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SF PERUSALS

In Juliet's Garden

A Comedy in One Act

by Judy Elliot McDonald

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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CHARACTERS

NURSE – Juliet's Nurse. She is also the Widow from *Taming of the Shrew*, and Mistress Quickly from *Henry IV Part 1*. Sweet and kindly.

PORTIA – (*Merchant of Venice*) imperious and self-controlled

KATHARINA – (*Taming of the Shrew*) rough and ready

JULIET – (*Romeo and Juliet*) sweet but spoiled

OPHELIA – (*Hamlet*) a basket case

DESDEMONA – (*Othello*) always a little confused

JACQUELINE DE BOYS – name borrowed from Jacque de Boys from *As You Like It*. Shakespeare's editor and literary agent. Has met all the ladies before and has some definite opinions about each one.

(Optional ending: **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE –** traditionally dressed)

SETTING

A garden of the Capulet estate, Verona, anytime.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

IN JULIET'S GARDEN was first performed by the Waterfront Players Repertory Company in North Bend, Oregon in 2000 as a twenty-minute short. In 2002 ***IN JULIET'S GARDEN*** was awarded production in this format at the Festival of Inspired Shakespeare Shorts in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, performed by the Festival Company. In 2003, a thirty-minute version of the play and won the 2003 Oregon AACT/Fest for the Waterfront Players in McMinnville, Oregon.

In 2006, the final version, as a fifty-minute one-act, the play was produced by the Waterfront Players Repertory Company, North Bend, Oregon. The production was directed by Judy McDonald, the Technical Direction by Pat McDonald, the Light and Sound operator was Nolan Hofferber with the following cast:

PORTIA . . . . . Carolyn Agee
KATHARINA . . . . . Rosalia D'Amato
OPHELIA . . . . . Wavey Shaver
DESDEMONA . . . . . Hilary Clayton
JULIET'S NURSE . . . . . Judy McDonald
JULIET . . . . . Aubrae Hathaway
JACQUELINE DE BOYS . . . . . Marla Taylor

SPECIAL THANKS

The author wishes to thank Josiah Phillips, Pat McDonald and Lowell Kobrin for their contributions to this final version of In Juliet's Garden.

(Lights up. Birdsong. **PORTIA** *is pre-set in audience. She is dressed in very severe contemporary business attire, with briefcase. Cell phone rings and she looks in her purse.)*

PORTIA. Oh, why can't I ever find that phone? *(Finds phone.)* Hello Nerissa, just a moment, *(to surrounding irate audience members)* excuse me, so sorry, pardon me *(as she exits row)* good you got my text message. *(Again to nearby audience)* Sorry, I really must take this. Nerissa, could you please double-check Juliet's address for me, please? I don't seem to be able to locate the house.

(Enter **KATHARINA**. *She is dressed in traditional Shakespearean garb, but a little loud).*

KATHARINA. Portia *(interrupting phone conversation)* is that you?

PORTIA. OK, I've got it. Yes, this looks like it. Thanks Nerissa, yes that's all. Goodbye.

KATHARINA. It is, isn't it? Well, I haven't seen you since we were double billed in Ontario a few seasons ago. *(Notices her suit and brief case)* Interesting costume concept. Who's the designer?

PORTIA. *(Coolly)* Yes, a *very* modern production at Center Stage in Baltimore. Can't remember the designer's name. Certainly works for the role, doesn't it?

KATHARINA. *(Gives her an unwelcome slap on the back)* Well, you look great! How the hell are you?

PORTIA Why, I'm fine, actually. I say, Katherina, would you be seeking the home of Juliet Capulet, as am I?

KATHARINA. You're darn right – and this is it. I've been here before, you see. I couldn't believe Juliet, of all of us, had the nerve to call this little meeting. Who else is coming – do you know?

PORTIA. Not exactly … we *principal* female characters, of course, but I don't really know who else. I must confess, I *am* surprised to see *you.*

KATHARINA. Oh? Really. Is the old man coming?

PORTIA. The 'old man?' If you mean the Bard, I have no idea. I have come merely to observe the proceedings, and judge the merits of the complaints on a case-by-case basis. I may offer any advice or council that may be of use.

