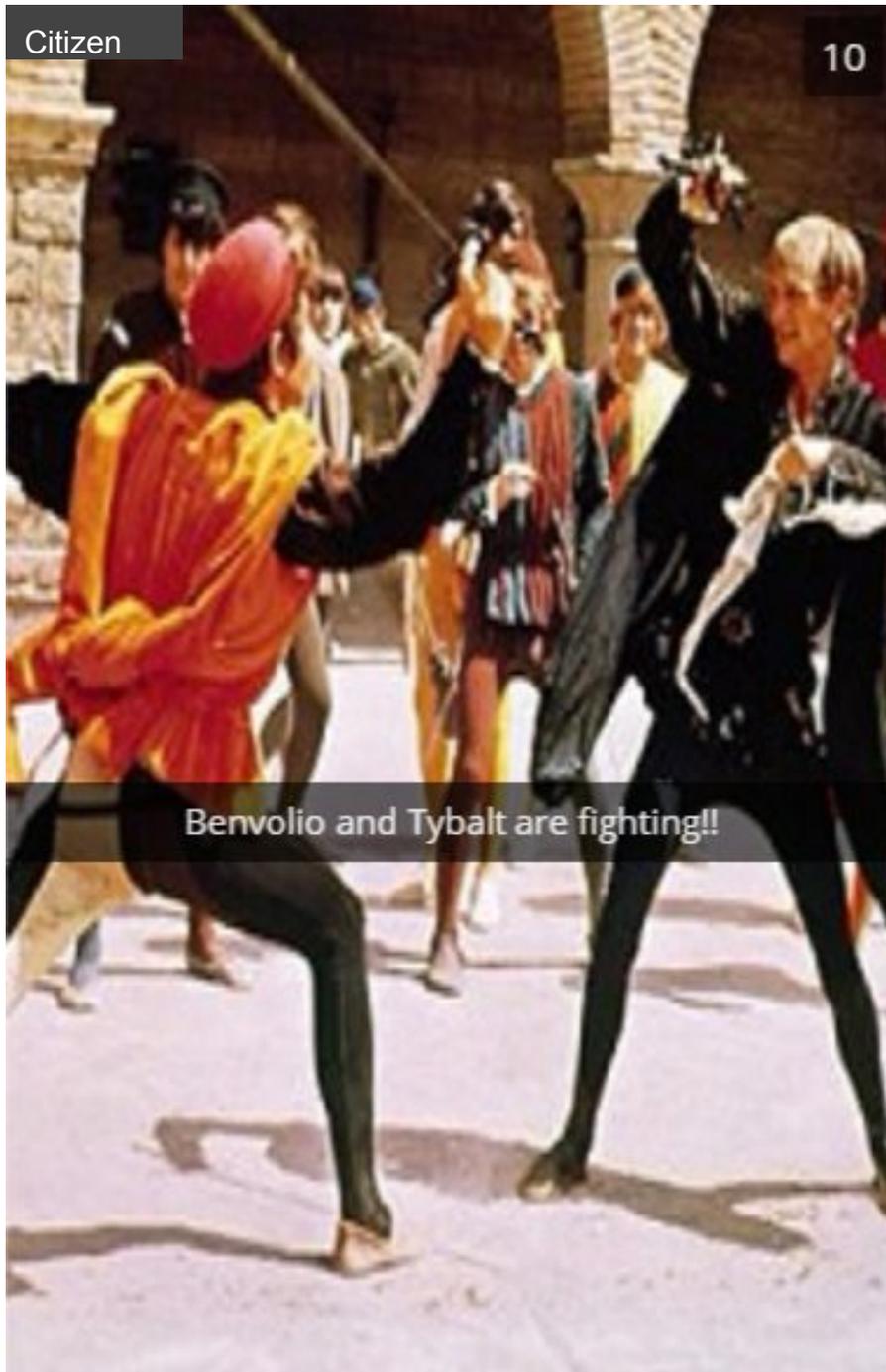
**Favorite Movies:** Pass, Movies are too mainstream

**Bio:** Madly in love with the girl of my dreams. Montague till I die.

### Contact Information

**Address:** The House of Montague

**Contact Person:** Friar Lawrence



Benvolio and Tybalt are fighting!!



**Prince Escalus**

@PrinceOfTheCastle



I AM SO DONE WITH THE FIGHTING!  
THIS IS THE THIRD TIME THIS HAS  
HAPPENED! ONE MORE TIME AND I  
WILL SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH!

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

8:00am Sunday - Embed this Tweet

Messages

Montague

Edit

Sunday, 8:40am

Have you seen our son?

Lady Montague

No I can't say that I have.  
I'm just happy he wasn't in  
that terrible fight in the  
street earlier.

Montague

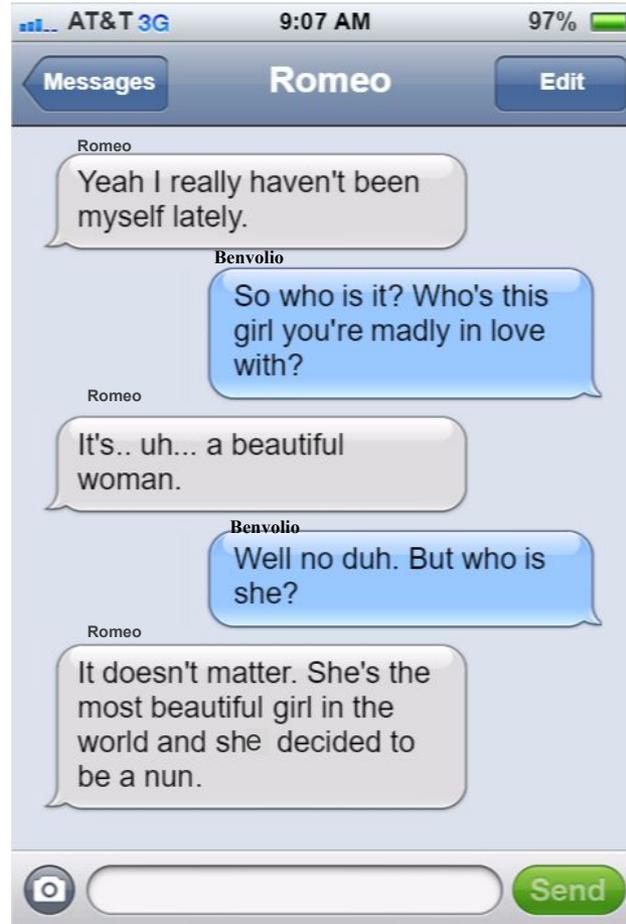
Yeah. He's just been so  
depressed lately. All he  
does is lock himself in his  
room, he doesn't even  
hang out with friends.

Montague

I know, I'll have Benvolio  
find out whats wrong and  
report back to me.



Send



Messages

Paris

Edit

So have you thought about my request? Can I marry your daughter?

Lord Capulet

Uhh I dunno Paris. She is still very young. I think we might wait a little bit to let her mature.

Paris

Oh come on now 13 isn't too young. Why she's almost 14 right? She's practically an old maid by now.

Lord Capulet

Look I'm having a party tonight. If you come and flirt with her and she's into you, well maybe I'll consider it.



Send



## Juliet Capulet

[Wall](#)
[Info](#)
[Photos](#)
[Messages](#)

Write something...

