

Romeo and Juliet



The Shorter Shakespeare

Adapted from William Shakespeare

By Tracy Irish

CAREL PRESS



Above: *The Public Theater* in Central Park, New York, Oscar Isaac, Alexander Sovronsky.
Below: *The Guthrie Theater*, Minneapolis, Christine Marie Brown. Photos: Michal Daniel



The Prologue

- Chorus 1:** Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
- Chorus 2:** From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
- Chorus 3:** The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but for their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
- Chorus 1:** The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.



The Royal Exchange Theatre Company, Manchester Photo: Stephen Vaughan

Act 1 Scene 1

Verona's Streets

Two Capulet servants, Gregory and Sampson, are talking in the street. Two Montague servants, Abraham and Balthasar, come by.

Gregory: Here comes two of the house of the Montagues.

Sampson: Quarrel; I will back thee.

Gregory: How? Turn thy back and run?

Sampson: Fear me not.

Gregory: I will frown as they pass by and let them take it as they list.

Sampson: Nay as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

Sampson aims this insulting gesture at the Montague servants who cannot ignore it.

Abraham: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Sampson: I do bite my thumb, sir.

Abraham: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Gregory: Do you quarrel, sir?

Abraham: Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

Sampson: But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you. Draw if you be men.

A fight breaks out. Benvolio and Tybalt enter from opposite directions.

Benvolio: Part fools!

Put up your swords; you know not what you do.

Tybalt approaches Benvolio, who speaks to him

I do but keep the peace: put up thy sword.

Act 4 Scene 3

Juliet's Bedroom

*Juliet and the Nurse are laying out clothes for the wedding.
Lady Capulet enters.*

Lady Capulet: What, are you busy, ho? Need you my help?

Juliet: So please you, let me now be left alone,
And let the Nurse this night sit up with you,
For I am sure you have your hands full all
In this so sudden business.

Lady Capulet: Good night.
Get thee to bed and rest, for thou hast need.

Lady Capulet and the Nurse leave.

Juliet: Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins.
I'll call them back again to comfort me.
– Nurse! – What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come vial!
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?
No, no! This shall forbid it. Lie thou there.

She lays her dagger beside her.

What if it be poison which the Friar
Subtly hath minist'ed to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonoured
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is; and yet methinks it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point!
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in?

Or, if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place –
Where for this many hundred years the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are packed,
Where bloody Tybalt lies festering in his shroud,
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints?

Chorus 1: Juliet is terrified of what may await her – but her choices are limited. She is alone with her fears.

Chorus 3: Her love for Romeo gives her courage.

Juliet: Romeo, Romeo, Romeo, here's drink! I drink to thee!

Juliet drinks the potion and falls on her bed.



The Public Theater in Central Park, New York, Lauren Ambrose. Photo: Michal Daniel