

Romeo & Juliet - Scene by Scene Synopsis

Prologue: The Chorus tells, in a Sonnet, that the play will concern a pair of lovers whose deaths shall end the conflict between their feuding families.

Act I, Scene 1: Sampson and Gregory, servants of the Capulet family, encounter Abram and Balthazar, of the Montague household, in a street in Verona. They fight; Benvolio appears and tries to stop them, but Tybalt enters and insists on dueling with him. Some Citizens attempt to break up the brawl, as Capulet and Montague join in, to the dismay of their wives, Lady Capulet and Lady Montague. The Prince arrives and chastises both families. He declares that any further fighting will be punished with death. The Prince and the Capulets depart, and the Montagues discuss with their nephew Benvolio the mysterious melancholy that afflicts their son Romeo. As Romeo approaches, his parents leave Benvolio to interrogate him. Benvolio learns that Romeo is in love with a woman who is sworn to chastity and ignores him. Benvolio recommends that his cousin consider other women, but Romeo declares that his love's beauty will eclipse all others.

Act I, Scene 2: Paris seeks Capulet's permission to marry his daughter Juliet. Capulet argues that Juliet is too young, but he says that, if Paris can win Juliet's affections at the banquet planned for the coming night, he will give his consent. He gives a Servant a list of guests with instructions to deliver invitations, and he and Paris depart. Romeo and Benvolio pass by, and the Servant seeks their assistance, for he is illiterate. Romeo reads the list of guests, which includes the name of his beloved, Rosaline. He and Benvolio decide to attend the banquet in disguise, Romeo wishing to see Rosaline and Benvolio hoping that the sight of many beautiful women will cure his friend's love sickness.

Act I, Scene 3: The Nurse reminisces at length about Juliet's childhood. Lady Capulet tells Juliet about her father's plans for her marriage, and Juliet coolly agrees to 'consider Paris out of filial duty.

Act I, Scene 4: Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio arrive at the banquet. Romeo asserts that he will not dance, due to his melancholy, and he is teased by Mercutio, who humorously enlarges on his probable enchantment by Queen Mab. The group proceeds to the party, although Romeo expresses darkly ominous feelings.

Act I, Scene 5: Four servants joke among themselves as they clear away the dinner. While the guests dance, Romeo first notices Juliet and is enthralled by her beauty. Tybalt recognizes him and rages against his presence. Capulet orders him to be peaceful, and he leaves in disgust. Romeo addresses Juliet, and their love immediately blossoms as they kiss. Juliet is called to her mother, and Romeo learns who she is from the Nurse. He is dismayed to learn that her family is his family's rival, and she, when learning his identity from the Nurse, is similarly distressed.

Act II, Prologue: The Chorus recounts, in another sonnet, that Romeo and Juliet cannot easily meet, their families being enemies, but their passion enables them to find a way.

Act II, Scene 1: Romeo separates himself from his friends as they leave the party. Presuming he has gone in search of Rosaline, they depart.

Act II, Scene 2: Juliet appears at a high window and Romeo, in the garden below, admires her beauty. Believing herself to be alone, she soliloquizes about her love for Romeo, regretting that he is a Montague. He reveals himself, and they speak of their love and exchange vows. Juliet is called away by the Nurse, but she returns to say that she will send a messenger to Romeo the next day, to whom he can convey a plan for them to marry. She leaves but returns once more, and they exchange loving farewells.

Act II, Scene 3: Friar Laurence, picking herbs, muses on their capacity to kill or cure. Romeo arrives and tells him of his new love and asks his help in marrying her. The Friar agrees, hoping that their alliance will end their families' feuding.

Act II, Scene 4: Benvolio and Mercutio discuss Tybalt, who has challenged Romeo to a duel. Tybalt is well known for his skill with the sword, and Romeo's friends wonder whether the lovesick youth is up to the challenge. Meeting their friend, they banter with him about his love. The Nurse appears; Romeo's friends depart. Romeo gives the Nurse a message for Juliet: she is to go to Friar Laurence that afternoon, and they shall be married. He arranges for the Nurse to receive a rope-ladder for Juliet to lower for him that night.

Act II, Scene 5: The Nurse returns to an impatient Juliet. She teases her charge by withholding the message briefly; when she delivers it, Juliet departs at once.

Act II, Scene 6: Juliet comes to Romeo in Friar Laurence's cell, and they greet each other joyfully. The Friar prepares to marry them.