[View photos of Juliet \(371\)](#)

[Send Juliet a message](#)

[Poke message](#)

### Information

**Hometown:**  
Verona, Italy  
**Birthday:**  
July 31, 1584  
**Age:**  
13  
**House:**  
Capulet



### Juliet Capulet

Hey everyone. The House of Capulet is throwing a party tonight.

Here are the people on the guest list:

Signor Martino and his wife and daughters,  
Count Anselme and his beautiful sisters,  
Vitruvio's widow,

Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces,  
Mercutio and his brother Valentine,

Uncle Capulet and his wife and daughters,  
My cousins Rosaline and Livia,

Signor Valentio and my cousin Tybalt,  
Lucio and the lively Helena

And pretty much anyone else who isn't a Montague.

We are going to have a great feast and drink lots of wine and be merry.

### Friends



Lady  
Capulet



Lord  
Capulet



Friar  
Laurence



Nurse



Paris



Tybalt

Juliet Capulet

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

**Juliet Capulet**

Hey everyone. The House of Capulet is throwing a party tonight.

Here are the people on the guest list:

Signor Martino and his wife and daughters,

Count Anselme and his beautiful sisters,

Vitruvio's widow,

Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces,

Mercutio and his brother Valentine,

Uncle Capulet and his wife and daughters,

My cousins Rosaline and Livia,

Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt,

Lucio and the lively Helena

And pretty much anyone else who isn't a Montague.

We are going to have a great feast and drink lots of wine and be merry.

Romeo did you see this!? Capulet Party!!!

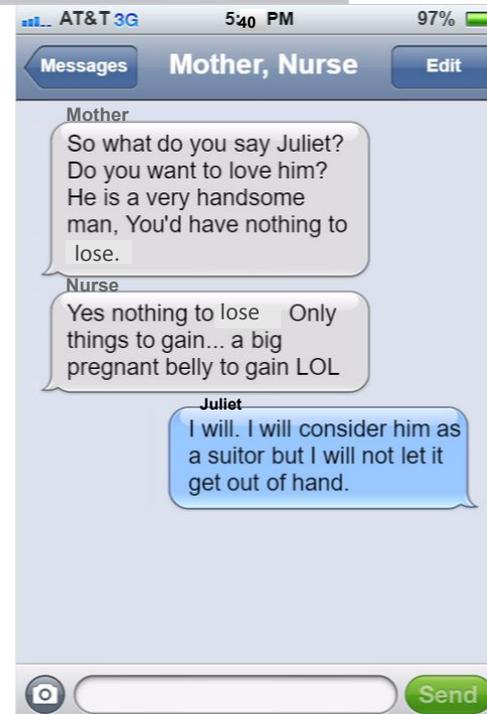
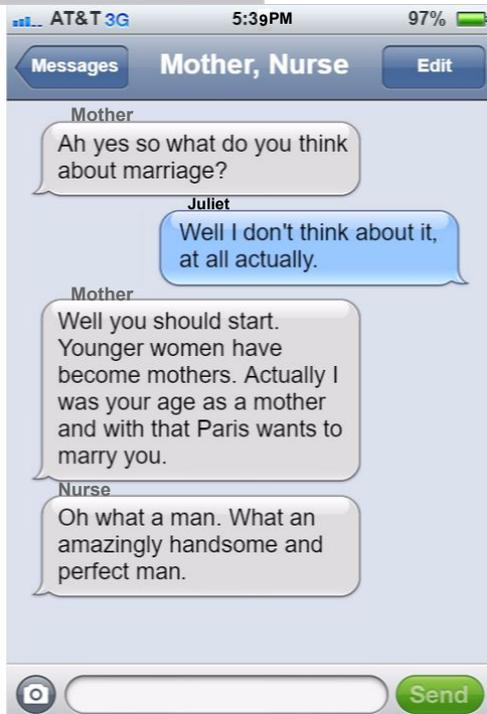
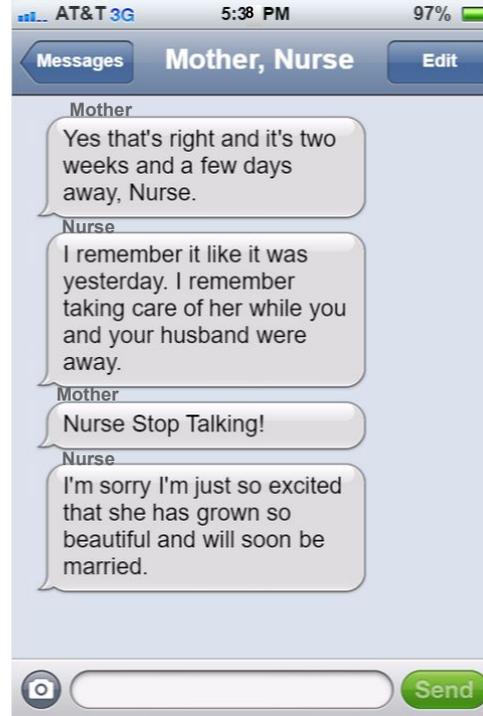
Romeo  
I am not going to that party!

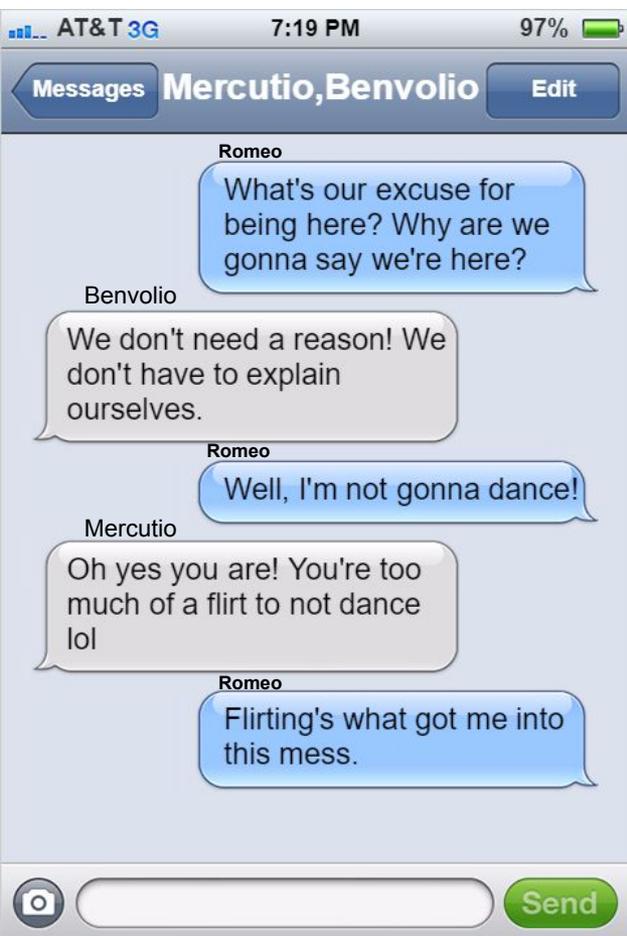
Benvolio  
Oh come on you can see how ugly Rosaline is in comparison to every other girl in Verona. Everyone will be there.

Romeo  
I would never think she was ugly!

Benvolio  
You haven't compared her to anyone though.

Romeo  
Listen I will go with you but only to see her because she is the love of my life.



