



ROMERO & JULIET

By Debra A Cole

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Romero and Juliet

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SYNOPSIS:

During World War II, many romances bloomed through letters between young women at home and soldiers overseas during World War II. Some love stories defined two different lifetimes, others defined four.

CAST:

JULIET 1: 18, full of life and wonder

JULIET 2: 65, warm and knowing

ROMERO 1: 18, nervous and unsure

ROMERO 2: 65, calm and loving

SETTING:

Four Single, Small, Black Boxes on a Blank Stage

TIME PERIOD:

1980s

(Lights come up on JULIET 1, JULIET 2, ROMERO 2, and ROMERO 1 standing in front on four, single, small, black boxes in that order stage right to stage left. All are telling a story, facing out to the audience while speaking. No actors ever look at one another until the final lines.)

JULIET 1:

(with enthusiasm) Private Romero. It was perfect. A young girl like me from Mount Juliet, Tennessee writing a soldier fighting over in Germany named Private Romero. It was fate.

ROMERO 1:

(grinning) Was it fate that some, crazy girl wanted me to just write back to just “Juliet, care of Mount Juliet, Tennessee?” I didn’t know about that, but it was nice. No address. Can you believe it? I guess it was such a small town that the post office knew exactly which household to give it to. She said Mount Juliet was ranked the 5th safest city in the US, which compared to where I grew up, sounded pretty nice.

JULIET 2:

It really was nice. My sister had always been a romantic and a reader, so finding the perfect Shakespearean boy was kismet in her mind. *(smiles)* And that’s what he was at the beginning. Just a boy.

ROMERO 2:

We really were just boys, and I liked being in the same unit with my cousin. It was a little piece of home in a place that was nothing like it. I had to help him spell in those early letters. He wasn’t the best student before we were drafted, and spelling and grammar wasn’t a part of his basic field training to face the Germans.

JULIET 1:

His grammar and spelling were perfection. Imagine, a soldier who could write such beautiful prose.

JULIET 2:

(laughs) Prose. That’s what she called his letters. She read all of his letters out loud like they were actual poetry. And to be honest, they weren’t too bad.

ROMERO 1:

At the beginning, my letters were really, REALLY bad. I guess her letters intimidated me. She used words I had never heard of. But once I found my style, I was pretty good.

ROMERO 2:

His style was my style. I took each of his letters and rewrote them before they were mailed out. I couldn’t let him look stupid. He deserved to have a nice girl writing him. Back home, he had never had a girlfriend, so this was...special.

ROMERO 1:

The girl was special. Historians said the average GI wrote six letters a week, but Juliet and me? We wrote seven...each. It was that extra letter that made it kinda romantic.

JULIET 1:

He wrote about his dog “King” back home. I had always been a cat person, but he made having a dog sound like some epic journey between man and hound.

ROMERO 2:

That hound! He went on and on about him. Here is this girl reaching out to him, and all he could talk about was his old, mangy dog.

JULIET 2:

No dogs in our house. Daddy was allergic. After the letters started, she begged Mother and Addy for a dog. She didn’t win this one.

ROMERO 1:

She wrote that she was trying to get a dog, just like King. It was kinda romantic.

JULIET 1:

He was so romantic. He wrote about what our lives would be like once he was home. He wrote about a little house the two of us would share one day in Mount Juliet. He was the one.

JULIET 2:

She was convinced that he was the one. She talked day and night about how they would marry once the war was over. Somedays, I started to believe her.

ROMERO 2:

I couldn’t believe what he was writing this girl. Marriage? A house? He actually told her he would buy a house in that little Tennessee town. No one in our family had ever owned a house. As migrant workers, we stayed where the work was. I remember one summer in the San Joaquin Valley; we picked enough apricots to keep all the troops regular. *(laughs)*

JULIET 2:

(smiles) His letters came regularly, that’s for sure. Each day she would wait for the mailman to bring the next perfect letter.

JULIET 1:

He was perfect, well, he was until Frank came along.

ROMERO 1:

Along about that time, her letters started coming less often. I started to worry.

ROMERO 2:

I was worried. Things felt different with him.

JULIET 2:

I felt really bad for the guy. To go from a letter a day plus, to suddenly one a week. It just wasn't right. She wasn't being honest. I begged her to tell him and not drag him along. I wanted her to be kind and gentle, not just dump him.

ROMERO 2:

I thought he was being dumped, so I ramped up my letters, just in case there was still a shot. I didn't want him to be any lower than he was already. It wasn't just this, he was struggling overall. I mean, some people are meant for fighting, and some are not. My cousin? He didn't have the stomach for it. Aunt Maria said he was like our grandfather – tender and cautious.

JULIET 1:

Bobby was cute. I threw caution to the wind when I met him. Frank was just a phase. There was something about Bobby. He was in college and close by and Private Romero? Distance sometimes does NOT make the heart grow fonder. I just needed someone... here.

JULIET 2:

Here was the real issue, the letters kept coming, but instead of HER opening them, I did. There was something new in his letters. Instead of just talking about his daily life, Romero was more open and vulnerable than he was before.

ROMERO 1:

My letters were suddenly so open. I knew what he was doing. I mean, I knew my cousin had always edited my letters to make them sound... smarter, but once he saw that SHE was pulling away, his words really came to life. I wish I had felt all that he wrote. I could never have been that honest with her.

JULIET 1:

I honestly didn't feel like writing anymore. I just stopped.

JULIET 2:

She stopped, but I didn't. I enjoyed talking with him. I didn't tell him it wasn't HER. I didn't feel bad about it, because I knew it made a difference for him.

ROMERO 2:

Suddenly, there was a difference in her letters. *(smiles)* A good difference. Each time HE wrote a response, I found myself sharing more of MYSELF in the edit than he had every thought to include in the original letter. He stopped writing. I didn't

ROMERO 1:

Originally, I didn't mind him editing, but at some point, I had to bring it up to him that I knew. He was more into these letters than I was. I suggested he just stop. *(laughs)* It was becoming more work than I got any enjoyment out of... I mean, there were girls in towns along the way. I mean, a G.I. could do well with a bar of chocolate and some nylons. I found more pleasure in personal touch than those old letters. I stopped writing the letters.