

Synopsis of *Romeo and Juliet*

Prologue

This sonnet gives the plot and theme of the entire play: the story of the romance of two young lovers. Because of the death of these two “star-crossed lovers,” the parents of the children end their bitter feud.

Act one, Scenes 1 and 2

Samson and Gregory, who are related to the Capulets, express their hatred of the Montague family. This hatred is a result of an ancient feud between the two families. Servants from the house of Montague walk by, and Samson and Gregory taunt them. They begin to fight with swords. Benvolio, a Montague, tries to stop the fight, but when Tybalt, a Capulet, enters the scene, the fighting grows worse. Prince Escalus of Verona arrives and orders all brawls to end under penalty of death.

Romeo’s parents, the Montagues, are worried about Romeo’s moody sadness. They ask Benvolio to try to find out what is bothering Romeo. He talks with Romeo and discovers that Romeo is swooning with love over Rosaline, but she does not return his affection. Benvolio persuades Romeo to go to a masked ball given by the Capulets in order to compare Rosaline with other lovely young women. There, Benvolio argues that Romeo will see that he does not need to pine for Rosaline when there are other beautiful young women that Romeo could love.

Meanwhile, Count Paris is at the Capulets’ estate, asking for permission to marry Juliet. Capulet gives his consent only if Paris wins Juliet’s love and if he can wait for two years because she is only thirteen.

Act one, Scene 3

Juliet’s nurse and her mother speak to Juliet about Count Paris’s wish to marry her. They feel that Paris would be a good match for Juliet, and Juliet responds by saying she will “look to like” Count Paris, but will not proceed with any relationship without her parents’ consent.

Act one, Scene 4

Romeo and his friends proceed to the Capulets’ ball. On the way, Mercutio gives a long and beautiful speech about the Fairy Queen Mab, who can influence the dreams of people. Just as they are entering the dance, Romeo feels fear about the future.

Act one, Scene 5

At the Capulets’ masked ball, Romeo instantly falls in love with a young woman whose beauty teaches the “torches to burn bright.” He speaks to her, and they kiss. The beautiful young woman is called away, and the Nurse tells Romeo that his new love is Juliet, daughter and only heir of the Capulets. Juliet also learns that the young man she has fallen in love with is a Montague and “the only son of your great enemy.”

Introduction to the Play

During the ball, Tybalt realizes that Romeo has crashed the party, but he is forbidden by Capulet to cause any trouble at the dance. However, Tybalt swears to pay back Romeo later.

Act two, Chorus

In this sonnet, the Chorus tells how Romeo's love for Rosaline has died, and Juliet is now Romeo's new love. Even though they are forbidden to meet, their love is stronger than any other claim on their lives.

Act two, Scene 1

Mercutio and Benvolio look for Romeo after the dance. Mercutio makes fun of Romeo's affection for Rosaline, little realizing that Romeo is now in love with Juliet.

Act two, Scene 2

Romeo is in the Capulets' garden under Juliet's window. He overhears her as she says to the night that she is in love with Romeo. He tells her that he is in the garden, and they exchange passionate words of love. Juliet asks Romeo if he is willing to commit to marriage, and he says he will. They part with great sadness but look forward to a secret marriage.

Act two, Scene 3

Romeo meets the Friar, who is collecting weeds and flowers for medicine. Romeo tells the Friar that he doesn't love Rosaline anymore but loves Juliet instead and wishes the Friar to marry

them. The Friar is unsure of Romeo's heart since he changed his mind so fast. He cautions, "Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast." Still, the Friar likes the idea of making peace between the Montagues and Capulets, and he agrees to marry the pair.

Act two, Scene 4

Romeo meets up with Mercutio and Benvolio. Because of his new love for Juliet, Romeo is in a more social mood, and Mercutio notes, "Now art thou sociable. Now art thou Romeo." The Nurse arrives looking for Romeo and asks if he is serious about his relationship with Juliet. He says yes, and tells the Nurse to have Juliet tell her family she is going to confession, but instead she will be married to Romeo at Friar Lawrence's cell.

Act two, Scenes 5 and 6

Juliet waits impatiently for the Nurse to return with news about Romeo. Upon returning, the Nurse is tired and out of breath, but she enjoys delaying the good news to Juliet. She finally tells Juliet to go to Friar Lawrence's cell where Romeo waits to marry her. At Friar Lawrence's cell, Romeo and Juliet once again declare their love for one another, and the Friar leads them to the church to be married.