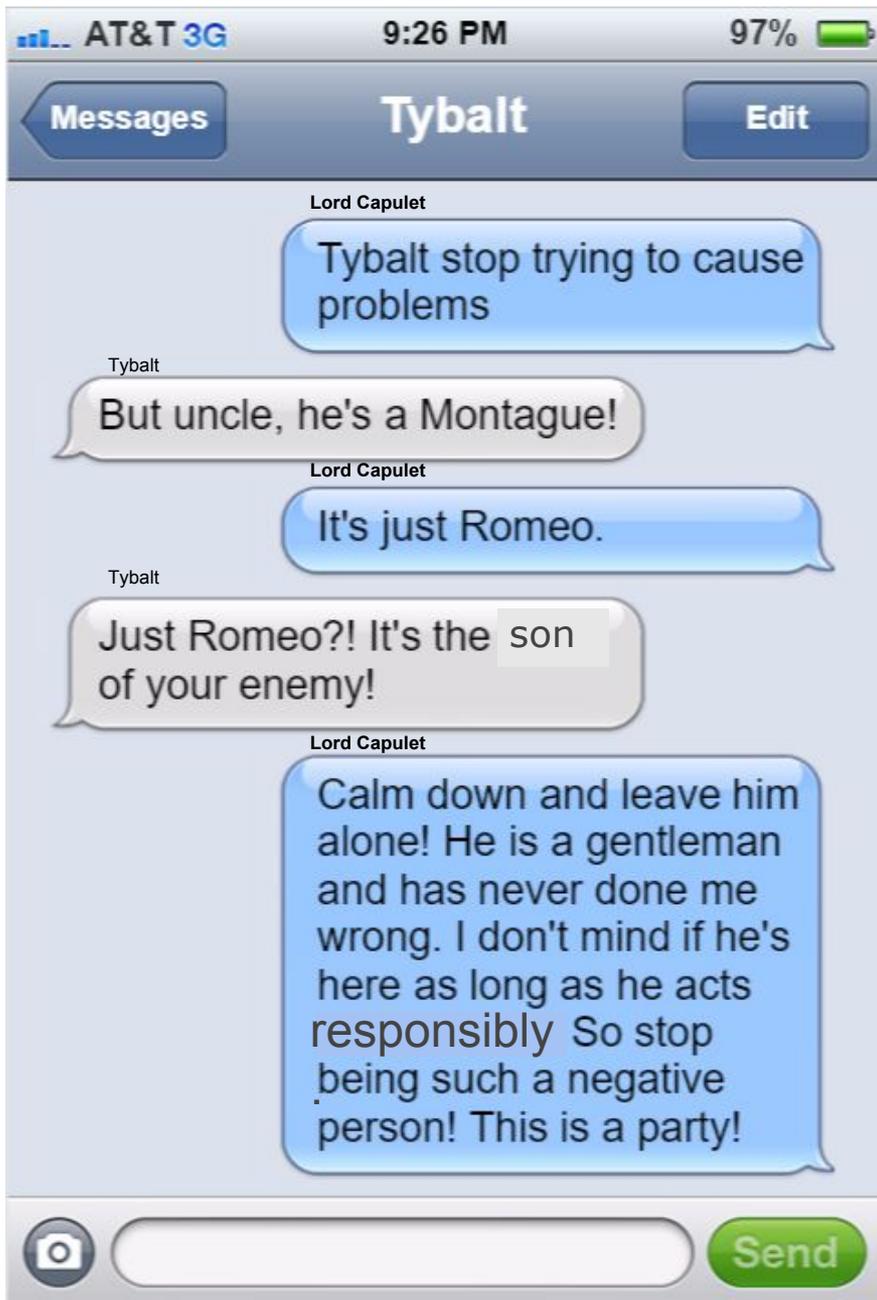




Wow this is the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.



Uncle this boy is a Montague!



Messages

Juliet

Edit

Juliet

It's almost like by holding hands, our hands are kissing.

Romeo

Hmm oh they are, are they?

Juliet

Yeah LOL

Romeo

I wonder if our lips could do what our hands do? ;)

Juliet

Wouldn't that be a sin?

Romeo

But if I kissed you I could take your sin couldn't I?



Send

Messages

Juliet

Edit

Juliet

Then wouldn't I also have your sin then?

Romeo

Well if you have my sin then I'll have to take it back from you ;)



Send



**Romeo**

@LoverBoy



 Follow

I just saw the most beautiful girl I've ever met. I just wish I knew who she was.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

11:43 PM Sunday - Embed this Tweet



**Nurse**

@CapuletCaregiver



 Follow

@LoverBoy that girl you're talking about is the lovely Juliet. Daughter of Lord Capulet.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

11:49 PM Sunday - Embed this Tweet



**Juliet**

@JoyfulJuliet



 Follow

I just danced with the most amazing boy. If only I knew who he was. I hope he's not married hehe :)

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

11:52 PM Sunday · Embed this Tweet



**Nurse**

@CapuletCaregiver



 Follow

@JoyfulJuliet I asked for you hun. He is Romeo. Son to Lord Montague, your family's mortal enemy.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

11:57 PM Sunday · Embed this Tweet

Messages

Romeo, Mercutio

Edit

Benvolio

Hey Romeo, where'd you go?

Mercutio

He probably went to bed.

Benvolio

He ran this way and jumped that fence.

Mercutio

Romeo, I bet you'd respond if I was Rosaline.

Benvolio

Dude! You're gonna make him mad!

Mercutio

Oh come on! It's not like I said Rosaline was gonna be with another guy.



Send

Messages

Romeo, Mercutio

Edit

Benvolio

He's probably just hiding.

Mercutio

You know what, good night Romeo. I'm going home to my bed.

