

[Snap Judgment intro]

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** 19 years old, young, just starting a life built on my own decisions, and I knew two things simultaneously. I knew I loved her desperately, deeply, and I knew I was moving away to the other side of the world, to Japan. The chance of a lifetime. I had to take it. I had to. Mostly in the days leading up to getting on that plane, she and I, we didn't talk about it. Even though she helped me pack up my brand-new suitcase, looked for Japanese-English dictionaries, we avoided mentioning what we were packing for. The herd of elephants in the room, but I wanted her to know, I wanted to give her something to make her understand that even though I had to do this, she was special to me. I snuck off to a jeweler. He helped me pick out the most beautiful bracelet I could afford, and he framed it in a beautiful box. I knew she would love it, and she would appreciate that this is just a bump, that this year would go quickly that we have our entire lives ahead of us, so excited to give it to her. It could say everything that we had not.

On that night, walking next to her along the footpath, I pulled out the jewelry box and handed it to her, the look of joy, elation. She opened that box to see a bracelet, and I know instantly that she did not expect to see a bracelet. The disappointment, the almost sorrow, the almost anger, the chasm. Then the acceptance, almost. As she placed the bracelet on her wrist, thanked me, and we continued walking down the path, to lives completely different than they had been just a few moments before. I had added injury. I had twisted the knife. And some things, some things you can never take back.

And say what you will, we are forever bound, she and I. Just not in the way I intended.

[upbeat music]

Today on Snap Judgment, we proudly present, Wherefore Art Thou? Amazing stories from people looking for something. My name is Glynn Washington, and if you're handing out glory, be careful, when you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

We're going to begin our walk towards destinations unknown with our evil twin show, Spooked, a Luminary original podcast. So, I ask you, have you ever gone to see Shakespeare in the Park? I'm talking *Hamlet* in the middle of the woods at midnight. You feel you're in a play, that those ghosts, those dark forces summoned by the actress lines are coming alive right there in front of your eyes. So, we're making a nighttime travail to the American Players Theatre, an outdoor amphitheater in rural Wisconsin. Now, I'd like you to meet Kelsey and Andy, two apprentices at the theater who have just been cast in the roles of their young lives, Romeo and Juliet. I'll let them take it from here. Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

**Kelsey:** We start rehearsing the play, and the balcony scene has started to give us problems.

**Andy:** The balcony scene, it's the time they really get to meet and get to know each other.

**Kelsey:** Romeo and his friends crash this party of Capulet. And from across the room, Romeo spots Juliet. And instantly, they fall in love. Romeo sticks around the property of the Capulets, hoping to get another glimpse of Juliet or maybe work up the courage to say something to her. As he's waiting, looking around in this really, really dangerous area for him to be, he would be murdered if he was found, she appears on her balcony. It's night. These two people can't see each other's face. There's no one else around except this constant threat, that at any moment, they could be found out.

**Andy:** But in the rehearsals, it's bright, we're rehearsing at noon. Sometimes under the sun, where it's boiling, because it's the middle of the summer. All those factors were playing into it. So, we're getting notes from our director, Matt, about how the balcony scene is just not working.

**Kelsey:** The stakes are not high enough, feel the danger. The risks are higher. Death is around the corner.

**Andy:** We're getting down to the wire. We decide one night that we're going to go up the hill in the dark, and rehearse on the stage that's in the middle of the woods.

**Kelsey:** Do I want to walk up the hill in the pitch darkness and rehearse? Probably not. That's not something that is on brand for me. But I want to be the best Juliet I can possibly be. So, I'm going to do anything.

[footsteps in woods at night]

**Andy:** There's a walking ramp that's gravel stone, that winds up in through the woods. There's no light, because it's an off night from the theater.

**Kelsey:** It's trees everywhere, to the point where you can't really see too far. You're looking straight into the wilderness.

**Andy:** We start getting deeper into the woods and deeper up the hill. I'm like, "I can't see anything. Oh, my God, what have we decided to do here?"

