

Star-Crossed Love

The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare • Adapted by Bryon Cahill • Illustrations by Craig Phillips

Characters

(main characters in green)

Prologue reader

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Sampson Capulet

Gregory Capulet

Abraham Montague

Tybalt Capulet, Juliet's cousin

Benvolio Montague, Romeo's cousin

Prince, the prince of Verona, Italy

Romeo Montague

Juliet Capulet

Nurse, Juliet's nurse

Lady Capulet, Juliet's mother

Mercutio, Romeo's friend and the prince's kinsman

Lord Capulet, Juliet's father

Friar Laurence, a priest

Lord Montague, Romeo's father



PROLOGUE

*Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whole misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.*

SCENE 1

Narrator 1: In Verona, Italy, Sampson and Gregory Capulet are taking a stroll. They are armed with swords and looking for a fight.

Sampson Capulet: I hate all Montagues and would gladly strike them down like dogs!

Gregory Capulet: The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

Narrator 2: Abraham and Balthasar Montague can be seen coming toward them.

Gregory: Well, here's your chance for a fight. Draw your sword!

Narrator 3: Gregory and Sampson unsheathe their swords.

Sampson: Let's make sure we have the law on our side. Let them begin the quarrel. I will draw them into it by biting my thumb at them. They won't be able to ignore the insult.

Narr 1: Abraham sees Sampson bite his thumb as he walks by.



Abraham Montague: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Sampson: I do bite my thumb, sir.

Abraham: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Sampson: No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

Gregory: Do you quarrel, sir?

Abraham: Quarrel, sir! No, sir.

Sampson: If you do, sir, I will fight you. I am as good a man as you.

Abraham: No better?

Narr 2: Sampson considers this before answering.

Sampson: Yes, better, sir.

Abraham: You lie!

Narr 3: The four men engage in swordplay and fight in the street.

Narr 1: Benvolio Montague comes rushing in and breaks up the fight.

Narr 2: Tybalt Capulet enters and challenges Benvolio.

Tybalt Capulet: Turn thee, Benvolio, and look upon thy death.

Benvolio Montague: I have no quarrel here. I do but keep the peace: Put up thy sword.

Tybalt: You talk of peace! I hate the word, just as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee!

Narr 3: Tybalt attacks Benvolio, and once again swords are clashing in the street. More and more Capulets, Montagues, and others become involved, and the violence rapidly escalates.

Narr 1: The prince of Verona is called to the scene, and upon his arrival, the massive fight is finally broken up.

Prince: If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay



for the disturbance of the peace!

Narr 2: Everyone goes a separate way, for now. Benvolio lingers as he sees his cousin Romeo walking toward him.

Benvolio: Good-morrow, cousin.

Romeo Montague: Is the day so young? Ay me! The sad hours seem long.

Benvolio: What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours? Art thou in love?

Romeo: Out of it, I'm afraid.

Benvolio: I weep for thy good heart's oppression, cousin.

Romeo: Love is a smoke raised with the **fume** of sighs. What else is love but a madness most discreet?

Benvolio: I will walk you home, fair cousin.

Romeo: I have lost myself. I am not here. This is not Romeo.

Benvolio: Tell me ... who is it that you love?

Romeo: It matters not, for she will not have my love. And I live dead as I live to tell it now.

Benvolio: Forget her, Romeo.

Romeo: O teach me how I should forget to think.

Benvolio: By giving your eyes freedom and seeking out other beauties.

Romeo: He that is struck blind cannot forget that precious treasure of his lost love. Farewell, Benvolio, thou cannot teach me to forget.

Narr 3: Romeo leaves sadly as Benvolio watches him go.

SCENE 2

Narr 1: The next day, Romeo and Benvolio hear about a masquerade ball that is to be held at the house of Capulet. Because the Capulets are the Montagues' sworn enemies, Benvolio persuades Romeo to crash the party.

Benvolio: With all the admired beauties of Verona, surely one or two will catch your eye and make you forget about your lost love. By the end of the evening, you will begin to look back on her as a crow instead of a swan.