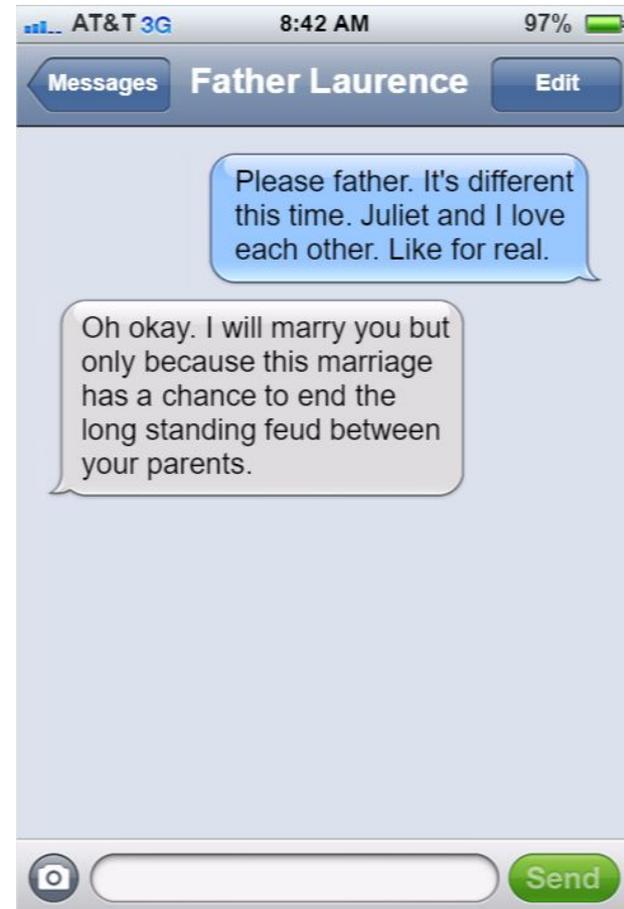
Benvolio

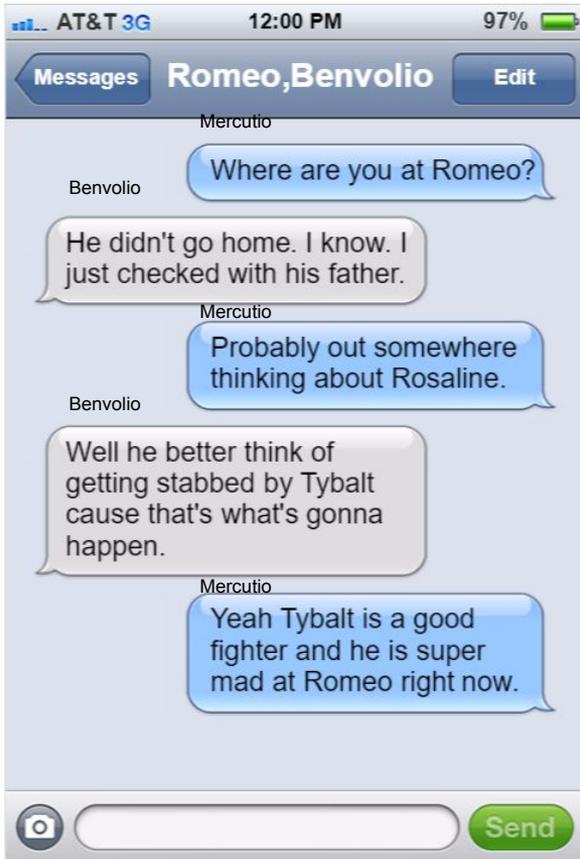
Yeah let's go. If he doesn't want to be found then we shouldn't be looking for him



Send









# Nurse

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

View photos of Nurse (7)

Send Juliet a message

Poke message

### Information

Hometown:: Verona, Italy  
Birthday: January 14, 1563  
Age: 43  
House: Capulet

### Friends



Lady Capulet Lord Capulet Friar Laurence



Juliet Paris Tybalt



**Nurse**

Hello everyone I'm looking for a boy named Romeo, does anyone know where he could be?

Like · Comment · 12:49 PM Monday · 🌐

👍 4 people like this.



**Mercutio**

I could be him if that's what you want me to be ;)



**Nurse**

How dare you speak to me like that



**Romeo**

I am Romeo, however I wouldn't say i'm a boy



**Nurse**

Okay well I need to talk with you so please meet up with me



**Mercutio**

Okay well bye then old lady

Messages

Nurse

Edit

Juliet

Where are you? It's been hours!

WHERE ARE YOU!?

Nurse

I'm just so tired.

OMG! Tell me what you know! What did he say?

Let me tell you young lady, you definitely picked the wrong guy. That Romeo is no good but I guess that's your decision.



Send

Messages

Nurse

Edit

What did he say about our wedding?

I have such a bad headache. I swear I think I'm falling apart.

WHAT DID ROMEO SAY!?

Can you go out today?

We have to go to Friar Laurence's and get you ready for your wedding silly girl! You must hurry! What are you waiting for.



Send

Messages

Romeo, Juliet

Edit

Romeo

Hello Father

Juliet

Thank you so much for this father!

Romeo

Juliet I'm so happy. We will have the greatest marriage like ever!

Juliet

I can't even express how happy I am!

Father Laurence

Well then come on. Lets get this wedding started. And I definitely don't want you two to have any time alone before you're officially married.



Send



**Tybalt**

@CaptivatingCapulet



 Follow

I won't let this go! I can't! And if my uncle isn't going to take care of this situation I have to! For the family! Romeo will pay!