**Kelsey:** I'm definitely starting to feel how alone we are up on this hill.

**Andy:** As you come through a lot of fir trees and that kind of thing, it opens up again, and you start to see the walls of the theater at the very top. It's this massive amphitheater that's cut into this natural bowl at the top of this large hill.

**Kelsey:** We walk into the lobby area, completely deserted. We walk down basically the center aisle that leads from the lobby area on to the stage. We get up there and there's not much to do, but just jump in. I go backstage up this staircase that leads to a window. I'm probably now maybe 15, 20 feet off the stage, and Andy is below. I can see just the outline of his face, and nothing more. That's exactly what Juliet experiences.

**Andy:** It's just a strange sensation to be, like, "Okay, now we're rehearsing and we can barely see each other."

**Kelsey:** We're completely alone. It's a little creepy. If we get caught by somebody up there, we're not really sure we're supposed to be up here, so it's perfect.

**Andy:** Maybe this is what we've needed all along.

**Kelsey:** We start the scene.

**Andy:** "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and Juliet is the sun! Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon-

**Kelsey:** And it's awesome.

**Andy:** -who is already sick and pale with grief.

**Kelsey:** So exhilarating.

**Andy:** -That thou her maid art far more fair than she."

**Kelsey:** O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou, Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet." And we do it again, because we're actors we want to rehearse. During the second rehearsal of the balcony scene, I start to feel like we're being watched.

[eerie music]

**Andy:** I'm noticing, Kelsey has got this halting nature now to her voice that she doesn't usually have.

**Kelsey:** "Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face, else would a maiden-- ah. Else would a maiden blush be paint my cheek for that which thou hast heard me speak to-night. Fain would I dwell on-

**Andy:** And that also she's just a little bit-

**Kelsey:** form, fain, fain deny what I have spoke-

**Andy:** -things are coming out of little slower.

**Kelsey:** -but farewell compliment!"

**Andy:** I started feeling this weird thing, where your arm hair start raising up, that prickly sensation on my skin, on my arms. I was like, "Am I getting cold?"

**Kelsey:** There's a center aisle that leads from the stage, all the way up through the audience and into the lobby. I look up. At the very top of that path, I saw that someone was there. It's pitch black, so it's just an outline of something that looks like a human being.

**Andy:** I'm required to turn around when I profess my love to Juliet. "With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls. For stony limits cannot hold love out, and what love can do, that dares love attempt." I open up to this aisle to see what I think is someone out there. Initially, the first thing I sense of course is, "Oh, whoa, someone is there." But then, it just has this sense of, "Okay, it's someone here to watch that we probably know."

**Kelsey:** And they walk down into the fifth row, and they sit down about two seats in. The seats are a beige leather and a grey leather. They are visible, even in the darkness. So, when that person is sitting in that seat, there is a blackness of an outline that covers the back of the seat. I immediately thought, it was Matt, my director. He was the only person who knew that we were out there and he had every reason to come and watch us. We concluded the balcony scene.

"Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, That I shall say good night till it be morrow."

**Andy:** Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast.

**Kelsey:** Instinctively, I'm waiting for notes, because that's the normal exchange. You end a scene and your director says, "Great. Okay, here's what I think." And there was just silence. I'm like, "Well, that's weird." Okay, maybe Matt just wants to give us space and doesn't want to insert any notes, doesn't want to ruin this moment. So, I come down off the balcony. I walk down, still silent. I join Andy on the stage, and that's when Andy says.

**Andy:** "Kelsey, do you want to do the Pilgrim scene maybe?" I thought I was just having this weird experience alone but I also want to keep doing this. It's been fun too and it's like also, I'm intrigued by what is actually happening. Will this person reveal themselves?

**Kelsey:** Andy is one of my best friends. He's my roommate. If Andy doesn't feel like we're in danger, I'm probably fine. So, I say, "Sure. Let's do the Pilgrim scene." At the Pilgrim scene, it is the moment where Romeo comes up to Juliet at the Capulets' party and he takes her hand.

"For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, and palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss."

**Andy:** That's the dance where they first get to meet. It's the first little spark that ignites this big love that everyone knows as Romeo and Juliet.

"Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?"

**Kelsey:** "Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer."

**Andy:** "O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do."

**Kelsey:** And this scene is played probably as close to the audience as you can get. But the person does not get clearer the closer I get. The person remains a black, fuzzy blob. I don't start to see a face. I don't start to see the color of a shirt. But I do notice that the seat is down. It's not my eyes tricking me. There is a person sitting in that seat.

**Andy:** We finished the scene.

**Kelsey:** There's this moment of silence. No one says anything. We're giving them the opportunity to say hello. They're very close to us. They're not that far away. It's awkward that they don't say anything. It feels a little dangerous.

**Andy:** When nothing happens and it's pure silence, and something's still there, the only option at that point is to go. And I said, "Let's go. Let's get out here."

**Kelsey:** The closest exit off the stage is to continue straight up the aisle that goes through the audience into the lobby and down the hill into the parking lot. But what it means is we have to go past this figure. We're walking with purpose, but I couldn't help myself, I turned my head to the right, and I get a good look at this person, this figure. And even from that close, really three or four feet away, it's still just black and fuzzy. There's no features. It's a black mass that had enough weight that the seat was down.

I think the most frightening thing is the proximity I had to this person did not inspire them to address me. It didn't move. It didn't turn towards me. And that felt very odd. My heart's racing. It's the fight or flight. It's the adrenaline. It's the urgency to get away.

When we reach the landing, that is the lobby, at this point, I have to check in with Andy. And so, I turned to him and I say, "Did you see--?"

**Andy:** I jump in immediately and say, "The thing coming down aisle 5 in the theater."

**Kelsey:** And we just start running. We're giggling and whispering like, "What is going on? What was that?"

**Andy:** As we get to the bottom of the hill, we climb it to one of our cars. We start talking about it to try to get some sort of rationale to the situation.

**Kelsey:** We say, "Okay, hold on. Let's think about this realistically. Who could that have been?"

**Andy:** Is it so and so? Is it Matt? Is it really Tracy, who is also directing?

**Kelsey:** We call Matt. He doesn't pick up the phone, we leave a voicemail. "Hey, man, were you just in the theater? Were you up there? Was that you? Were you playing a trick on us?" We call Tracy, she doesn't pick up, we leave a message.

Nobody called me back that night. So, I still thought maybe it was Matt just being weird. Maybe he thought we couldn't see him. I really was just trying to rationalize the event.

**Andy:** As I'm lying in bed, all I'm thinking is I have no explanation of what I've experienced tonight. I don't believe it's someone I've known out there. If it was someone I know, they would have said something. It just never felt like this was a normal situation.

**Kelsey:** The next day, I had a scheduled check-in with Brenda DeVita, my boss, just in her office. I said, "Okay, this thing happened to me and Andy last night. Is there a groundskeeper? Is there anyone who would have been up there around 10 o'clock when all the lights are off?" And she kind of looked at me and she said, "No, no. If there's no show, there's nobody up the hill." I said, "Okay. Well, let me tell you this whole story of what happened." She starts to get emotional. She goes, "Okay. Stay right there. Stay right there." She runs out of her office, and she grabs Ken Albers.

Ken Albers is a director with a huge history of experience in the theater. He knew those actors. He knew the history. She said, "Ken, listen to this. Kelsey, tell it again." I told the story again. She looks at Ken, she goes, "What do you think?" And he goes, "It was Stephen. You met Stephen last night." Stephen Hemming was a much, much loved actor at APT.

**Andy:** There's a memorial built for Stephen at the theater, like a little garden plot, essentially, that is in memory of Stephen Hemming.

**Kelsey:** He played the Friar. People remember him in that role.

**Andy:** In Romeo and Juliet, there's a character, Friar Lawrence, who essentially is there to bridge the gap between these two families. He sees and tests the love of Romeo toward Juliet, even telling him straight up basically that this is passion, this is lust, this is not love, and Romeo proves to him. So, the Friar is the person that clandestinely goes and helps these to form their love, so far as to marry them in secret. When we told everyone our experience, everyone immediately replied with, "We'd felt Stephen in this space."

