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Exam 1

The book *The Romeo and Juliet Code* begins with an eleven-year-old girl named Felicity Bathburn Budwig moving to Bottlebay, Maine from London in the midst of World War II to her estranged Grandmother, Aunt, and Uncle's house. Felicity is given no choice in the matter as her parents leave her to go help refugees as part of British intelligence (but she does not know that is what they do for their jobs) and Felicity is not happy.

A deviation from the normal prototype in this novel is that Felicity refers to her parents, Winnie and Danny, as "Winnie" and "Danny" and not "Mum" and "Dad". This deviates heavily from the typical case prototype as most children and children characters refer to their parents as "mom" (or "mum") and "dad".

Shortly after arriving in Bottlebay, The Gram, Aunt Miami, and Uncle Gideon decide to nickname her Flissy. At first she loathes the name angrily stating, "Sometimes pet names stick instantly and I was instantly stuck with it. I could just tell. I knew it." (pg. 19). As she grows more emotionally independent she states, "It seemed to me then that I was ever so Flissy, and not much Felicity at all anymore. It was like I, Flissy, was on shore, and Felicity was in a little rowboat, floating slowly away." (pg. 146)

Throughout the story Flissy makes reference to her Teddy-bear named Wink. Wink is another display of Flissy gaining emotional agency. In the beginning of the novel Flissy starts out with almost no emotional agency. She voices all of her emotions through Wink. "Even though I was eleven years old, I was still quite attached to Wink." (pg. 1); "Most of the time, I tried not to talk to anyone except for Wink. He was quite playful when we were alone, but with the Bathburns, he too fell silent." (pg. 35); "Poor, poor Wink. He hated Bottlebay, Maine." (pg. 48).

As the book progresses she voices her emotions as her own more and more and by the end of the novel she no longer needs Wink to express her emotions. “I decided that I was going to send my Wink to Lily’s little brother, Albert, in London. I knew he loved Wink dearly and needed him more than I did now.” (pg. 289).

In the beginning of the novel when she is unhappy and feels her agency has been stripped away, Flissy states, “Most British children like to feel they belong and I did not belong here.” (pg. 25). As the novel progresses, and she gains more of her emotional agency, Flissy states “*I* was his blessing in disguise. I belonged somewhere. I belonged somewhere. I belonged *here*.” (pg. 279).

As previously mentioned there is estrangement between Felicity's parents and the rest of Her father’s family. While they attended Oxford together, her Uncle Gideon and her mother Winnie had been briefly married before Winnie met Gideon’s brother Danny (Flissy’s father) and left him. When Gideon returned home due to heartbreak, his mother, The Gram, and his sister, Aunt Miami, grew distant toward Winnie and Danny for hurting Gideon and they became quite estranged.

There also is another person living in the house that she doesn’t meet for almost two months; his name is Derek, and he is a twelve-year-old boy who won’t leave his room as he is depressed about having had polio in his arm and not being able to use it.

As she stays in Bottlebay, awaiting for her parents to come back, her uncle begins to receive letters, in her father's hand writing, from Portugal and he refuses to let Flicity see them, locking them away in his private study.

Her curiosity about the letters and Derek propels her to investigate further and she writes a letter to Derek asking if he thinks that her Uncle Gideon is hiding something and he writes her back saying “yes”.

Soon after they exchange notes she meets and convinces Derek to help her by falling out of bed to distract Uncle Gideon while he is in his private study so she can have access to copy the first two letters which are written in code. This deviates from the normal prototype as Derek acts as the “damsel in distress” in order to aid Flissy in her mission when normally the female characters act as the “damsel.” Another example of deviation from the normal prototype is how throughout the novel Flissy has to help Derek due to his limited physical agency. She helps him do things he needs two hands for and helps him to realise that he can do more than he thinks he can.

“‘Anyway, it doesn’t matter about anything. What matters is this,’ he said and he flung his one useless arm up high. It dropped heavily back onto his lap. ‘I can’t help my country and I can’t ever ask a girl to dance. And so I will be staying here in this room. Good-bye’ ... I went over to Derek face-to-face and I said, “You see, you *can* ask a girl for a spin on the dance floor. I’ll dance with you. Pick up your left arm and prop it on my shoulder.’” (pg. 98)

After this Derek and Flissy become great friends and allies and they enjoy each other's cleverness and never try to put the other down by trying to outdo each other. They allow each other to have their own agency.

As Gideon receives more letters from Flissy’s father they notice him go on long walks carrying the letters with him. They decide to follow him, and this is a big deal because Derek hasn’t left the house, or even his bedroom, in months. In order to help Flissy, Derek leaves the

house for the first time in months showing how Flissy inspires others to have agency for themselves.

Through their friendship Flissy and Derek inspire each other to have agency. She gives him a reason to leave his room and helps him to not be emotionally damaged due to his injury, and he aids her quest to figure out what Uncle Gideon is hiding from her without ever doubting her intelligence or ever trying to make it about him.

Flissy also uses her physical agency to inspire her Aunt Miami to further her emotional agency. When she is left alone in town there is a raffle, and the winner is given a spot in the town's Christmas talent show. Flissy's Aunt Miami loves theatre (specifically *Romeo and Juliet*) but has terrible stage fright. Flissy uses her agency of being alone to take away Miami's physical agency and enters her without her permission. She wins, and Aunt Miami is mad for a short time but quickly forgives her and enjoys herself immensely on stage which causes Miami's emotional agency to grow.

Flissy also uses her emotional agency to convince Uncle Gideon to play the piano for her. Throughout the novel Uncle Gideon refuses to play the piano and even goes as far as to keep it nailed shut, as he hasn't played since Winnie left him. Toward the end of the novel Flissy has joined Aunt Miami's talent show and is singing a song. She asks Gideon to play the piano for her, but he declines. She then tells him all that she has found out about the letters and his affections for her mother and states that she knows everything. He replies, "not everything" and reveals to her that he is her biological father. This information deepens their bond, and when she later asks him again to play for her he accepts.

A recurring ideological theme I noticed in this book was the prevalence of gender normalities. On the front cover of the book there are two pairs of feet. One with pink converse

that represented Flissy and one with black converse which represented Derek. The colors of the shoes are very stereo-typical for their genders. Throughout the novel Uncle Gideon pats Flissy on the head like a small child or an animal even though she is eleven. Gideon doesn't do this to Derek who is only slightly older than Flissy and I believe it is because Flissy is a girl, and therefore much more child-like in his eyes. Flissy's Aunt Miami talks to Flissy as if she is a small child several times throughout the book and often tells her to, "go play with her dolls" when she feels Flissy is being too curious about things they try and keep secret from her (like Winnie and Gideon's previous involvement.) which is Aunt Miami limiting Flissy's agency. Flissy and Derek are both great readers but they are given very stereotypical books for their gender. Flissy is given *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess*, while Derek is given books about knights. At one point Flissy offers *A Little Princess* to Derek, and he scoffs at her furthering the ideology that boys can't like princesses.

Another Ideological theme in this novel comes through things Flissy remembers Winnie telling her about being a "proper" British child. "British children are usually ever so polite, and they always obey adults whenever they can." (pg. 41); "British children are ever so proper." (pg. 180); "You can always count on a British girl to know how to knit and to know how to keep a promise." (pg. 181). This ideological theme perpetuates the ideology that English children (especially girls) are always proper and never improper. As the book progresses she starts using more American words and in the final pages of the novel Flissy shows her growth by stating, "Suddenly as I stood there, I scented all the Bathburns close around me and I felt like I might be becoming a real true American and it felt super and warm and good" (pg. 289-290).