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

3:47 PM Monday - Embed this Tweet



**Mercutio**

@SavvySwordsMan

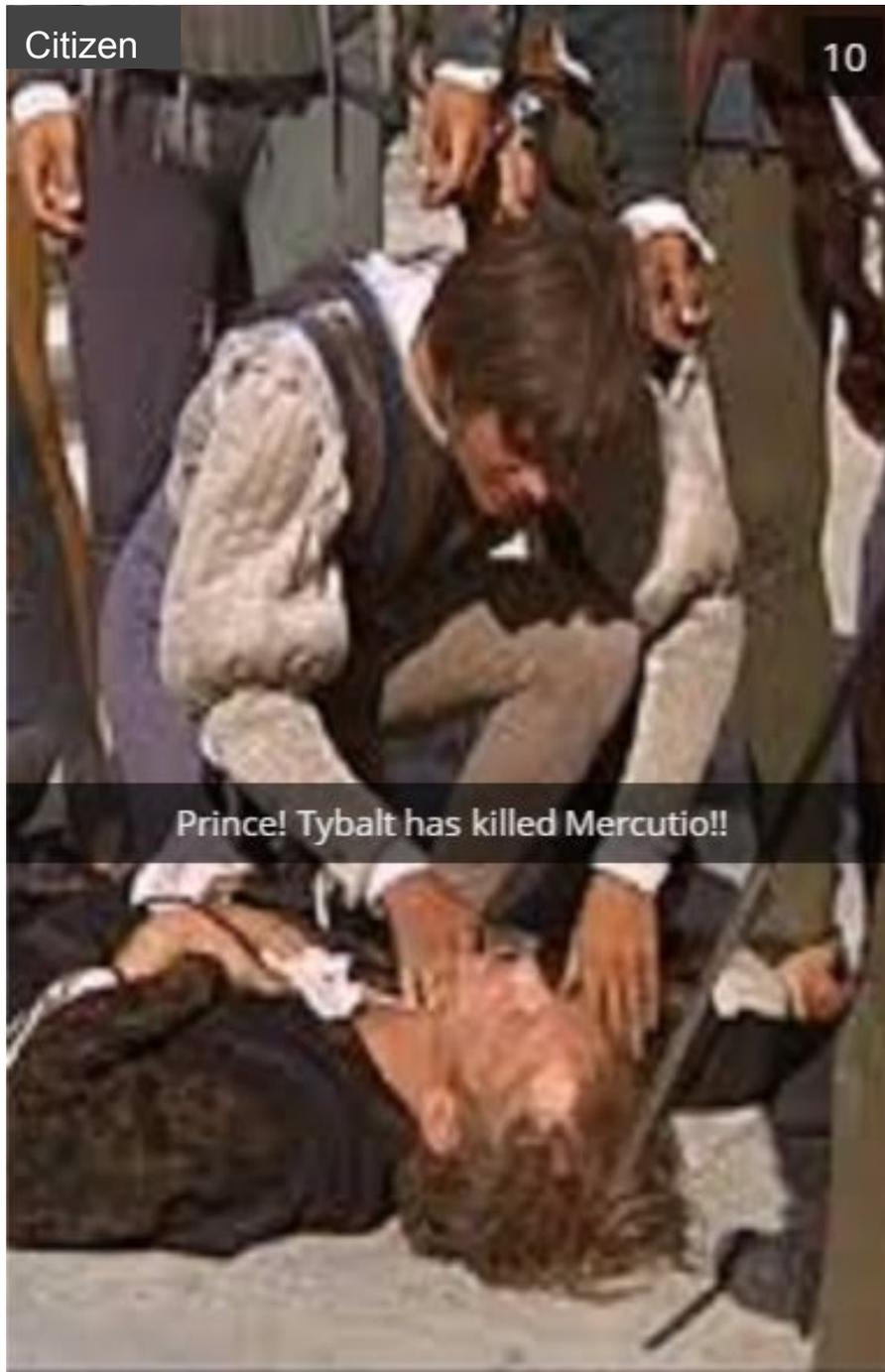


 Follow

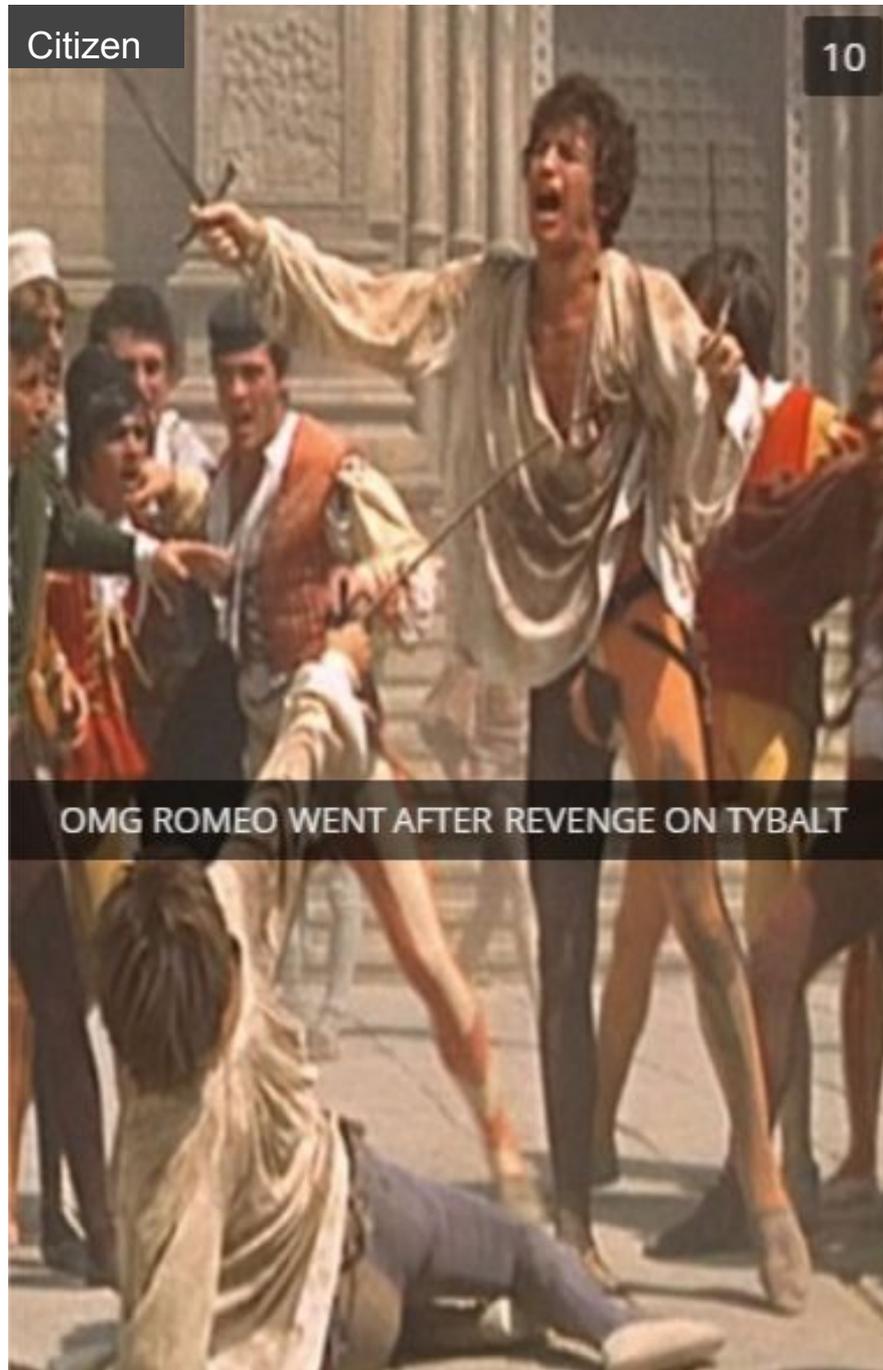
Over my dead body dude! You're not touching Romeo!

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

3:49 PM Monday - Embed this Tweet



Prince! Tybalt has killed Mercutio!!



OMG ROMEO WENT AFTER REVENGE ON TYBALT



**Prince Escalus**  
@PrinceOfTheCastle



 Follow

I TOLD YOU ALL THE FIGHTING MUST STOP! NOW YOU HAVE KILLED ONE OF MY RELATIVES! THIS WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED! BECAUSE ROMEO IS THE ONLY CONSPIRATOR STILL ALIVE HE IS HERE BY BANNED FROM VERONA!

