



Romeo and Juliet

Verona is home to two feuding noble houses, the Montagues and the Capulets. In response to the constant brawling between members of these families, the Prince of Verona has issued an edict that will impose a death sentence on anyone caught dueling. Against this backdrop, young Romeo of the house of Montague has recently been infatuated with Rosaline, a niece of Capulet. Rosaline is quickly forgotten, however, when Romeo and his friends disguise themselves and slip into a masque ball at Capulet's house. During the festivities, Romeo catches his first glimpse of Juliet, Capulet's daughter. In one of Shakespeare's most memorable scenes, Romeo steals into the garden and professes his love to Juliet, who stands above on her balcony. The two young lovers, with the aid of Friar Laurence, make plans to be married in secret.

Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, later discovers that Romeo has attended the ball, and he sets out to teach the young Montague a lesson at the point of his sword. Romeo is challenged by Tybalt, but tries to avoid a duel between them since he is now married to Juliet (making Tybalt a kinsman). Mercutio, Romeo's best friend, takes up Tybalt's challenge and is killed in the ensuing fight. Enraged, Romeo slays Tybalt in turn. As a result of this bloodshed, the Prince proclaims that Romeo is to be banished from Verona for his actions. Romeo has time to consummate the marriage and bid farewell to Juliet, though he hopes to be reunited with her once the Capulets learn that they are man and wife.

The Capulets, meanwhile, press for Juliet to marry Paris, a cousin to the Prince. Juliet, relying again on Friar Laurence, devises a desperate plan to avoid her parent's wishes. She obtains a drug that will make her seem dead for forty-two hours; while she is in this state, Friar Laurence will send word to Romeo of the situation so that he can rescue her from her tomb. Unfortunately, fate will not be so kind; the letter from Friar Laurence is delayed. Romeo instead hears second-hand news that Juliet has died. Grief-stricken, Romeo purchases poison and hastens to Juliet's tomb to die at her side. Meanwhile, Friar Laurence has discovered to his horror that his letter did not arrive, and he means to take Juliet away until he can set things aright.

At the tomb, Romeo encounters Paris, who mourns for Juliet. Romeo slays Paris, then enters the tomb and downs his poison. As Friar Laurence comes upon the scene, Juliet awakens only to find the lifeless body of her beloved Romeo laying beside her. Juliet takes the dagger from Romeo's belt and plunges it into her heart. Upon this scene, the Prince arrives—along with the Montague and Capulet parents—demanding to know what has happened. Friar Laurence relates to all the tragic tale of Romeo and Juliet's secret

marriage and their senseless suicides. The Montagues and Capulets, when faced with the terrible price that their feud has exacted, vow to put an end to the enmity between their two houses.

Dramatis Personae

Escalus, Prince of Verona
Paris, kinsman to Escalus
Montague
Capulet
Uncle to Capulet
Romeo, son of Montague
Mercutio, friend of Romeo
Benvolio, friend of Romeo
Tybalt, nephew of Lady Capulet
Friar Laurence
Friar John
Balthasar, servant to Romeo
Sampson, servant to Capulet
Gregory, servant to Capulet
Peter, servant to Juliet's nurse
Abram, servant to Montague
Lady Montague
Lady Capulet
Juliet, daughter of Capulet
Nurse to Juliet
An Apothecary
Three Musicians
An Officer
Pages to Paris and Officer
Citizens of Verona, Kinsfolk of both houses, Masquers
Guards, Watchmen, and Attendants
Chorus