Romeo: I will go with you. But I do not expect to rejoice.

SCENE 3

Narr 2: In the house of Capulet, Lady Capulet asks her daughter's nurse to call the girl. The nurse does so, and Juliet enters.

vocab

FUME: vapor, smoke

ESTEEM: favorable opinion

Juliet Capulet: How now! Who calls?

Nurse: Your mother.

Juliet: Madam, I am here. What is your will?

Lady Capulet: Tell me, daughter Juliet, how do you feel about marriage?

Juliet: It is an honor that I dream not of.

Lady Capulet: Well, think of marriage now. Ladies of **esteem** younger than you, here in Verona, are already mothers. I was your mother at your age now. Juliet, the valiant Paris seeks you for his love.

He that is struck blind cannot forget that precious treasure of his lost love.'

Nurse: Such a man, my lady!

Lady Capulet: Verona's summer hath not such a flower. What say you, Juliet? Can you love the gentleman? He will be attending our party this very night, and I would like you to engage him with your beauty.

Juliet: I'll give him a look and see whether I like him.

Narr 3: A servant enters and announces that the guests have begun to arrive. Lady Capulet leaves to attend to them.

Nurse: Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

Narr 1: Juliet follows after her mother.

SCENE 4

Narr 2: Romeo, Benvolio, and their good friend Mercutio stand on a street outside the house of Capulet.

Romeo: I dreamed a dream tonight.

Mercutio: And so did I.

Romeo: Well, what was yours?

Mercutio: That dreamers often lie.

Romeo: In bed asleep, while they do dream things true.

Narr 3: Mercutio rambles on about dreams. At last, Romeo stops him.

Romeo: Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace! You speak of nothing.

Mercutio: True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of a lazy brain. They are fantasies, nothing more.

Benvolio: Come now. Let us put on our masks and join the party.

Romeo: I fear that fate hangs in the stars tonight. But let that fate steer my course and direct my sail!

Narr 1: They put on their masks and head up the path to the house of their enemy.

SCENE 5

Narr 2: As Romeo enters the Capulets' house, his eye falls upon Juliet. In an instant, he completely forgets the pain of his lost love.

Romeo: *(to himself)* Did my heart love till now? For I never saw true beauty till this night.

Narr 3: Tybalt is standing close to Romeo and hears his voice. He is enraged that a Montague would crash the party.

Tybalt: Now, by the stock and honor of my kin, I shall strike him dead. I hold it not a sin.

Narr 1: Lord Capulet, the master of the house, comes upon Tybalt and stays his hand.

Tybalt: Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe. He is a villain that has come here to spite us!

Lord Capulet: Leave it alone, gentle Tybalt. He does not look as if he means us any harm on this night. In fact, he bears himself like a gentleman. And I will not have quarreling in my house! Respect me!

Tybalt: I'll not endure him.

Capulet: I say that he shall be endured! Am I the master here, or are you? If you cannot endure him, then leave! You'll not make a mutiny among my guests!

Tybalt: It is a shame, Uncle.

Narr 2: Tybalt leaves with the thought that he will repay Romeo at a later time for this intrusion.

Narr 3: Romeo, having heard none of this conversation, approaches Juliet cautiously. He follows her to a secluded corner and dares to speak.

Romeo: If I offend you with my unworthy hand, my lips stand ready, as two blushing pilgrims, to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much. Saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch.

Romeo: Do saints not have lips?

Juliet: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Romeo: O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.

Narr 1: Romeo kisses her.

Juliet: My lips have taken your sins.

Romeo: Have I given you my sin? Well, then, give me my sin again.

Narr 2: He kisses her again. The nurse calls for Juliet.

Nurse: Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

Narr 3: Juliet hurries away and leaves Romeo with her nurse.

Romeo: Her mother? Who is her mother?

Nurse: Her mother is the lady of the house.

Romeo: Is she a Capulet? Oh no!

Narr 1: Benvolio finds Romeo and steals him away from the house.

*'O Romeo,
Romeo!
Wherefore art
thou Romeo?
Deny thy father
and refuse
thy name.'*

Narr 2: The nurse finds Juliet and informs her that Romeo is a Montague.