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

3:56 PM Monday - Embed this Tweet



**Juliet**

@JoyfulJuliet

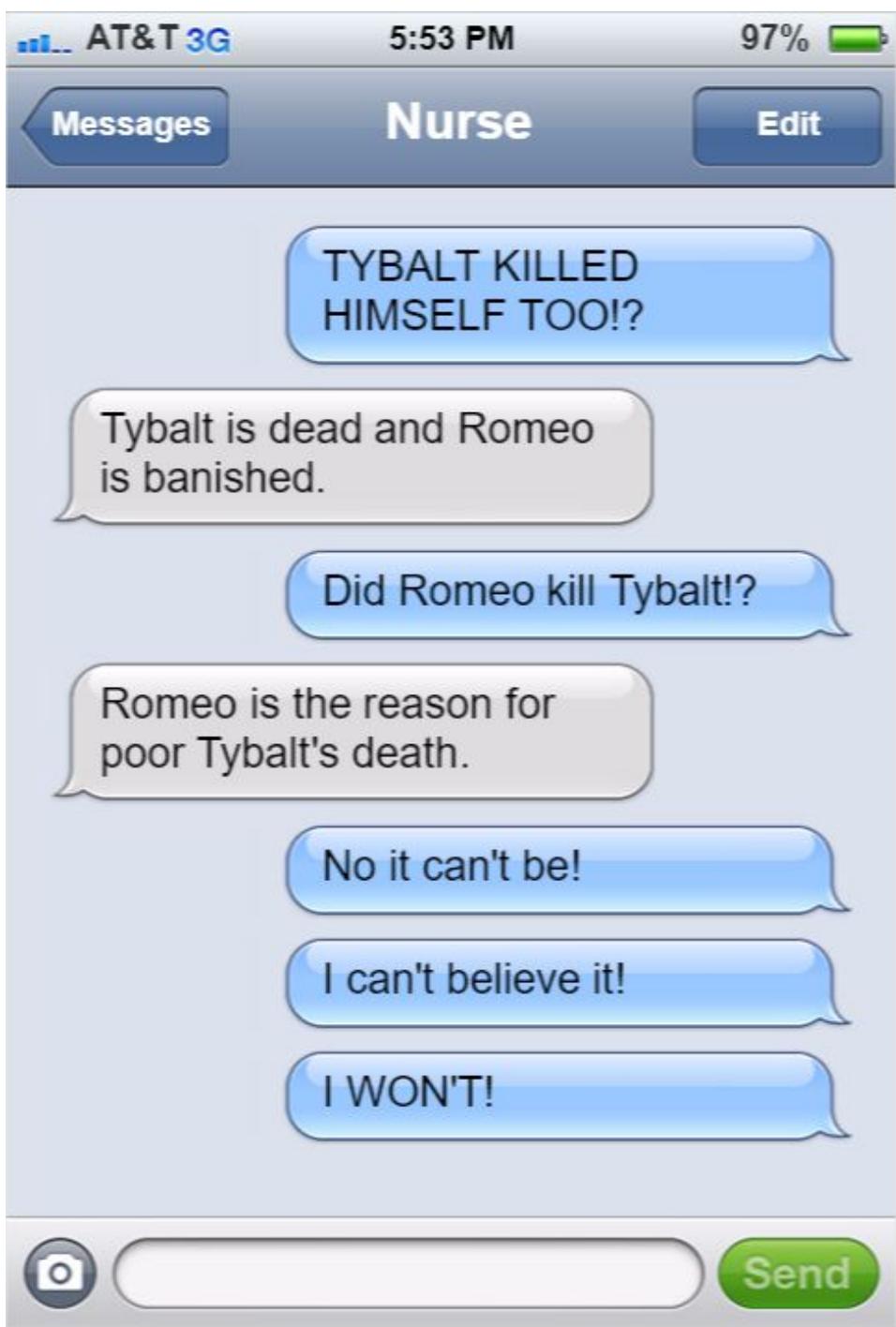
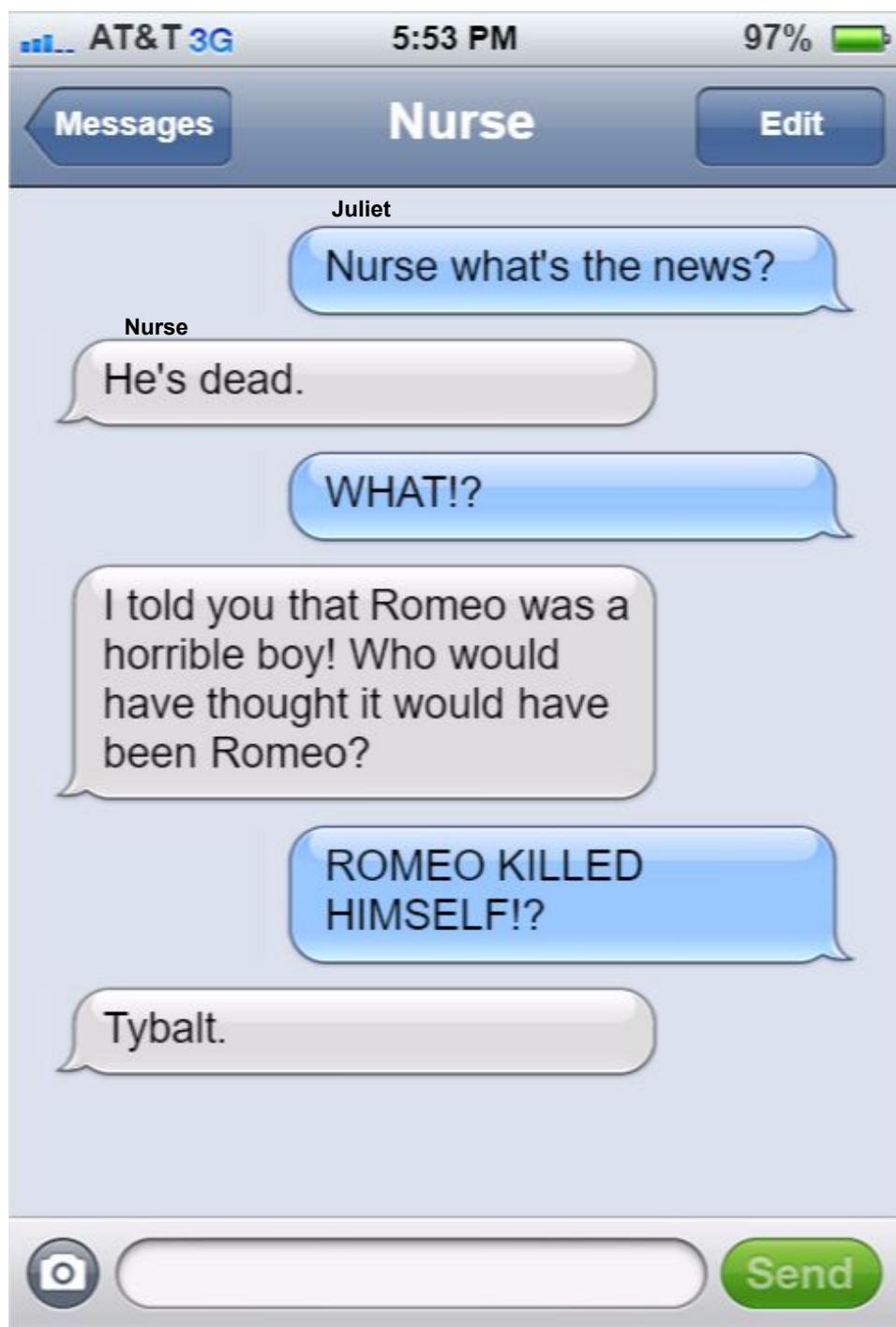


 Follow

I can't wait. Oh I just can't wait. I wish that it would be night already! So much has changed and I feel like a different person. I feel almost like I'm not a child anymore, I can feel that I am becoming a woman.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