**Kelsey:** But one of the things that Ken said in this meeting was, "I think Stephen was there to watch the kids fall in love one more time." The Friar is this beautiful supportive force in the story, and that's what he was for us that night.

**Andy:** The person that joins their hands in matrimony in the show, comes in and helps us figure this stuff out.

**Kelsey:** On the actual performance day, it was [chuckles] a 2:00 PM matinee, not for a full house.

**Andy:** And then, as we start performing, it becomes the hottest day on [chuckles] record.

**Kelsey:** Andy and I were both terribly ill. We both had terrible, terrible colds.

**Andy:** We both probably have fevers or something.

**Kelsey:** I have to say that I think the experience of rehearsing the play in the dark with a ghost felt closer to the actual story that Shakespeare wrote than our performance. We shared a secret. We had a thrilling experience together. We experienced something that no one else will understand, and that's what Romeo and Juliet have. They have a connection that only they really know about.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Kelsey Brennan and Andy Truschinski. And thank you to Stephen, the eternal Friar Lawrence for coming back from beyond the grave to make sure the production went smoothly. We see you. Original score was by Nicholas Marks. It was produced by Zöe Ferrigno.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** If you want more Spooked, the new season of Spooked is streaming right now. This Luminary original podcast is rolling out new episodes in spring of 2022. You can hear the newest episodes by subscribing to the Luminary channel on Apple Podcast, or directly on Luminary. That's *luminary.link/spooked*.

Now, when Snap Judgment returns, a man meets his perfect match several times over. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment, the Wherefore Art Thou? episode. Now, listeners are advised that while the following segment does refer to trauma from sexual and physical abuse, that's not what it's about. It's a classic Snap story that takes place in Los Angeles, where our own Julia DeWitt spoke with Jim Bunkelman.

[somber music]

**Jim:** Abigail hid in closets a lot when she was a little girl. She was really shy. She never came out if anybody else was around. And she stuttered so badly that you couldn't understand at all what she's saying. It was just total stuttering.

**Julia:** Abigail was a deathly shy kid. Talking made her so nervous that she stuttered almost in comprehensibly. Jim tried to teach her sign language, but they didn't get very far. He held out hope that maybe reading out loud or something would help her. And as for any child of the early aughts, the book to read Abigail was obvious.

**Jim:** I read her *Harry Potter*. She was just a huge fan of *Harry Potter*. When *Harry Potter* opened up, the first one, we were there the first day. We're sitting there waiting for it, and there was this 10-year-old boy sitting one seat over from her. They started talking about *Harry Potter*. I was amazed because Abigail had never spoken to anyone else but me. That's first time I've ever seen her in that situation. So, it was a really good feeling.

**Julia:** This was exceptional for two reasons. One was that Abigail was shy. The other reason was it Abigail wasn't actually a kid.

**Jim:** Kid had no idea. He was talking to this 40-something-year-old lady as far as he knew, but it was Abigail talking to him.

**Julia:** This 40 something year old lady was Jim's wife, Rhonda. She was petite, she had dark hair with some gray in it, gap in her front teeth and wrinkles around her eyes from years of smiling. She was talking with a kid's voice, the voice of a kid she called "Abigail." See, she was diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder. You might have heard it called multiple personality disorder. Doctors have different explanations for it. But for Rhonda, it meant that she expressed herself through a bunch of totally distinct personalities. Abigail, the little girl that loved *Harry Potter*, was just one of them.

[somber music]

**Julia:** But Rhonda didn't call it a disorder. Instead, she just felt like she was a group of people all sharing one body. When Jim met her, he had no idea about any of this.

**Jim:** What she presented to the outside world was Rhonda. We met, she was office manager at a production company.

**Julia:** Jim was a video editor. When he'd go in for freelance jobs to Rhonda's office, they started to get to know each other and they got to be friends. It wasn't until two years after they first met that they went on their first date.