Juliet: My only love sprung from my only hate! This information comes too late, for my heart is bound to him. O what an extraordinary love is in me, that I must love a loathed enemy.

Narr 3: All the other guests begin to leave as the festivities wind down. Juliet retreats to her room.

SCENE 6

Narr 1: Benvolio and Mercutio leave the Capulet grounds, but Romeo lingers in the orchard.

Narr 2: Juliet appears in a window high above the orchard. Romeo looks on her lovingly as he speaks softly to himself.

Romeo: But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair sun, and kill the jealous moon who is sick with grief, that Juliet is a maid far more fair than she. O it is my lady! It is my love!

Narr 3: Juliet speaks to the wind, but Romeo cannot hear what she says.

Romeo: She speaks, yet she says nothing? I am not bold enough to answer her. She speaks not to me but to the fairest stars in all the heavens. Those stars that twinkle in her eyes and yet the brightness of her cheek puts those same stars to shame.

Narr 1: Juliet lays her cheek upon her palm.

Romeo: O that I were a glove upon that hand that I might touch that cheek!

Juliet: Ay me!

Romeo: She speaks! O speak again, bright angel!

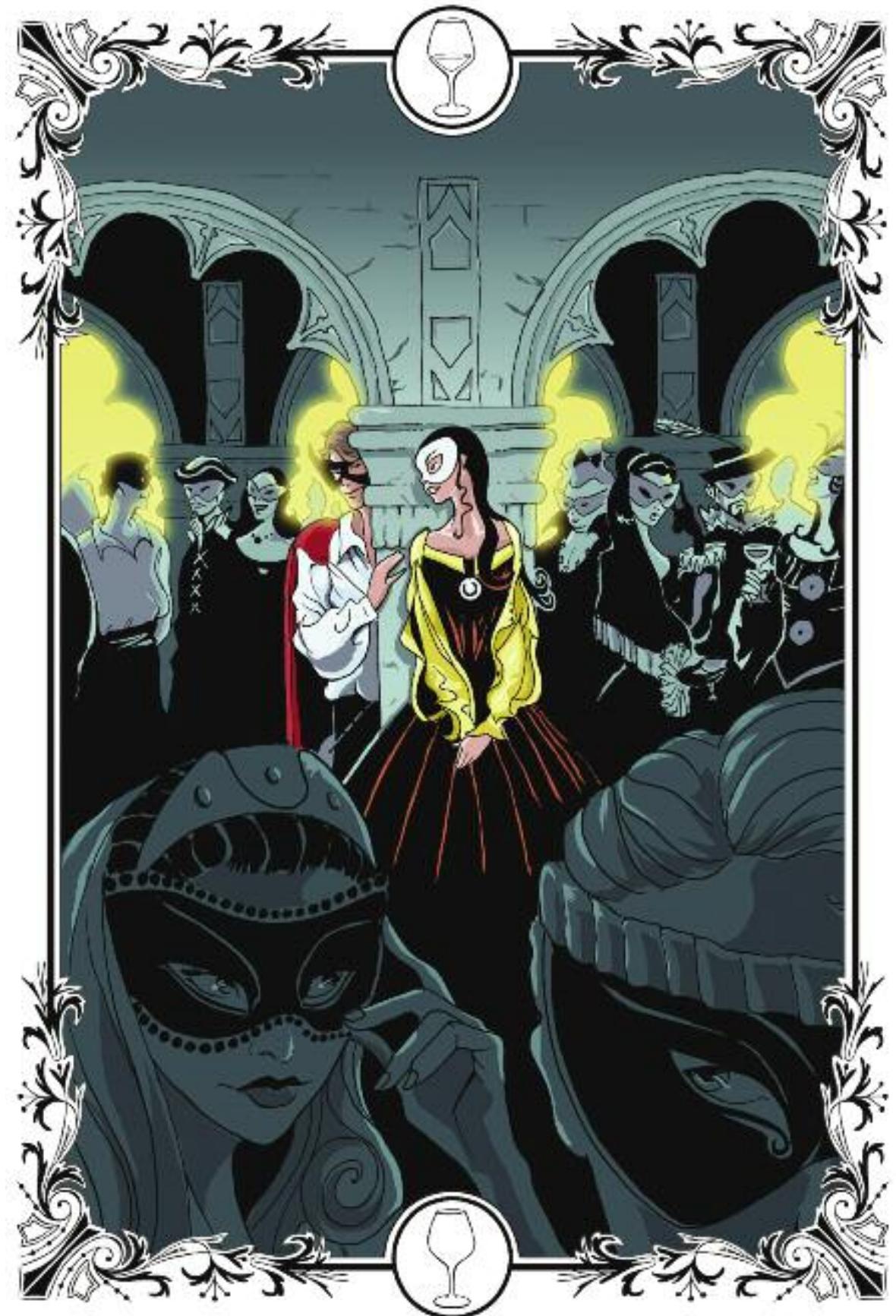
Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo! **Wherefore** art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, swear thy love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Romeo: Shall I hear more, or shall I speak to this?