5:46 PM Monday - Embed this Tweet





**Juliet**

@JoyfulJuliet

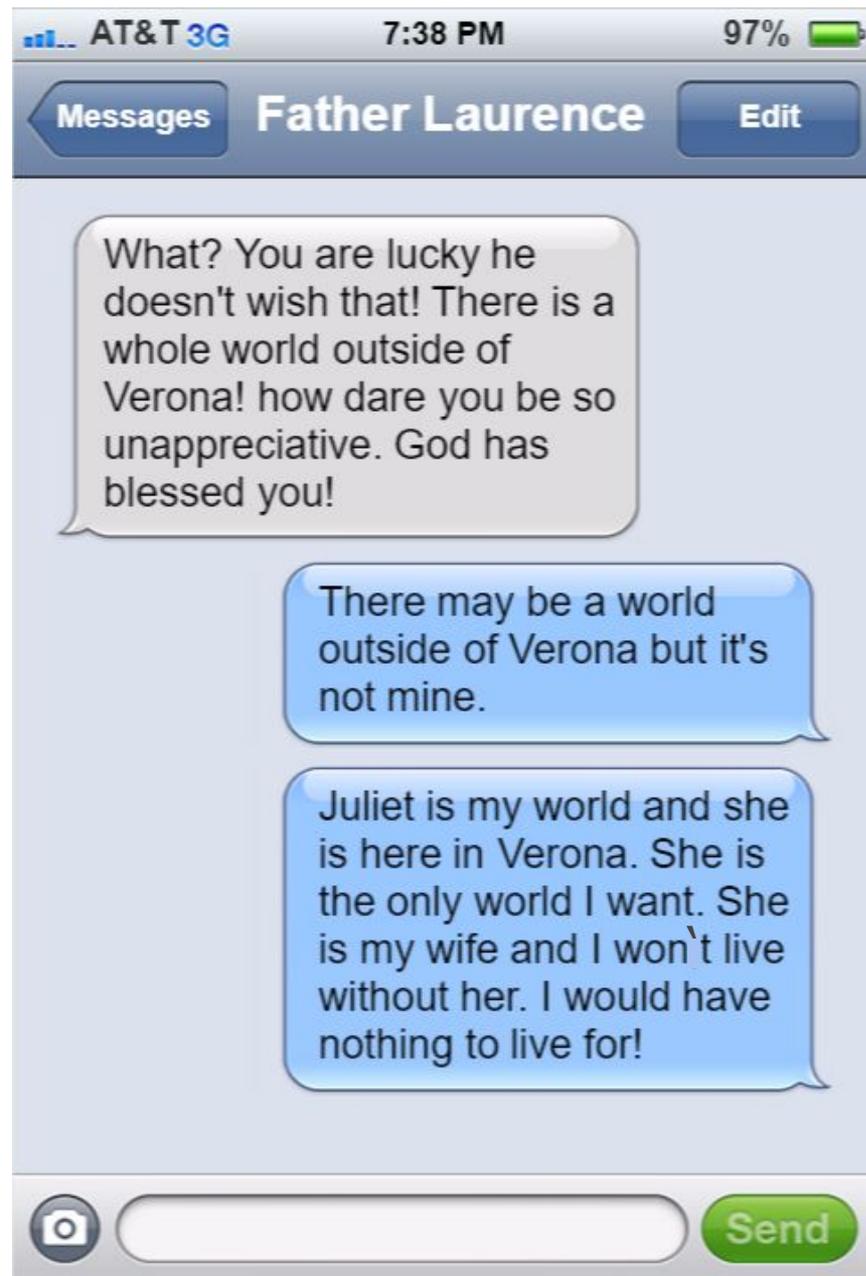
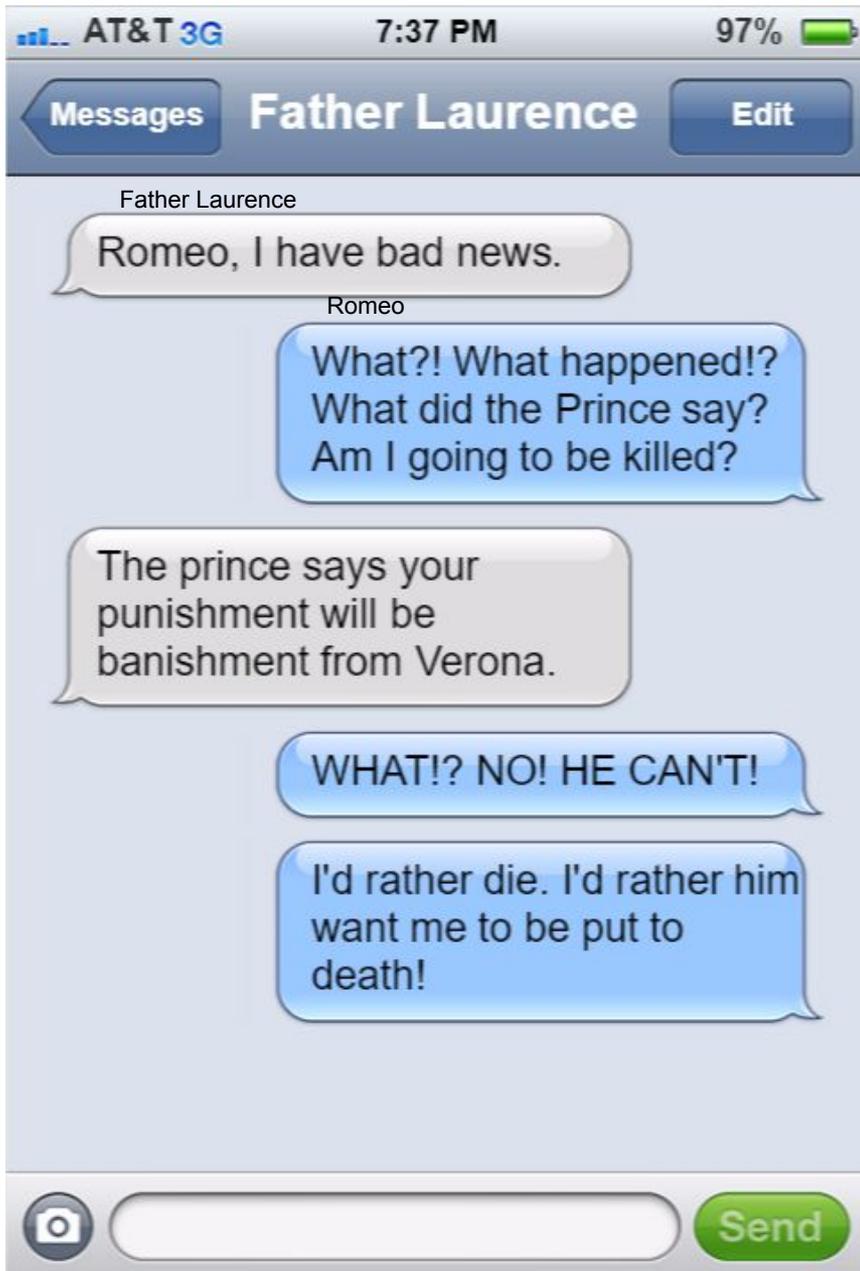


 Follow

How can someone be so perfect but so evil at the same time? Why does everything bad have to happen to me. Just when I am happy something happens to ruin it. I won't cry though! I would rather just pretend this never happened.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

6:09 PM Monday · Embed this Tweet





Lord Capulet

Paris I'm really sorry to say I haven't had time to convince Juliet to marry you. You see her cousin Tybalt died and she's been mourning ever since.

Paris

Yes you're right. This is quite a bad time for romance. Please give my regards to your daughter. I wish there was something more I could do to ease her pain.

WAIT! I have a great idea!

I believe my daughter will do whatever I say so tonight I will have my wife go up and tell her that she will be married to you on Thursday!

We will have an amazing wedding not too big but just something small and fun. Does that sound good to you?

Ah I'm so happy. I'm so excited I wish Thursday was tomorrow! I can't wait to meet my young bride to be.

Messages

Romeo

Edit

Juliet

I wish the night never ended. I had the most amazing night with you.

Romeo

But it did so I gotta go.. I like now.

I wish you would stay.

If I stay I'd get captured. They would kill me.

But I mean maybe I could stay a little longer.

No you have to go before everyone wakes up. Goodbye my husband.



Send



# Juliet Capulet

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

View photos of Juliet (371)

Send Juliet a message

Poke message

### Information

Hometown:  
Verona, Italy  
Birthday:  
July 31, 1584  
Age:  
13  
House:  
Capulet

### Friends



Lady Capulet



Lord Capulet



Friar Laurence



Nurse



Paris



Tybalt



## Juliet Capulet

Is 🐼 feeling sad



### Lady Capulet

I really wish you would stop being so sad. Your father has prepared a big surprise to cheer you up. On Thursday you will be married to the wonderful Count Paris!



### Juliet Capulet

I cannot! I mean I don't know him! He never even came to court me! He's a complete stranger.



### Lord Capulet

You ungrateful little child! You should be happy to marry such a noble man. You will marry Count Paris or you will not live in my house! You won't be my daughter anymore. And don't even reply. I don't want to hear your voice.



### Juliet Capulet

Please father don't do this to me! Please don't make me marry him and please don't throw me out.

Messages

Nurse

Edit

Juliet

Nurse what am I supposed to do!? I can't marry Paris, I am already married to Romeo! Please, please help me!