**Jim:** When I'd started dating her, started seeing her, and I found out talking to her sister, and her sister said something about-- said, "Split personalities in Rhonda."



**Julia:** Rhonda was scared Jim might leave her once he found out. But that was not Jim's reaction.

**Jim:** I just wanted to meet people.

**Julia:** Just for somebody that's never seen this before, when she would do this with a kind of an instantaneous change in her facial expression or how does it look like?

**Jim:** Now, that's the thing. It's called switching. With Rhonda, when she'd switch, it was instantaneous. Her face would change, her body language would change, and her speech patterns would change, pretty instantaneously.

**Julia:** It was in this manner, the sudden switching, that Jim watched Rhonda switch between her personalities right before his eyes.

**Jim:** There was some great meetings. There was one time I was sitting at the computer and Rhonda was sitting on my lap, and we were looking at some websites on science because, well, my background is in science and Rhonda was really interested in that. All of a sudden, I noticed that there was someone new out, and I could tell it was someone new because it's like, if you all of a sudden woke up in a strange place, you'd be looking around, trying to figure out where you were and all that. So, I realized that there was someone new. I asked him who it was. He said, "Isaiah."

It turns out that Isaiah was really interested in science. He was observing this from inside, and he was so interested and he was leaning, and he started to lean really far forward. All of a sudden, he was out. He just fell out. He said, "I just falled out." [chuckles] He fell out. There he was in the front, because he was so interested. So, I got to know Isaiah.

**Julia:** The more time they spent together, the more of these personalities he met. There were a lot of them. There was Lizzie, she loved flowers. There was a little boy named Nicholas.

**Jim:** Nicholas decided that he and I would be interested in cars together because he liked cars. So, he was my car guy.

**Julia:** There were triplets.

**Jim:** Natalie, Lola and Nicolette.

**Julia:** Numbers was a little girl who only spoke in numbers.

**Jim:** When she was really happy, and she felt safe, she'd say 2240, because that was the address of the house. And 711, somehow that meant happy. [chuckles]

**Julia:** There is Jake and Jeremy. Another set of triplets, Angela, Angelica, and Angelique.

**Jim:** There was Cashmere, who was a gay female. There were more kids than adults, but there were quite a few adults. Adults blended in with Rhonda more easily than the kids did. There was not such a change for the adults. A lot of times, I would meet the adults, but they wouldn't really come out a lot. There were a few that were just indeterminate ages, I had no idea. They didn't know either. But most of them were younger, either teenage, preteen or little kids, and there were babies too.

**Julia:** In total, Rhonda said that she had over 70 different personalities, which is far more than most people with her diagnosis. When Rhonda would switch between them, Jim says he could recognize almost all of them.

**Jim:** Sometimes, a kid would want something, and they would feel that I would be more inclined to say yes to one of the other insiders. So, they would pretend to be that person. They'd say, "I'm so and so," and they would pretend to be that person. But I could tell by the differences that that wasn't her. I'd nail them on it, and then they'd laugh, and they said, "Well, oh, yeah. I'm pretending to be her." [laughs]

**Julia:** Rhonda explained to Jim that the different personalities were all aware of what was happening at any given time. So, Jim could talk to anyone he wanted to whenever he wanted to. But Rhonda also explained that she had the ability to block them out, which was especially important when it came to the kids.

**Jim:** For instance, when Rhonda and I were being intimate, kids weren't there. It wasn't like I was making love to kids. That was really a sure thing. I mean that was a solid thing. There were other times, maybe if we'd be talking about something that would be what they call triggers where it would bring bad feelings out, or I'd be talking about Rhonda's past history, the kids would be blocked off from hearing that.

**Julia:** The diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder has been controversial. One explanation for it is that it's a response to trauma. Rhonda's childhood had been pretty terrible.

**Jim:** Her mom had Rhonda when she was 16. She married Rhonda's biological father. Shortly after Rhonda was born, her mom started showing signs of schizophrenia. Her mom was not really able to protect her. When Rhonda was six, she first inadvertently said something that clued her mother into the fact that her father was sexually abusing her. Her mom just freaked out. Her mom reported him to authorities, he was arrested and jailed. Health services came, took the two kids out of the household, put them in foster care that wasn't any better, and separated Rhonda and her sister.

