

## Romeo and Juliet - the story

The Montagues, Romeo's family, and the Capulets, Juliet's family, hate each other because of some ancient unexplained feud.

At the start of the play servants from the two families fight in the street - the third brawl - which annoys Prince Escalus. He says any further fighting will result in the death penalty. We find out that Romeo is sad because he is in love with Rosaline who doesn't love him.

Paris visits Lord Capulet to ask if he can marry Juliet. Capulet says she is too young but he can court her to see if she likes him. He invites Paris to a masked ball that night.

Lady Capulet tells Juliet, in front of the Nurse, that Paris will be at the ball. Juliet says she will look at him but promises no more. Mother and the Nurse would like to see her married.

Romeo and his friends, including Benvolio and Mercutio, make their way to the ball wearing masks. Mercutio has been invited because he is a relative of Escalus and he takes the Montagues along wearing masks so they won't be recognised. Romeo is still sad and apprehensive about what may happen. Mercutio is a joker and a very passionate man.

Tybalt, Juliet's hot-headed cousin, recognises Romeo's voice and wants to start a fight at the ball but is stopped by Capulet, who says he bears Romeo no grudge and believes him to be a good man. Romeo sees Juliet and immediately they fall in love. Only at the end of the ball does each find out who the other is.

On the way home, Romeo gives his friends the slip and climbs into the Capulet's garden. Juliet is on her balcony talking to herself about how much she loves him and how she wishes he was not a Montague. He listens a while then shows himself. After much lovey-dovey chat, Juliet suggests they get married and arranges to send a messenger the following day to find out what Romeo has managed to arrange.

Romeo visits his priest, Friar Lawrence, who agrees to marry them in the hope it will reunite the two families.

Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio are in Verona the next day when the Nurse comes from Juliet. They tease her (which she secretly enjoys). Mercutio is pleased to see Romeo looking so happy again, though he does not know the reason. Romeo tells the Nurse that he has arranged the wedding at Friar Lawrence's cell later in the day and the Nurse says she will hang a rope-ladder over Juliet's balcony that evening.

The Nurse makes Juliet wait for the good news, complaining for ages about her aches and pains.

Romeo and Juliet are married in secret by the Friar.

That same afternoon Mercutio and Benvolio are in the street when Tybalt comes by looking for Romeo to get revenge for his gate-crashing the Capulet's ball. Mercutio and Tybalt taunt each other then Romeo arrives on the way back from his marriage. He refuses to fight Tybalt (now they are related) but Mercutio is spoiling for a fight and draws his sword. Romeo and Benvolio try to stop them - Romeo steps between them and Tybalt stabs Mercutio and flees. Mercutio is carried away to his house and Benvolio returns to say he is dead. Romeo, distraught at his friend's death, seeks out Tybalt and kills him in a sword fight. Romeo runs away and Prince Escalus arrives. He banishes Romeo from Verona - to take effect from dawn the next day.

Juliet is waiting impatiently for Romeo to come to her when the Nurse bursts in and tells her the news. At first she blames Romeo but changes her mind as soon as the Nurse starts to criticise him. The Nurse says she knows where he is and will bring him to her.

Romeo is wailing in Friar Lawrence's cell. The Friar tells him off and says he has been lucky - he is still alive and has not been sentenced to death. He tells Romeo that he should go and live in Mantua until such a time as the marriage can be made known and hopefully then the Prince will pardon him. The Nurse arrives to tell Romeo that Juliet is waiting for him.

The Capulets assume that Juliet's grief is caused by the death of Tybalt so Lord Capulet comes up with a cunning plan to cheer her up. He invites Paris to the house and tells him that Juliet will marry him in two days!

Romeo and Juliet spend their one night together and Romeo reluctantly leaves at dawn to begin his exile in Mantua. Almost immediately Lady Capulet comes to announce the wedding to Paris. Juliet is horrified and refuses. Lord Capulet enters and is absolutely livid, threatening to put her out into the street if she doesn't obey him. When they leave she turns to the Nurse for comfort but the Nurse merely advises her to marry Paris. Juliet expected more - the Nurse *knows* she is already married.

In desperation she goes to Friar Lawrence. He too is horrified - how can he marry Juliet to Paris when yesterday he married her to Romeo? He likes to make potions out of herbs and suddenly thinks of a

way out for both of them. He gives Juliet a vial of liquid which he says will make her look dead for 42 hours. She will be placed in the family vault. The Friar will send word to Romeo and he and Romeo will be there when she 'wakes up' and she can go off to Mantua with her husband.

While the Capulet household is preparing for the wedding, Juliet begs to be left alone. She drinks the potion after much worrying about what will happen to her. Perhaps the Friar has just given her poison. Perhaps she'll wake up before 42 hours and go mad in a tomb with all her dead relatives. But anything is better than marrying Paris.

She is found apparently dead and all the preparations for the wedding are turned into preparations for her funeral.

Balthasar, Romeo's servant arrives in Mantua and tells Romeo that Juliet is dead. He goes to buy poison, intending to kill himself and lie in the tomb with her.

Friar Lawrence asks his messenger to Romeo, Friar John, what reply there is from Romeo. Friar John says he called in a suspected plague house on the way to visit a sick friend and was not allowed to leave so Romeo has not had the news about the plan. Friar Lawrence rushes off to the vault to meet Juliet, intending to hide her in his cell until he can write again to Romeo.

Meanwhile Romeo arrives at the vault to find Paris putting flowers there. Paris assumes Romeo has come to desecrate the grave of his family's enemy and draws his sword. Romeo kills him and enters the vault. He sees Juliet apparently dead as he had been told and, after much wailing, drinks the poison and dies beside her. Friar Lawrence arrives and tries to shield the now awakening Juliet from the body of Romeo but he hears voices approaching so, afraid of what he has done, he runs away. Juliet sees the body and overcome with grief stabs herself with Romeo's dagger.

Friar Lawrence is caught trying to make his escape and tells the whole story to Prince Escalus, the Capulets and the Montagues. The families end their feud and agree that the two lovers should be buried side by side. Montague says he will have a gold statue made of Juliet and Capulet says he will do the same for Romeo.