Nurse

Why not just marry Paris? Romeo is banished, you won't have to worry about him. I mean it's not like he's going to be here so just marry Paris. He's such an amazing man.

WHAT!?



Send

Messages

Nurse

Edit

You're kidding right?

No. It'll be fine. No one will ever know. Just marry Paris.

You know what... Please go tell my mother that I am going to go to Father Laurence's. I need to pray on this and confess my sins.

Oh of course! What a wonderful idea!



Send

Messages

Paris

Edit

Paris

Well hello there my little wife.

Juliet

Umm I'm not your wife until after I'm married off.

Hmm well your dreams will come true soon enough young love. Thursday will come soon.

Yeah we'll see what happens.

Have you come to confess all your sins away?

Messages

Paris

Edit

If I answered that wouldn't I be confessing to you?

Well don't forget to confess to him how much you love me.

Yes I'm sure I'll confess exactly how I feel about you to him. Now if you don't mind, I must talk to Father Laurence.

Of course. I can't wait to wake you early on Thursday, and everyday for the rest of our lives ;)

Juliet

Father! How can I fix this!? I can't let this happen! Father Please! You have to help me! I can't live like this. I won't ! I'll kill myself before I marry someone other than Romeo. Help me please!

Father Laurence

Well I have an idea but it is a bit crazy.

Please. I will do anything! Anything!

Agree to marry Paris and then go to bed alone. Don't let the nurse in your room. Then go to bed and drink this potion. You will go to sleep and you will stop breathing but you won't be dead. You'll be like this for forty two hours and then you'll wake up and me and Romeo will be there to dig up your grave and the both of you can run away from Verona.

I'll do it! I'll do anything!

Good. Then I'll text Romeo and let him know.



# Juliet Capulet

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

[View photos of Juliet \(371\)](#)

[Send Juliet a message](#)

[Poke message](#)

### Information

Hometown:  
Verona, Italy  
Birthday:  
July 31, 1584  
Age:  
13  
House:  
Capulet

### Friends



Lady Capulet



Lord Capulet



Friar Laurence



Nurse



Paris



Tybalt



### Juliet Capulet

I would like to say I am extremely sorry to my father. I was extremely disobedient



### Lord Capulet

I'm so glad you've finally come to your senses. You must meet your soon to be husband!



### Juliet Capulet

Oh I've already met him father! I met him at Father Laurence's so there's no need for that



### Lord Capulet

Good! Then we must get everything in order for your wedding!



Juliet...  
Montague

## Undecided Question

[Show me another »](#)

### Just a hypothetical question.

So if I hypothetically take a potion that is supposed to fake kill me what will happen?

10:46 PM Tuesday

[Report Abuse](#)

[Answer Question](#)



Anonomous

## Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

I mean it would probably just kill you? I dunno? Take it and see what happens LOL

19 hours ago - 1 week left to answer.

[Report Abuse](#)

 **6%** 14 Votes

 2 people rated this as good

4  Interesting! ▾

 Email

 Save ▾



Juliet...  
Montague

Open Question

Show me another »

## Just another hypothetical question.

What happens if you are alive and you get burried?

10:48 PM Tuesday

Report Abuse

Answer Question



Anonomous

Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

Hmm, well you would probably just run out of air and suffocate to death. Ya know, if you don't go crazy from being in that dark and confined space first, so I wouldn't reccomend it.

19 hours ago - 1 week left to answer.

Report Abuse

22% 9 Votes

6 people rated this as good



### Nurse

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

View photos of Nurse (7)

Send Juliet a message

Poke message

#### Information

Hometown:: Verona, Italy  
Birthday: January 14, 1563  
Age: 43  
House: Capulet

#### Friends



Lady Capulet



Lord Capulet



Friar Laurence



Juliet



Paris



Tybalt



### Nurse

Juliet is dead! Poor Juliet



### Lady Capulet

My baby! My poor child! My reason for living! She's gone! What am I going to do with myself?



### Lord Capulet

My only child! Gone. Taken from me. She is cold, she has no heart beat. She's gone!



### Paris

Oh you're kidding! I've waited so long for my bride only for her to be taken on the morning of our wedding day!?



### Friar Laurence

You all stop it! All this moping is not going to bring her back from the dead! She is in heaven now! Be happy that she was here, not that she's gone!

Messages **Balthasar** Edit

I have bad news for you...

Romeo

Is it about Juliet!? What's wrong? Is she sick or something?

Well no she's not sick. She died. She was buried in the Capulet tomb. I'm so sorry for your loss.

NO! IT CAN'T BE! I must go to Verona!

Please don't do anything irrational.

Leave me alone! I have things to do!



Romeo

## Open Question

[Show me another »](#)

### Looking for some stuff.

Does anyone know where someone could acquire some poison that would kill them?

[Report Abuse](#)

3:36 PM Thursday

[Answer Question](#)



ApothecaryGary

## Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

I think I know where you can aquire the stuff you're looking for... for the right price.

[Report Abuse](#)

19 hours ago - 1 week left to answer.

0% 0 Votes

[0 people rated this as good](#)

Messages

Romeo

Edit

Father Laurence

Romeo! I came up with the greatest plan! I gave Juliet a potion and it will cause her to seem dead but she won't be. So they they will bury her and then we will go dig her up. Then you two can start a life of your own outside of Verona! It's a fool proof plan!

96099 Error: Number not in service. Please contact your service provider and try your extension again.

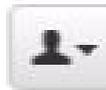


Send



**Paris**

@CountParisToYou



The villain Romeo is trying to break into the Capulet Morgue! He is trying to vandalize the graves! I Must Stop Him!

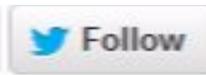
 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

12:21 AM Friday - Embed this Tweet



**Romeo**

@LoverBoy



@CountParisToYou I'm not trying to fight you and I'm not vandalizing anything. Please just leave me be to do what I need to do!

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

12:22 AM Friday - Embed this Tweet



Romeo has killed Paris and is sneaking into the Capulet Morgue!!! Someone stop him!



Romeo

@LoverBoy



My poor wife is dead and even dead she is the most beautiful girl I've ever seen. No one can make me leave her! I will die here by her side. And I will die here happily and no one can stop me.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

2:17 AM Friday · Embed this Tweet



**Juliet**

@JoyfulJuliet



MY HUSBAND! My husband is dead. Dead before I even got to say goodbye. I won't let it be this way! I will die here with him so I'll never have to say goodbye.

 Reply  Retweet  Favorite  More

2:47 AM Friday - Embed this Tweet



# Prince Escalus

Wall

Info

Photos

Messages

Write something...

Share

View photos of Prince (3,271)

Send Prince a message

Poke message

### Information

Hometown:

Verona, Italy

Birthday:

July 31, 1559

Age:

39

House:

I AM THE PRINCE!

### Friends



Lady Capulet



Lord Capulet



Juliet



Romeo



Lady Montague



Montague



### Prince Escalus

Look. Look what you all have caused due to the hatred in your hearts.



### Friar Laurence

Let me explain. I married these two so they could be together and helped Juliet fake her own death when we heard of the plans to marry her to Paris. However when Romeo got here he was not aware and so he killed himself over his dead wife but then Juliet woke up to both Romeo and Paris dead and killed herself as well.



### Prince Escalus

Now this is the price you must both pay as a result of your feud. And because of this now the whole city of Verona has had to pay. There will never be a sadder day than this one.

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