The individuals in multiple system just developed spontaneously to take care of what the situation is. In other words, a lot of times, they are protectors, a lot of times, they're deflectors of abuse, and things like that. Insiders, the people in the system, help save the system. They help save it, and they're heroes.

**Julia:** Like, for example, take Isaiah, a little boy that loves science.

**Jim:** Isaiah came out when Rhonda was moved from foster home to foster home. One of the foster homes she was in, apparently, the foster parents found out that she was there because her father had abused her. So, they decided that Rhonda was a sinner. They would hold Rhonda down and beat her and read her verses from the Bible to try and save her because her father had abused her. So, Isaiah came out. They used to read verses from Isaiah in the Bible, and that's how he got his name. He was really interested in science because science was the antithesis of the Bible. That's how he developed.

I got back so much love. So much. You know what it's like, little kid, and you give them a present and how happy they are? I had that all the time. That was worth it. I wasn't taking care of them as a charity. I was taking care of them because I got so much back.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Oh, it's not over. It's far from over. When we return, Jim wrestles with the meaning of one true love when Snap Judgment, the Wherefore Art Thou? episode continues. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

Welcome back to Snap Judgment. My name is Glynn Washington, and you're listening to the Wherefore Art Thou? episode. And when last we left, Julia DeWitt was talking to Jim about the many sides of his beloved.

**Julia:** The more I talked with Jim, the more confused I got. It was hard to wrap my head around, was it Jim, while maybe by some standards, a little eccentric, is also a lovely guy with a big group of friends, steady stream of work. He's present and with it.

You had no hesitations about this or any sort of--?

**Jim:** I just remember that it was like, "Oh, she's multiple." It made almost no impact on me.

**Julia:** There's so many parts of your story that make sense to me even though your experience is so foreign. But I can't imagine not going home at the end of the day, and going to my roommate and being like, "So, I found out that Jim has a bunch of other personalities."

**Jim:** Yeah. Well, I do remember talking to some friends and saying that, "This girl I'm with has multiple personalities, and it's really fascinating." I wasn't shocked by it.

My background is physics. You come across a lot of things in physics that just don't seem real. It's like, "What do you mean time slows down?" How can time slow down? How can length contract as you approach the speed of light?" Does that sort of help explain?

**Julia:** Yeah, totally. The thing is that there's a need to be why would one do this as opposed to the kind of why not?

**Jim:** Well, Rhonda was an absolutely amazing, wonderful person, and we connected on so many different levels. The fact that she has multiple really had nothing to do with it. I was attracted to her before I found out she was multiple. When I found out she was multiple, it didn't make a difference.

**Julia:** Do you feel you can remember the last thing you thought was weird?

[chuckles]

**Julia:** Is that a thing you even think ever?

**Jim:** No, I don't feel that way.

**Julia:** Jim and Rhonda eventually got married. They loved to go live music together. They hosted these big parties on the weekends with DJs at their little Hollywood bungalow. They had a ton of friends. Some knew about the personalities, some just thought Rhonda was kind of eccentric. The couple, along with Rhonda's many insiders, lived happily together for 15 years. Until one night, Jim heard a noise coming from Rhonda's room.

**Jim:** I slept in another bedroom because she snored so loud, [chuckles] I couldn't sleep with her. I heard her yell, and so I ran into the bedroom, and I found her on the floor. She was conscious, but she was very confused.

**Julia:** Jim got her in the car and to the hospital. Rhonda fell into a coma. She had had a stroke. When she came to the kids, the adults, all of her insiders, were gone.

**Jim:** They didn't come out, they would normally come out all the time. They didn't talk to me. I knew ways to bring them out. I can say certain phrases, and there was no response from her. So, I knew that they weren't around. I was so involved in trying to get her better and take care of her, was my focus. That's what we were doing. But, yeah, I missed everybody. There was no chance to say goodbye. That was hard. But the kids knew I loved them.

