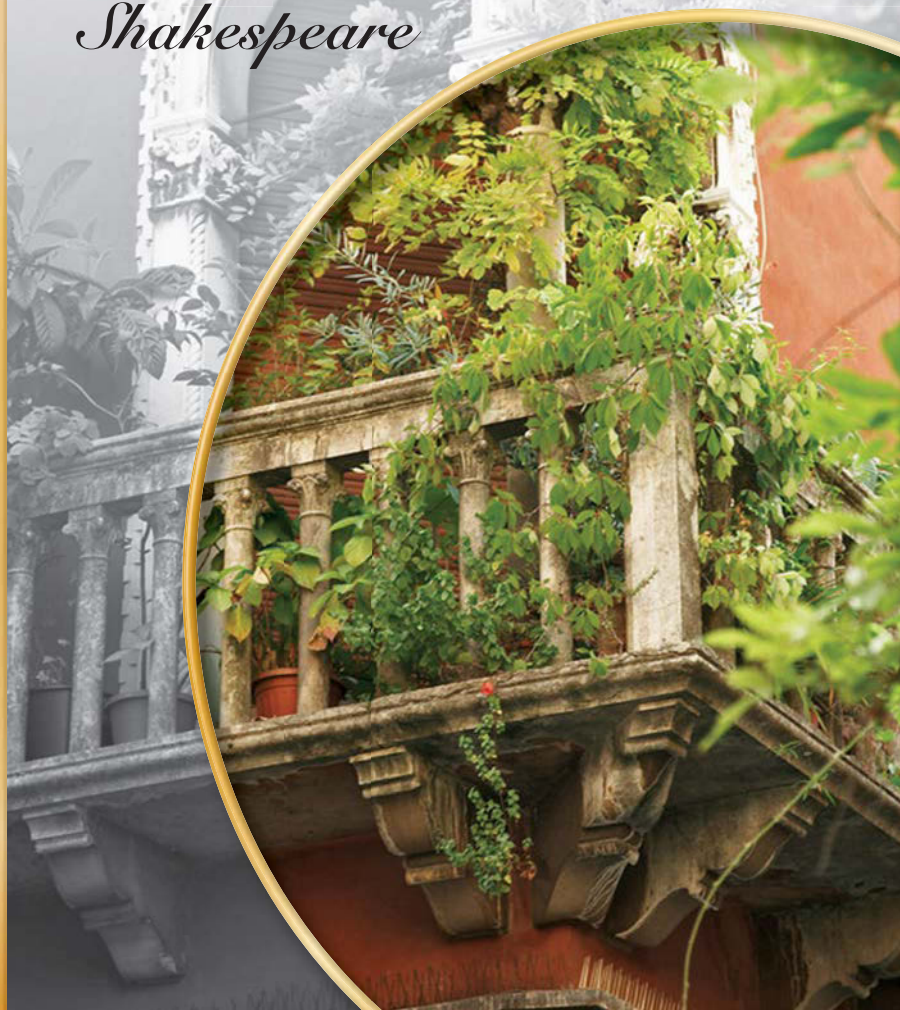


Romeo and Juliet

*William
Shakespeare*

TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE





TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE

Hamlet

Julius Caesar

King Lear

Macbeth

The Merchant of Venice

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Othello

Romeo and Juliet

The Tempest

Twelfth Night



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| The Prologue |

(The **Chorus** enters.)

CHORUS: Two families in Verona, Italy,
equally respected,
Have been feuding for many years.
A daughter of one family and
A son of the other—
A pair of star-crossed lovers—
Take their own lives.
Their pitiful, needless deaths
Bury their parents' feud.
The sad story of their death-marked love
And how it ended their parents' rage
Is the subject of this play. If you listen well,
Our play will fill in the details.

ACT 1

| Scene 1 |

(A street in Verona. **Sampson** and **Gregory** enter.
They are armed with swords.)

SAMPSON: I tell you, Gregory, I won't be
insulted by any of those Montague dogs!

GREGORY: Calm down, Sampson. Remember,
The fight is between our masters—not us.

SAMPSON: It's all the same to me. I would go to the wall against any of them.

GREGORY: Well, you're about to get your chance. Draw your sword. Servants of the Montagues are coming now.

SAMPSON (*drawing his sword*): Pick a fight with them. I'll back you up.

GREGORY: How? Turn your back and run?

SAMPSON: Fear not.

GREGORY: I'm more afraid of what *you* will do than I am of the Montagues.