(Enter **NURSE***, dressed as* **JULIET***'s* **NURSE** *in contemporary attire, simple housedress and apron.)*

NURSE. Good afternoon, ladies

PORTIA. Good afternoon. This *is* the home of Juliet Capulet?

KATHARINA. *(To* **PORTIA***)* What, you don't believe me?

PORTIA. I didn't mean to imply …

NURSE. Oh my, my, my, yes this is the home of the Capulets. Please come in. This is Juliet's favorite garden … God forbid, where is this girl? Now, by my maidenhead, I bade her come *(Calls within)* What, Juliet?

JULIET. *(From within)* I come anon.

NURSE. She'll be joining you shortly. May I get you something to drink?

KATHARINA. Not me.

PORTIA. Not at the moment, thank you. *(She sits and pulls out her cell phone or some papers.)*

NURSE. Then, excuse me while I attend to some details inside.

KATHARINA. Just a moment, don't I know you from somewhere?

NURSE. Well, dearie, I'd wonder if you didn't. Right now, I'm Juliet's nurse, as you know, but you probably remember me as the widow in *your* play.

KATHARINA. The widow … hmmmm … the widow?

NURSE. I also have the enormous good fortune to appear as Mistress Quickly in a few of the histories. I take very good care of that rogue Sir John Falstaff.

KATHARINA. Aha! That must be exhausting!

NURSE. Oh, to be sure, to be sure, he is that. Oh! You mean playing all three characters, ma'am. Oh yes, especially at those festivals where they run my shows simultaneously and I have to dash back and forth from scene to scene. Sometimes its just impossible. Well, I must attend to my duties.

KATHARINA. *(Looks after her, then at* **PORTIA** *– then flounces down into chair next to Portia with a)* Hmmmmmf!

*(***OPHELIA** *enters L twirling and humming to herself, followed by* **DESDEMONA**.*)*

DESDEMONA. Now, Ophelia, I told you to wait for me, dear.

OPHELIA. *(Stops and hands* **DESDEMONA** *a stem of Rosemary from the bouquet she is carrying.)* Rosemary – for remembrance. I think you need that, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA. What do you mean, that I'm becoming adlepated, that my mind is failing like yours, young lady?

OPHELIA. Not your mind, Desi, just your memory. You could have avoided a lot of trouble if you remembered where you left your handkerchief. That nasty old **I**ago would never have been able to accuse you of …

DESDEMONA. Now … now – I was a victim of knavery and malevolence – not of a failing memory, my girl. *(To herself)* Oh, his impossible jealousy – and never did I give him cause.

OPHELIA. You aren't the only victim, Desdemona. It makes me so sad that Hamlet thinks I am as wicked and as black with corruption as his dreadful mother. Poor dear boy, he thinks all women are whores.

DESDEMONA. Ophelia! What can you mean by that?

OPHELIA. He does, he thinks all women act like whores. He overhears my father arranging to use me to discover why Hamlet is behaving so oddly. I know he overhears the conversation and he thinks I am being prostituted, that I have let myself be 'used' by a man. A nunnery, indeed, perhaps that's where I'm headed, I don't know

DESDEMONA. Oh I don't know dear, surely …

OPHELIA. I've tried to be a good girl, a trusted girl, an obedient girl, but I just have to endure all I can endure and at the end, I simply can't take it anymore. *(Starts to sob)*

DESDEMONA. Oh, sweet Ophelia, believe me, not all men think that way about women.

OPHELIA. Desdemona, why is Othello suspicious of you?

DESDEMONA. Ouch! *(She steps back from* **OPHELIA***).*

NURSE. *(Interrupting, appears in doorway with a pitcher of iced tea).* Ladies, welcome. Here is some refreshment for you all. Juliet will be with you anon. Her mother, the lady of the house, and a good lady, and a wise and a virtuous, has her closeted in counsel. I am told to see to your needs.

PORTIA. *(Coming forward)* We are fine, nurse, and thank you.

NURSE. Very well then. Ladies. *(exits)*

PORTIA. *(Coming forward).* Desdemona! How nice to see you. *(Checks out her dress)* Mmm ... lovely fabric. Where are you playing?

DESDEMONA. Missouri Rep, isn't it wonderful? *(the dress)*

PORTIA. And you as well, Ophelia. Are you … well?