**Julia:** Was the hope that if she recovered, part of what you felt like you were working for her was for the kids to come back? Was that part--? [crosstalk]

**Jim:** I would hope so. Yeah. The focus was just helping her recover. I hope they would come back. I was just hoping that they might be blocked and that they would come back.

**Julia:** Rhonda was eventually able to leave the hospital, but her insiders still didn't come back. Jim took care of her at home for months.

**Jim:** Seven months later, she had another stroke or her heart stopped beating, stopped breathing. It was middle of the night, and I found her semiconscious. Then, we just rushed her to the hospital. She died August 7th.

[somber music]

**Julia:** Jim had Rhonda cremated. He gave away some of her ashes to friends who spread the ashes all over the world, and they'd take a picture before they did it and send it back to Jim.

**Jim:** Yeah, I had lost a lot of people. We have a lot of little things that -- when you have kids, you have little things with each kid. It's different. So, I had little different things. What I lost was just the day-to-day interaction. A person that loses actual physical child, it's even more, I understand that. It's not the same. But before seeing a news report and somebody would talk about losing a child, and I would feel sad for them but I didn't feel it inside, it wasn't that internal sadness. Now, I feel it. It's just different. It's still strong, but it's different.

**Julia:** We are in your backyard.

**Jim:** Mm-hmm. Shortly after she died, we had the-- [crosstalk]

**Julia:** It was a perfect day. We stood under a couple of tall California pines next to the pool. There are traces of Rhonda everywhere in Jim's house. But only one place where all of the personalities are commemorated.

**Jim:** This is the ghoul fairy garden area that was one of Rhonda's favorite parts. So, we decided to build a memorial to Rhonda because so many people in the community knew her. We built a little structure. On the front of the structure were three columns that had crystals embedded in them, with lights behind them that flashed off and on. Each one got the name of one of Rhonda's insiders. They would all be a part of-- [crosstalk]

**Julia:** The columns are over six feet tall. They're covered with names from top to bottom. There's a rhinestone that shimmers next to each of them. One for Jimmy, one for Abigail, one for each of the triplets, for Leelu, and Numbers and Isaiah. A rhinestone for every kid and companion and friend that Jim lost when Rhonda's one body died.

How long ago did she pass?

**Jim:** Three years ago. Yeah, it comes up every so often.

**Julia:** But you feel it?

**Jim:** [in a shaky voice] Yeah. I try to focus on the really happy times. It's not just losing one person. I lost a family. I miss them a lot.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Big thanks to Jim Bunkelman for sharing his story with the Snap. Jim works with several organizations that support the idea of healthy multiplicity. His views are not necessarily the views of this show, but if you like to learn more about his world, you can find out more information on our website, [snapjudgment.org](http://snapjudgment.org). The original score for the story was created by Leon Morimoto. It was produced by Julia DeWitt.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** It's time. It's time, and if you like to just wander down the Snap road, no. There's so much more. So much more Snap storytelling magic awaits, for free. Just follow the Snap Judgment podcast, and instantly become the most interesting person your friends know. It's true. Even better, you can rock a Snap Judgment t-shirt available right now at [snapjudgment.org](http://snapjudgment.org).

Snap was created by the team that always takes the mic. Except of course for Mark Ristich, he prefers to beatbox freestyle. Pat Mesiti-Miller, Anna Sussman, Renzo Gorrio, Annie Nguyen, Nancy López, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, John Fecile, Marisa Dodge, Regina Bediako, Davey Kim, Bo Walsh, Zoë Ferrigno, and David Exumé.

This is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, after some extensive research, you discover that your grandmother is way cooler than you'll ever be, and you'll still not be as far away from the news as this is, but this is PRX.

[upbeat music]

**Kelsey:** “O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.”

“Tis but thy name that is my enemy.”

“What's Montague?”

“What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, retain that dear perfection which he owes without that title. Doff thy name, and for that name which is no part of thee. Take all myself.”

“O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou, Romeo?”

[music fades off]