SAMPSON: Let's keep the law on our side. Let them start it.

GREGORY: I will frown as I pass by. Let them take it as they will.

SAMPSON: Or as they dare! I will thumb my nose at them. They will lose face if they stand for it.

(*Abraham and Balthasar enter.*)

ABRAHAM: Do you thumb your nose at us, sir?

SAMPSON (*aside to Gregory*): Is the law on our side if I say yes?

GREGORY: It is not.

SAMPSON: Then no, sir, I do not thumb my nose at you. But I do thumb my nose.

GREGORY: Do you want to fight, sir?

ABRAHAM: Fight? No, sir!

SAMPSON: Well, if you do, I am ready. I serve
as good a man as you do.

ABRAHAM: As good, perhaps. But no better.

GREGORY: Say “better.” Here comes Benvolio.
He’ll back us up.

SAMPSON: Yes, say *better*, sir.

ABRAHAM: You lie.

SAMPSON: Draw your swords, if you are men.
Gregory, are you ready?

*(They fight. **Benvolio** enters.)*

BENVOLIO: Stop, fools! Put up your swords.
You don’t know what you’re doing.

*(He beats down their swords. **Tybalt** enters.)*

TYBALT: Benvolio, do you fight with servants?
Turn and get ready to die!

BENVOLIO: I’m just trying to keep the peace.
Put your sword away—
Or use it to help me stop this fight.

TYBALT: What? Your sword’s drawn,
And you talk of peace? I hate the sword,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and you!
Come on, coward!

*(They fight. Others, from both sides, join in. Then **Lord and Lady Capulet** enter.)*



CAPULET: What's this? Give me a sword, too!

LADY CAPULET: A crutch is more like it!

Why do you call for a sword?

CAPULET: My sword, I say! Old Montague
Is coming and waving his blade to spite me.

(Lord and Lady Montague enter.)

MONTAGUE: You villain, Capulet!

(to his wife, who is holding him back): Let me go!

LADY MONTAGUE: No! Not one foot to seek a foe!

(Prince Escalus enters, with attendants.)

PRINCE: Rebels, enemies to peace,
Killers of your own neighbors—listen!

Throw down your weapons.
Hear the sentence of your angry prince.
Three fights between your two families
Have disturbed the quiet of our streets.
If you ever disturb our streets again,
You shall pay with your lives.
For now, clear the streets!
You, Capulet, shall go along with me.
And, Montague, you come this afternoon
To hear what I have to say about this case.
Once more, on pain of death, all men leave.

(Everyone exits but Lord and Lady Montague and Benvolio.)

MONTAGUE: Who started this fight, nephew?

BENVOLIO: Capulet's servants and yours
Were fighting hand to hand when I got here.
I drew my sword to part them. Just then,
Tybalt came, with his sword out.
He swung it about and cut the winds, which,
Not being hurt, hissed at him in scorn.
As we were trading blows, more and more
People joined in the fight.
Then the prince came and stopped it.

LADY MONTAGUE: Oh, where is Romeo?

Did you see him today?

I am glad he was not in this fight.

BENVOLIO: Madam, an hour before the sun
Peered from the golden window of the east,

My troubled mind drove me to take a walk.
I saw your son in a grove of sycamores.
I walked toward him, but he saw me
And stole away into the woods.
I could see that he wanted to be alone,
So I did not follow him.

MONTAGUE: He has been seen there often,
Adding tears to the fresh morning's dew.
But as soon as the sun begins to rise,
My son goes home to escape the light.
He locks himself in his room and
Shuts his windows, keeping fair daylight out
And making himself an artificial night.
If he would only tell us what is wrong,
We would do anything we could to help.

BENVOLIO: Well, here he comes.
I'll see if I can find out anything.

MONTAGUE: I hope you can.

(to Lady Montague): Come, madam, let's go.

(Lord and Lady Montague exit. Romeo enters.)

BENVOLIO: Good morning, cousin.

ROMEO: Is the day so young?

Ah, me! Sad hours drag on so!
Was that my father who just left?

BENVOLIO: It was. What sorrow makes your
hours seem so long?

ROMEO: The sadness that comes from love—

Or rather, from not having love.
The woman I love will not listen
To my sweet words, nor look into
My longing eyes, nor accept gifts of gold.
She is rich in beauty. It is so sad that her
Treasure of beauty will die with her.

BENVOLIO: Then she has sworn that she will
live chaste?

ROMEO: She has. And it seems such a waste
That her beauty won't be passed on
to any child.
She has sworn off love, and that cruel vow
Makes me feel like dying now.