Act III, Scene 1: Benvolio and Mercutio encounter Tybalt, and Mercutio begins to pick a fight. Romeo appears and is immediately insulted by Tybalt, who wishes to challenge him to a duel. Romeo excuses himself, citing mysterious reasons why he and Tybalt should be friends, but Mercutio cannot tolerate such conciliatory behavior and draws his sword on Tybalt. Romeo at-tempts to separate the combatants, and Mercutio is mortally wounded by Tybalt, who flees. Mercutio, after bravely jesting about his wound and cursing both Montagues and Capulets for their feuding, is carried away by Benvolio, who returns to report his death. Tybalt returns, and Romeo fights and kills him. At Benvolio's urging, Romeo flees. The Prince appears and interrogates Benvolio. Judging Tybalt to be guiltier than Romeo, he spares the latter the death sentence but banishes him from Verona.

Act III, Scene 2: Juliet longs for night, when Romeo is to come. The Nurse brings her word of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. Doubly grieved, Juliet speaks of suicide, and the Nurse volunteers to bring Romeo to her.

Act III, Scene 3: Romeo, in hiding with Friar Laurence, learns of the Prince's edict and raves that death would be more merciful than life without Juliet. The Nurse arrives with word of Juliet's distress, and Romeo's grief reaches new heights; he too speaks of suicide. The Friar chastises him for his weakness and proposes that, after a night with Juliet, Romeo should flee to Mantua, where he can live until his marriage becomes known, the families reconciled, and he pardoned. Romeo recovers his spirits and leaves to go to Juliet.

Act III, Scene 4: Capulet ordains that Juliet, whose grief he finds excessive, shall be married to Paris in three days.

Act III, Scene 5: Romeo and Juliet reluctantly bid farewell, regretting that dawn is near. The Nurse warns that Lady Capulet is coming, and Romeo departs for Mantua. Her mother tells Juliet of the proposed marriage, and Juliet refuses, objecting to the hastiness of the plan. Her father enters and flies into a rage on hearing of her refusal. Her parents leave angrily, and the Nurse advises that Juliet ignore her marriage to Romeo, which no one else knows about, and marry Paris. Juliet resolves to seek aid from Friar Laurence.

Act IV, Scene 1: Paris confers with a reluctant Friar Laurence about his coming wedding. Juliet arrives and coolly deflects Paris' courtesies. Once alone with the Friar, she desperately craves assistance. Her talk of suicide suggests a plan to him: he will provide her with a potion that will make her seem to be dead. She will be placed in the family crypt, where Romeo will meet her so that they can flee together.

Act IV, Scene 2: As the Capulet household is busy with her wedding arrangements, Juliet appears and apologizes to her father, promising to obey him and marry Paris. Capulet moves the wedding up a day to the next morning.

Act IV, Scene 3: Juliet, alone in her bedroom, is afraid that the Friar's potion may actually kill her. She is also filled with revulsion at the prospect of awakening in the vault, perhaps to encounter the spirits of the dead and with the certain company of Tybalt's fresh corpse. But she steels herself and drinks the potion.

Act IV, Scene 4: The next morning, the wedding day, the Capulet household is astir with last-minute preparations. Capulet sends the Nurse to awaken Juliet.

Act IV, Scene 5: The Nurse, unable to rouse Juliet, raises the alarm that she is dead. Her parents and Paris—who arrives with Friar Laurence and the Musicians intended for the wedding festivities—grieve for her. Friar Laurence counsels acceptance of God's will and ordains her solemn interment in the family vault. Peter then engages the Musicians in a bit of humorous byplay.

Act V, Scene 1: Balthasar arrives at Romeo's refuge in Mantua with the news that Juliet has died. Romeo immediately plans to return to Verona and join his beloved in death; he buys a fast-acting poison from an Apothecary

Act V, Scene 2: Friar John reports to Friar Laurence that he has been unable to deliver Laurence's letter to Romeo. Laurence sends John to fetch a crow bar, planning to open the vault and take Juliet into hiding in his own cell until Romeo can be summoned.

Act V, Scene 3: Paris visits Juliet's tomb at night. His page, posted as a lookout, whistles a warning that someone is coming, and Paris hides. Romeo appears with Balthasar, whom he sends away with a letter to Montague. Balthasar leaves but hides nearby to observe. Romeo breaks into the tomb, and Paris steps forth to challenge him. They fight, as the Page leaves to call the watchman, and Romeo kills Paris. He addresses Juliet, whom he believes to be dead, saying that he will remain with her forever. He drinks the poison and dies. Friar Laurence arrives and views the carnage just as Juliet awakens. He tells Juliet what has happened and begs her to flee, for he can hear the Watchmen coming. She refuses and stays. She kisses her dead lover and stabs herself with his dagger, as the Watchmen appear. They arrest Balthasar and the Friar as the Prince arrives, followed by Juliet's parents and Romeo's father, all of them drawn by the news of the tragedy. The Friar gives an account of Juliet's feigned death and Romeo's misinformation. His tale is confirmed by Balthasar and by Romeo's letter to his father. The Prince points out that the feud between the two families has led to this moment, and Montague and Capulet forswear their hostility and vow to erect golden statues of the two lovers