

# ROMEO AND JULIET

## Act Summaries

### **Prologue**

Arguably Shakespeare's most famous play begins with a Prologue which establishes that this play will be a tragedy and that the children of two feuding families, Romeo of the Montague family and Juliet of the Capulet family, will both love and die in the course of this play...

### **Act I**

Sampson and Gregory, servants to the Capulets and Abraham and Balthasar, servants to the Montague family start a street fight, which is joined by Benvolio (Montague) and Tybalt (Capulet). Escalus, the Prince of Verona who angrily learns of this fight, declares a death penalty for further feuding between the two families. Romeo we learn is lovesick; Rosaline, the object of his affections will not requite (return) his love. His friend Benvolio tells Romeo to look at other girls...

Meanwhile Capulet is keen for Paris to marry his daughter Juliet and plans a party to be held later that night. Romeo and friends decide to turn up uninvited, Romeo hoping to see Rosaline, whom he still pines for...

Lady Capulet discusses the idea of marriage to Paris with Juliet. Juliet keeps her options open. The Nurse wishes Juliet every possible happiness...

Meanwhile Mercutio attempts to cheer a lovesick Romeo up, telling him to be rough with love if need be. At the Capulet's party, Romeo who is disguised by a masque (mask), falls in love with Juliet on sight. Capulet stops Tybalt from attacking Romeo at his party, telling him there will be other opportunities. Both Romeo and Juliet learn that they are each enemies of the other's family... A Prologue sung by a choir dramatizes the conflict both Romeo and Juliet feel between their love for one another and their loyalty to their respective families.

### **Act II**

Ignoring the danger, Romeo scales the Capulet's wall to be near Juliet, the woman he cannot forget... Unnoticed in Juliet's orchard, Romeo learns of Juliet's love for him. After declaring their feelings for each other, the two decide to marry. Juliet will send Romeo a messenger in the morning to make plans for their wedding...

The very next day, we meet Romeo's friend, Friar Laurence. He wonders how Romeo can forget Rosaline so quickly but agrees to marry the two since he hopes this marriage it will end the long running Montague / Capulet feud...

Romeo catches up with his friends Mercutio and Benvolio. Juliet's messenger, the Nurse, arrives and the wedding is set for later that day. The Nurse brings Romeo "cords" or ropes which will allow Romeo to climb into Juliet's bedchamber as her husband later that night... Act II ends with Romeo and Juliet's marriage.

### **Act III**

Benvolio and Mercutio (both Montagues) meet Tybalt (Capulet). Tybalt attempts to provoke Romeo into fighting. Mercutio fights Tybalt and is killed. Romeo then kills Tybalt. Escalus, the Prince of Verona banishes Romeo from Verona threatening death should he ever return. Juliet learns of Romeo killing Tybalt and despite being torn between her loyalty for her family and Romeo, mourns her husband Romeo's banishment.

Romeo learns of the banishment order, realizing he will not be able to see Juliet again. Friar Laurence suggests Romeo go to Juliet's bed chamber to comfort his wife... Capulet, who does not know of Romeo and Juliet's marriage, decides that the marriage of Juliet to Paris must now proceed, bidding his wife to make Juliet aware of Paris' love for her. The day of the marriage has been decided; it will be Thursday. We learn that Romeo has spent the night with his Juliet. Juliet who is now already secretly married to Romeo, learns that she is to marry Paris. She tries to fight her father's wishes, failing to dissuade him. Juliet decides to commit suicide if all else fails...

### **Act IV**

Paris reveals that the wedding will occur on Thursday. Juliet is cold to Paris. Friar Laurence tells Juliet to take a potion simulating death, allowing Romeo to take her away, unopposed to Mantua since everyone will think she is dead at the Capulet's ancient vault or burial ground.

Capulet makes plans for Juliet's wedding. Juliet, who has decided to drink Friar Laurence's potion, no longer opposes the wedding, delighting Capulet.

Hearing this good news, Capulet, who is keen to have Juliet marry Paris decides to move the wedding forward. It will now be on Wednesday morning, not Thursday as previously planned...

Juliet succeeds in sleeping alone which allows her to take the potion in privacy. Juliet worries about the Friar's intentions before the potion takes effect and she falls asleep...

Lady Capulet and the Nurse are busy making preparations for the wedding. It is 3 o'clock in the morning and now Capulet hearing music announcing Paris' arrival, tells the Nurse to wake Juliet. The Capulet's learn that their daughter Juliet is dead. The wedding preparations are changed to those of a funeral.

### **Act V**

In Mantua, Romeo learns of Juliet's death, deciding to risk his own life by returning to Verona at once to see Juliet one last time. Romeo also buys some poison from a local Apothecary.

Friar John explains to Friar Laurence that his letter informing Romeo that Juliet is not dead, did not reach Romeo. Friar Laurence tries again to inform Romeo of his plan and heads off to the Capulet burial chamber where Juliet will soon awaken.

Paris mourns his bride that never was. Romeo arrives, opening Juliet's coffin to look at his love one last time. Paris fights Romeo whom he believes is desecrating Juliet's grave. Paris dies, Romeo placing him beside Juliet. Romeo takes his poison, kisses Juliet and dies. Friar Laurence arrives too late. Juliet, now awakens, asking for her Romeo. Friar Laurence leaves, leaving Juliet alone. Juliet kisses Romeo and stabs herself, dying. The Prince, Capulets, and Montagues arrive, Balthasar and Friar Laurence explaining all. Escalus scolds the two families who finally end their feud. The play ends with the Prince summarizing this tragic love story.