OPHELIA. Well, well, well, yes, indeed, very well … all's well that ends well, I suppose, well now, … well? really, yes, well!

DESDEMONA. *(To* **PORTIA***)* You know, she had on a perfectly lovely little yellow silk when I picked her up from the Pasadena production, but she insisted on choosing her own outfit.

OPHELIA. I told you – I'm not playing this weekend, so I dressed myself Tyrone Guthrie *(notes blouse),* Utah Shakespeare Festival, *(notes skirt)* Wilmington Drama League, *(hat)* and … *(raises skirt to show big black heavy work boots)* … Reed College!!

DESDEMONA. *(Shaking her head at* **OPHELIA** *as* **OPHELIA** *dances off)* Portia, I know why I'm here, but what kind

of issues could you possibly have with the old man. You're the heroine, the objective thinker, the wise one, the … the one with all the great lines!

KATHARINA. *(To herself)* And, she's the one who gets to make fools out of all the male characters!

DESDEMONA. *(Ignoring* **KATHARINA***.)* And, you get your man!

KATHARINA. *(Gets up, joins conversation)* And, she gets to make fools out of every single male character! Exactly how many suitors are there, let's see. There's the Neapolitan Prince …

DESDEMONA. … who talks of nothing but his horses …

KATHARINA. … the county Palatine …

DESDEMONA. … such a sad, dour little man …

KATHARINA. … the French lord …

DESDEMONA. … Oh, now, really!

OPHELIA. *(From the corner)* And, there's Monsieur Le Bon and Faulconbridge …

DESDEMONA. Falconbridge, oh those clothes! *(***OPHELIA** *wanders off)*

DESDEMONA. The Scottish Lord, the Duke of Saxony's nephew … who else?

PORTIA. Fortune hunters all!! Well, it is true – I am the heroine, and I do get to make fools out of a number of the male characters – but there is just one small element in the plot that disturbs me – and, well, beyond that, I simply want to support my fellow heroines.

*(***JULIET** *enters, smiling)*

JULIET. Ladies, ladies, so sorry I wasn't here when you arrived. I hope you are all comfortable

ALL. *(Mixed thanks, yes, of course, etc.)*

KATHARINA. Oh now, *this* is pretty *(***JULIET***'s dress).*

JULIET. Yes, isn't it? Stratford, Ontario.

KATHARINA. Ah, I know the designer … *very* nice *(nods knowingly).*

JULIET. Well, hello friends, and welcome to Verona. I hope you are all comfortable.

ALL. Yes, its lovely here, etc.

JULIET. I have noticed, as we have all crossed paths in recent seasons, that we all seem to have 'issues' that concern us about our roles, questions of motivation, and inevitability of plot, and heaven knows what else. So, ladies, I took the liberty of inviting you here to help clear the air. I'm afraid our little meeting is much against the wishes of my father, who, at the very mention of Mr. Shakespeare's name, seems to breathe fire and spew ash from his ears. Papa, as you might expect, has his own very real 'issues' with his character and plot. Mama, however, has given her approval, which I think is very surprising since she always goes along with whatever Papa decides.

DESDEMONA. We've all been dying to know. Will the Bard himself be joining us this afternoon?

JULIET. Oh, dear ladies. I would love to say yes, but it seems he sees very few people these days and he has sent his representative Miss Jacqueline de Boys. I expect that she will be joining us very soon. I've met her and she seems very smart and very kind.

KATHARINA. I knew he wouldn't come!

PORTIA. Now, really, Katharina, I'm sure Ms. De Boys will be most helpful.

(Enter **OPHELIA** *dragging by the hand* **JACQUELINE DE BOYS** *dressed somewhat "Hollywood" with big sunglasses, scarf, car keys dangling impatiently from her hand).*

OPHELIA. Look what I found in the side garden … just next to that lovely pool of shallow gray water.

DESDEMONA. *(To* **OPHELIA***)* Oh you poor sweet girl.

JULIET. Jacqueline – how nice of you to come. You know these ladies, of course – Katharina.

DE BOYS. Kate – *Taming of the Shrew* – we've met *(she ticks her name off in her notebook).*

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