BENVOLIO: Listen to me, cousin.
Forget to think of her!

ROMEO: Oh, teach me how to do that!

BENVOLIO: Give liberty to your eyes.
Look at other beauties.

ROMEO: If I did, I would only think of her.
He who goes blind cannot forget
The precious treasure of his lost eyesight.
Show me a woman who is beautiful,
And her beauty would only make me think
Of one who is even more beautiful.
Farewell. You cannot teach me to forget!

BENVOLIO: I will, or I'll die trying!

(Romeo and Benvolio exit.)

| Scene 2 |

(A street in Verona. Lord Capulet, Paris, and a servant enter.)

CAPULET: Montague must obey the prince, too.
It shouldn't be too hard, I think,
For men as old as we are to keep the peace.

PARIS: You are both men of good reputation.
It's a pity you have been enemies for so long!
But now, my lord, what do you say about
My request to marry your daughter Juliet?

CAPULET: I say what I have said before.
My child is still a stranger in the world.
She is not yet 14 years old.
Let two more summers pass before
She will be ready to be a bride.

PARIS: Many girls younger than Juliet
Have become happy mothers.

CAPULET: Such girls are more often ruined.
All my other children have died.
Juliet is the only child I have left.
But woo her, gentle Paris. Get her heart.
My wishes are not as important as hers.
If she agrees, then I will consent.
Tonight I am giving a dinner party.
I have invited many guests.
You are invited, too.
Come to my humble home tonight.

You will see young beauties that,
Like stars, make the dark nighttime bright.
Hear all, see all. Maybe you will decide
That you would prefer a different bride.
(*to the servant, giving him a piece of paper*): Go
through fair Verona. Find the persons
Listed here and tell them that I hope to
see them at the party tonight.

(*Paris and Capulet exit.*)

SERVANT (*aside*): *Find those named on this list!*
He has forgotten that I cannot read.
I must find someone who can.

(*Benvolio and Romeo enter.*)

BENVOLIO: I have some more advice for you.
One fire can burn out another one.
One pain stops when another one starts.
One great grief is cured with a greater
one. Fall in love with someone else,
And the poison of your old love will die.

ROMEO: I am in a prison of my own sorrow.
Nothing can help me, Benvolio.
(*to the servant*): Good day, good fellow.

SERVANT: Good day to you. May I ask, sir, can
you read?

ROMEO: Yes, I can read my own sad future.

SERVANT: Perhaps you can read that without a
book. But can you read anything you see?

ROMEO: Yes, if it is in a language that I know.

SERVANT (*giving Romeo the list*): Please read this.

ROMEO (*reading*): “Martino and his wife and daughters, Count Anselmo and his beautiful sisters, the widow of Vitruvio, Placentio and his lovely nieces, Mercutio and his brother Valentine, my uncle Capulet and his wife and daughters, my fair niece Rosaline, Livia, Valentio and his cousin Tybalt, Lucio and the lively Helena.” That’s quite a group. (*He returns the list.*) Where should they come?

SERVANT: To supper at our house.

ROMEO: Whose house?

SERVANT: My master, the great rich Capulet.
And if you are not of the house of Montague, you may come and have a drink, too. Goodbye now.

(*The servant exits.*)

BENVOLIO: Rosaline, whom you love so much,
Will be at Capulet’s feast. Go there, Romeo.
Compare her face to others you will see.
I’ll make you think your swan is but a crow.

ROMEO: A face more beautiful than Rosaline’s?
If my eye believed such a lie,
Then tears would turn to fires!
One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun
Has never seen her match!

BENVOLIO: How do you know, Romeo?
 You have never compared her to another.
 Tonight, look at some of the other girls.
 I'll show you that Rosaline is not
 The only girl in Verona.

ROMEO: I'll go—no such sight to be shown,
 But to enjoy the beauty of my own.

(Romeo and Benvolio exit.)

| Scene 3 |

(A room in Capulet's house. Lady Capulet and Nurse enter.)

LADY CAPULET: Nurse, where's my daughter?
 Call her.

NURSE: Juliet!

(Juliet enters.)

JULIET: Who wants to see me?

NURSE: Your mother.

JULIET: Mother, I am here. What is your wish?

LADY CAPULET: Nurse, leave us now.

We must talk in secret. No, wait, come back.
 You may stay and listen.
 You know my daughter's age.

NURSE: Of course. I can tell her age to the hour.

LADY CAPULET: She's not 14.