TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE

Romeo and Juliet

William Shakespeare



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– CAST OF CHARACTERS –

Montague family and friends:

ROMEO MONTAGUE: A young man

LORD MONTAGUE: Romeo's father and the enemy of Lord Capulet

LADY MONTAGUE: Romeo's mother

MERCUTIO: Romeo's friend and Prince Escalus's cousin

BENVOLIO: A cousin and friend to Romeo

BALTHASAR: Romeo's servant

ABRAHAM: Lord Montague's servant

FRIAR LAWRENCE: A Franciscan priest

FRIAR JOHN: An associate of Friar Lawrence

Capulet family and friends:

JULIET CAPULET: A 13-year-old girl

LORD CAPULET: Juliet's father and the enemy of Lord Montague

LADY CAPULET: Juliet's mother

NURSE: Juliet's nanny

SAMPSON and **GREGORY:** Servants to Lord Capulet

TYBALT: Juliet's cousin

PARIS: A young man who wants to marry Juliet; Prince Escalus's cousin

PRINCE ESCALUS: Prince and ruler of Verona

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.)*

TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight. Yet the bitter feud between their families forbids all contact. Can the power of their love stand up against such a longstanding history of hatred?

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