Act three, Scene 1

Romeo is in the streets of Verona after his wedding, and meets his friends Benvolio and Mercutio. His friends are in an argument with Tybalt over Romeo's presence at the Capulets'

Introduction to the Play

ball. Tybalt turns his attention to Romeo and seeks to start a fight, but Romeo realizes that Tybalt is Juliet's—and therefore now his own—relative, and so seeks no fight. However, Mercutio, who is Romeo's best friend and a relative of the Prince of Verona, is insulted by Tybalt's accusations and begins to fight with Tybalt. Romeo and Benvolio try to stop the fight, but Tybalt uses that opportunity to stab Mercutio and kill him. Romeo loses his temper at the death of his friend and kills Tybalt. Afraid, Romeo runs away. The citizens and the Prince arrive on the scene, and Benvolio tells the story of what occurred. The Prince banishes Romeo.

Act three, Scene 2

Juliet speaks words of love and desire to be reunited with Romeo. The Nurse enters and tells Juliet that Romeo has been banished for slaying Tybalt. Juliet's sorrow is deep for Tybalt but even more for banished Romeo. She sends the Nurse to Friar Lawrence's cell, where Romeo is hiding, with a ring and the request that Romeo come to her at night to say good-bye.

Act three, Scene 3

In the Friar's cell, Romeo is extremely upset about all his misfortunes. The Friar tries to cheer him up but is unsuccessful. The Nurse arrives and tells Romeo that Juliet wishes to say good-bye and gives him her ring. Romeo leaves for Juliet's room with a warning from Friar Lawrence to be back before daybreak.

Act three, Scene 4

Old Capulet decides to go ahead with Juliet's marriage to Paris, despite the death of Tybalt. He is sure that Juliet will go along with his wishes, totally unaware that she is already married to Romeo.

Act three, Scene 5

Romeo and Juliet regretfully say good-bye after their only night together. After Romeo departs, Juliet's mother comes in her room to tell her that she is to marry Count Paris. Juliet refuses. Her father and the Nurse arrive, and Old Capulet is very angry at Juliet's attitude. He demands that she marry Paris or be cast out of her house to "beg, starve, die in the streets." Everyone leaves Juliet except the Nurse, who advises Juliet to marry Paris since Romeo is banished anyway. When Juliet realizes no one cares about her situation, she vows to go to Friar Lawrence for a solution or else kill herself.

Act four, Scene 1

Juliet meets Paris in Friar Lawrence's cell, where she has gone to seek advice. The Friar tells her to pretend to agree to marriage with Count Paris but then to take a potion that will cause her to seem dead. She will be put in the family's tomb, where Romeo, who has been told of the situation, will come and free her and take her with him to Mantua. Juliet would rather die than marry Paris, and she agrees to the Friar's desperate plan.

Introduction to the Play

Act four, Scenes 2 and 3

Juliet returns from Friar Lawrence and tells her parents that she agrees to marry Paris. They are very relieved, and Capulet plans to spend the entire night getting ready for the marriage feast. Alone in her room, Juliet imagines the horror of waking up in the Capulet's tomb or wonders if the potion will kill her. She finally drinks the entire potion and falls upon her bed.

Act four, Scenes 4 and 5

There is a bustle around the house in preparation for Juliet's wedding. The Nurse goes to wake up Juliet. She discovers that Juliet is "dead," and everyone grieves. The Friar comes to perform the wedding and acts as a comfort to the family, stating that Juliet is now in heaven and they should not be so sad. Then the musicians, who have been dismissed because there is no wedding, make puns and jokes.

Act five, Scene 2

Unaware of Friar Lawrence's plan, Balthazar arrives in Mantua and tells Romeo that Juliet is dead. Romeo, upset and angry at fate, buys poison with the intent to drink it in Juliet's tomb and join her in death. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence learns that Romeo never received the letter he sent informing him that Juliet was sleeping in the family tomb awaiting Romeo's

arrival. The Friar gets ready to break into Juliet's tomb to be there when she wakes up.

Act five, Scene 3

Romeo meets Paris at the Capulets' tomb. Paris has come to bring flowers and perfume to honor Juliet's memory. Paris challenges Romeo to fight, and Romeo refuses at first, wishing only to join Juliet. But when Paris calls Romeo a felon, Romeo fights with Paris, and Paris is killed. Romeo places Paris in the Capulet tomb and then finds Juliet. He is amazed that she looks so lifelike. He gives Juliet a final kiss and then drinks the poison.

Friar Lawrence enters the graveyard about 30 minutes after Romeo takes the poison. He enters the Capulet monument to find Romeo and Paris dead. Then, Juliet wakes up. The Friar tells her that Romeo and Paris are now dead and she should flee with him. Juliet refuses to leave Romeo, and the Friar leaves her. She kisses Romeo and stabs herself.

The watchman finds the scene of death at the Capulet monument, and soon everyone arrives in the churchyard: the Capulets, the Montagues, the Prince, and finally the Friar. The Friar tells the story of all that went wrong. The Prince blames the deaths of Romeo and Juliet on their parents' feud. He says, "All are punished." In the face of such a tremendous loss, Capulet and Montague make peace with each other.