Juliet: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy. It is not hand nor foot nor arm nor face. O if only you had some other name! But what's in a name? That which we call a rose by

vocab

WHEREFORE: why; for what



any other name would smell as sweet.

Narr 2: Romeo now speaks louder so Juliet can hear.

Romeo: I take thee at thy word. From now on, I never will be Romeo.

Narr 3: Juliet is startled by his voice.

Romeo: My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself because it is an enemy to thee. If I saw it written, I would tear the word.

Juliet: My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words, yet I know the sound. Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

Romeo: Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

Juliet: You should leave now before my kinsmen find you here and kill you.

Romeo: I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight. And if you do not love me, let them find me. For my life would be better ended by their hate than wanting for your love.

Juliet: O gentle Romeo, if you do love me, pronounce it faithfully.

Romeo: Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear ...

Juliet: O swear not by the inconstant moon that changes monthly in her circled orb.

Romeo: What shall I swear by?

Juliet: Do not swear at all. Or swear by thy gracious self, and I'll believe thee.

Narr 1: Juliet changes her mind again.

Juliet: Well, do not swear at all. This is all too rash, too sudden. Good night, good night!

Narr 2: The nurse calls for Juliet.

Juliet: I hear some noise within, dear love. Sweet Montague, be true. Stay a little longer, and I will return.

Narr 3: Juliet disappears from the window for a moment. She returns quickly.



‘Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be tomorrow.’

Juliet: If you truly love me, send word of marriage tomorrow. Let me know where and when we should perform the rites, and I will follow thee throughout the world.

Narr 1: The nurse calls for Juliet once again.

Juliet: A thousand times good night!

Narr 2: Juliet disappears from the window once more, only to return again.

Juliet: Romeo!

Romeo: My dear?

Juliet: I have forgot why I did call thee back.

Romeo: Let me stand here till thou remember it.

Juliet: Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be tomorrow.

Romeo: Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast! Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest!

SCENE 7

Narr 3: In the morning, Romeo goes to see Friar Laurence. Romeo admits to his love for Juliet and asks the friar to marry them.

Narr 1: Meanwhile, Mercutio and Benvolio learn that Tybalt has sent a letter to the house of Montague. It is a challenge to fight Romeo and undo the insult that occurred the night before at Tybalt's uncle's house.

Narr 2: When Romeo arrives, he tells of his newly found love. Mercutio makes fun of him for his ever-changing heart.

Narr 3: Juliet's nurse comes upon the gentlemen in the street. After Mercutio has a little fun at her expense, Romeo gives the nurse a message to deliver to his love.

Romeo: Tell Juliet to make some excuse and get herself to Friar Laurence's cell this afternoon. There, she will be married.

Nurse: This afternoon, sir? Well, she shall be there.

Narr 1: Juliet's nurse returns to her and tells her the good news. In the afternoon, Juliet goes to Friar Laurence's cell, and there she is married to her Romeo.

SCENE 8

Narr 2: Mercutio and Benvolio are relaxing in a public place when Tybalt and his men arrive, looking for trouble.

