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Juliet the Innocent

[*Turned away from Jury.*] Hello everyone. Excuse me while I fix my blouse and skirt. [*Smooths out dress clothing.*] My apologies for that. Anyway, as you all have more than likely heard, the Capulets and Montagues have finally put an end to their warring feud. [*Turns and faces Jury.*] This is a reason to rejoice, for the arguments, fighting, and nasty comments have all finally ceased—but as we have learned throughout this whole ordeal, no good thing comes without a price to pay. In this case, the cost was the demise of numerous souls, some more deserving of his or her fate than others. With so much tragedy spreading through both noble houses, along with the house of our very own Prince, who here is possibly to blame? [*Dramatic pause.*] A person who is living? A person who is dead? A person who was in love? A person who was full of hate? [*Looks off into crowd of bystanders.*] No matter whom it may be, we must also ask: was the outcome worth it? Well, although the peace brings a wave of relief, it still does not justify nor distract from the atrociousness of these recent deaths, and the person who is at fault [*Passionately.*] *will* pay for his or her crimes. But in order to do that, first we must point out who is *not* to blame. One person in particular immediately jumps out to me as being innocent, and it baffles me as to why anyone would think that she is possibly at fault. She was manipulated into a second marriage with Paris by her father—a marriage that she did not want, and she was already married to the love of her life, Romeo, bound by Holy Matrimony; to remarry would be

polygamy and also illegal. Furthermore, when everyone else, everyone she was counting on, failed his or her part of Friar Laurence's flawed plan, she stuck to her role, following through with taking a dangerous potion as wisely as a naïve, love-struck thirteen year-old girl possibly could. She is Juliet, and she is innocent.

Poor, fragile Juliet. [*Crosses hands over heart.*] She was manipulated into a second marriage with Paris by her father's coercive orders. Indeed, it was a marriage she so desperately did not want and to a man that she did not love. Despite the fact that Juliet expressed these feelings to Lord Capulet, he still somehow thought the marriage would abate what he thought was her grief over Tybalt. [*Rolls eyes in annoyance.*] Capulet even had the gall to respond to Juliet's distaste of the idea by saying, "Hang thee, young baggage! Disobedient wretch! / I tell thee what: get thee to Church o'Thursday, / or never after look me in the face. / Speak not. Reply not. Do not answer me" (3.5.166-169). No matter what his intentions originally were, he only made things worse for Juliet. A caring father who truly wanted what was best for his daughter would *not* threaten her to do what her virtues forbade, and *would not* take things a step further by saying that if she did not comply, he would kick her out and disown her! In fact, for a man who claims to be oh so concerned about his daughter's well-being, Capulet seems awfully vain and more concerned with his own image. [*Sneers.*] He says things like, "Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blessed, / unworthy as she is, [...]" (3.5.148-149) and "Lay hand on heart; advise [...] / [...] An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, [...]" (3.5.201-204). Some might say he only said these things out of pure disappointment and getting his feelings hurt, but it does not distract from the fact that these malicious quotes portray how he feels as if Juliet is not doing what *he* thinks is best for her, nor what *he* thinks will make *him* and his family look good.

[*Growing increasingly livid.*] He tried to take something that would affect Juliet's life forever and turn it into something about *him*, even though it would not be nearly as impactful on his life as it would be on Juliet's! He tried to make Juliet feel bad for *him*! Lord Capulet is the one to blame here! [*Long pause.*] After all Juliet's father put her through, after he made everything seem like it was her fault, who could blame her for acting the way that she did? Plus, how could she possibly be guilty when she never could have foreseen a forced marriage and her father's self-centered betrayal in the first place?

Juliet was already married to the love of her life, bound to him through holy matrimony. To remarry would be a [*Precise articulation.*] *crime*, for polygamy was illegal, and Juliet knew this. "God join'd my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands; / And ere this hand, by thee to Romeo seal'd..." (4.1.56-57) Juliet said. One might argue that it was Juliet's fault for not announcing her marriage with Romeo, but who could blame her for keeping it a secret, especially since she was in love with one of her family's enemies and Capulet acted so brazenly horrifying when she rejected a marriage with Paris? If he were to know about Romeo, his reaction might have been even worse, so Juliet acted out of pure desperation to protect herself. Even more so, she tried to protect the marriage she so ardently craved and was ready to fully commit to, a marriage that was *real* according to her religion, the law, and her own values.

When everyone else failed his or her part of the plan, she stuck to her role, following through with taking a dangerous poison as wisely as a naïve, love-struck thirteen year-old girl possibly could. Although Friar Laurence's plan was slightly altered due to Capulet shifting the day of Juliet's marriage to Paris to make it sooner than before, Juliet did as she was instructed, which was to take the potion the night before the wedding. She did exactly that, even though it

was a day before the original time she was going to take it, but did so without violating Friar Laurence's instructions. Romeo, although unaware of what was truly happening, failed his role by not listening to the Friar and spontaneously rushing back to Verona as soon as he heard of Juliet's "death." "I will hence tonight." (5.1.27) shows that Romeo was yet again acting way too impulsively fast. Friar John failed his role by not delivering the extremely important letter to Romeo, the letter that could've stopped him from acting out of desperation. "I could not send it—here it is again—" (5.2.14) exactly shows when Friar John confessed his failure to Friar Laurence. Friar Laurence failed his part of the plan by rushing out of the Capulet tomb before Juliet woke up. "I dare no longer stay." (5.3.164) said Friar Laurence before he so cowardly ran away. If he would have stayed until she woke up, as he promised he would do, he could have possibly prevented Juliet's death. [*Turns away from crowd. Muffled sniffing can be heard.*]

Work Cited

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Folger Shakespeare Library/Simon & Schuster, 2011. Print.