Narr 3: Benvolio attempts to keep the peace.

Benvolio: Gentlemen, we should withdraw to some private place to settle our **grievances**. All eyes gaze on us here.

Mercutio: Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze. I will not budge for man's pleasure.

Narr 1: Tybalt sees Romeo heading toward them. When he gets close enough, Tybalt addresses him rudely.

Tybalt: Romeo, the hate I bear thee cannot be described better than this—thou art a villain.

Romeo: Tybalt, I have much reason to love thee, and this excuses your rage. I am not a villain and therefore, farewell. I see you do not know me at all.

Tybalt: Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries you have done to me. Turn and draw your sword!

Romeo: I never injured thee, Tybalt. I love you more than you can know. I hold the good name Capulet as tender as I hold my own. Be satisfied.

Narr 2: Mercutio has heard enough. He draws his sword and

vocab

GRIEVANCES: complaints

advances on Tybalt. Tybalt draws his sword as well.

Narr 3: Mercutio and Tybalt fight in the street. Romeo tries to break it up, stepping between them. Tybalt stabs Mercutio underneath Romeo's arm.

Mercutio: I am hurt. A plague on both your houses!

Narr 1: Tybalt and his men run away.

Benvolio: What, art thou hurt?

Mercutio: Ay, ay, a scratch, 'tis just a scratch.

Romeo: Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

Mercutio: No. The hurt is not as deep as a well or as wide as a church door. But ask for me tomorrow, and you will find me a grave man.

Narr 2: Mercutio falls to the ground, bleeding.

Mercutio: A plague on both your houses! Why the devil did you come between us, Romeo? I was hurt under your arm.

Romeo: I was only trying to break up the fight.

Mercutio: A plague on both your houses! They have made worms' meat of me.

Narr 3: Mercutio dies in the street.

Narr 1: Tybalt runs back to the others. Romeo is filled with rage and vengeance.

Romeo: Now, Tybalt. While Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads, we shall stay and keep him company. Either thou or I or both must go with him.

Narr 2: Romeo draws his sword and attacks Tybalt. They fight at length before Romeo runs Tybalt

through with his sword.

Narr 3: Tybalt falls to the ground and dies.

Benvolio: Romeo, away, be gone! The citizens are up, and Tybalt is slain. Stand not amazed; the prince will doom thee death if he catches you here. Be gone, away!

Romeo: O I am fortune's fool!

Narr 1: Romeo flees the scene, leaving Benvolio to stand over the bodies of Tybalt and Mercutio.

Narr 2: The prince learns of what has happened and banishes Romeo from Verona.

SCENE 9

Narr 3: Romeo hears of the news from Friar Laurence in his cell. Banishment is worse than death in Romeo's mind, for he will never again be allowed to look upon his love or kiss her lips.

Narr 1: Friar Laurence consoles Romeo and asks him to travel to Mantua while the friar attempts to win the prince's favor. Then Romeo will be allowed to return to Verona and live happily with Juliet, the friar says.

Narr 2: Meanwhile, Lord Capulet demands that his daughter Juliet marry the noble gentleman Paris in just a few days' time. This news, coming immediately after the news of her cousin Tybalt's death and her husband Romeo's banishment, is too much to bear. Juliet too runs away to Friar Laurence's cell.

Juliet: What am I to do, good Friar Laurence? Come weep with me. I am past hope, past cure, past help! Romeo is banished, and I long to die!

Friar Laurence: There may be some light yet. I believe I may have a plan.

Narr 3: Juliet listens carefully as Friar Laurence lays out his plan for her.

Friar Laurence: Drink this vial of potion tomorrow night. It will make you appear to be dead, but you will just be in a great sleep. I will send a letter to Romeo, and he will be there, in the tomb of the Capulets where you shall lie, awaiting you to awake. You can live together in happiness, away from Verona.

Narr 1: Juliet takes the vial and thanks Friar Laurence for saving her life and her love.

SCENE 10

Narr 2: In the morning, Juliet is found in her bed. She appears to be dead.

Narr 3: There is much sorrow in the Capulet house. As the Capulets grieve, they carry Juliet to the family tomb.

Narr 1: The word of Juliet's death spreads quickly. It reaches Romeo's ears in Mantua before he receives Friar Laurence's letter.

Narr 2: Romeo buys some poison and then rushes to be by his love's side at the Capulets' tomb.

Narr 3: Paris enters the tomb and sees Romeo. He thinks Romeo is there to **defile** the tomb. They fight. Paris dies. Romeo lays his body in the tomb and then goes to look upon Juliet's face.

Romeo: O my love! My wife! Death may have sucked the honey of thy breath, but it has not scarred your beauty. Ah, dear Juliet, why art thou yet so fair? Here, here will I remain. O here will I set up my



everlasting rest. Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace! And lips, seal with a righteous kiss a dateless bargain to engrossing death! Here's to my love!

Narr 1: Romeo drinks the poison.

Romeo: O the drugs are quick! Thus with a kiss, I die.

Narr 2: Romeo kisses Juliet as he dies.

Narr 3: Friar Laurence has learned that his letter never reached Romeo. He fears a tragedy and hurries to the Capulet tomb.

Friar Laurence: Romeo! Romeo! O pale! Who else? Paris too? Ah,

what an unkind hour is guilty of this sorrowful chance!

Narr 1: Juliet wakes.

Juliet: O comfortable friar! Where is my lord? I do remember well where I should be, and there I am. Where is my Romeo?

Friar Laurence: I hear some noise. Lady, come from that nest of death and unnatural sleep. A greater power than we could have predicted has spoiled our intent. Come, come away. Thy husband lies dead, and Paris too. Come, I'll bring you to a nunnery. I dare not stay any longer.

*'Where be these enemies?
Capulet!
Montague! See
what a plague
is laid upon
your hate!'*

Juliet: Go, get thee hence, for I will not come.

Narr 2: Friar Laurence leaves the tomb. Juliet finds her Romeo dead on the ground.

Juliet: What's here? A cup closed in my true love's hand? Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.

Narr 3: Juliet looks in the vial and finds that all the poison has been drunk.

Juliet: O Romeo, hath thou left no friendly drop to help me after?

vocab

DEFILE: to make unclean

I will kiss thy lips. Perhaps some poison still hangs there.

Narr 1: Juliet kisses Romeo.

Juliet: Thy lips are warm.

Narr 2: There is a noise outside the tomb.

Juliet: They come? Then I'll be brief.

Narr 3: Juliet takes Romeo's blade from his belt.

Juliet: O happy dagger! This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die.

Narr 1: She stabs herself in the chest, falls on Romeo's body, and dies.

Narr 2: The watchmen enter the tomb and find the bodies of Paris and Romeo and Juliet. They summon the prince and the Capulets and Montagues.

Narr 3: All arrive at the tomb and set their eyes on the tragic scene.

Prince: Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague! See what a plague is laid upon your hate! That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love. All are punished!

Capulet: O brother Montague, give me thy hand.

Lord Montague: But I can give thee more. For I will raise a statue of your daughter Juliet in pure gold. For all who come to Verona will know her name.

Prince: The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head. Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things. Some shall be pardoned, and some punished. For never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo. ♥

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



William Shakespeare

was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, in April 1564.

At 18, he married

Anne Hathaway. He moved to London, where he lived and thrived as a writer and an actor. When bubonic plague hit England in 1592, the theaters closed for two years. During that time, Shakespeare concentrated on writing his sonnets and longer poems.

Throughout his enduring and prosperous career as a playwright, Shakespeare penned tragedies, comedies, histories, and romances. His work has been called into question, both for literary interpretation and genuine authorship, but Shakespeare has remained a name synonymous with brilliance, and his writings continue to educate and entertain readers and theatergoers everywhere.

WRITE ABOUT IT

The Montagues and the Capulets have been feuding so long that they probably don't remember what started the conflict. Using what you know of the families, write a story that explains the origin of their intense hatred for each other. E-mail us your stories at word@weeklyreader.com, and we'll post our favorites on our blog at www.readandwriting.com.