Prologue

Original Text

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.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Modern Translation

In the beautiful city of Verona, where our story takes place,

a long-standing hatred between two families erupts into new violence,

and citizens stain their hands with the blood of their fellow citizens.

Two unlucky children of these enemy families become lovers and commit suicide.

Their unfortunate deaths put an end to their parents' feud.

For the next two hours, we will watch the story of their doomed love and their parents' anger,

which nothing but the children’s deaths could stop.

If you listen to us patiently, we’ll make up for everything we’ve left out in this prologue onstage.
Romeo and Juliet

Name: ____________________

Act 1 (I)

The opening lines sum up the entire play: Two families have fought each other for what could be over a century. A son from one house and a daughter from the other house fall in love, but this love is not meant to be. Both lovers will take their lives, and their deaths will bring peace to both houses.

After the prologue, the scene shifts to the streets of Verona where two of Capulet’s men (Sampson and Gregory) discuss the tension between their lord and lord Montague. During their discussion they notice Abraham and Balthasar, two of Montague’s men. After a little prodding, Sampson gets Gregory to start an argument with the Montagues. A fight breaks out between the men, causing all of the people in the streets to begin fighting. Benvolio tries to stop the fight, but is attacked by Tybalt. The Prince arrives with his men and breaks up the fight. He announces that if anyone from either house disturbs the peace once more, they will be put to death.

After the fight, Benvolio is sent to find Romeo. Romeo has been brooding all morning because the love of his life does not love him anymore. He can’t imagine how he can ever find joy, happiness, or love without Rosaline. Benvolio tries to cheer up Romeo. During their conversation, a Capulet servant walks by and asks if they could read the note that he is carrying. The note is actually a list of people that are invited to Capulet’s house for a party. Benvolio, seeing Rosaline’s name on the list, persuades Romeo to go to the party and compare Rosaline’s beauty with the other women at the party. Basically, Benvolio is telling Romeo that there is more than one woman in the world.

Paris asks Capulet for Juliet’s hand in marriage. Capulet says to give her two more years and that he will agree to the marriage if it is what Juliet wants.

The next scene begins at the House of Capulet. The Nurse has raised Juliet since she was born, as was the custom for most births of royalty or nobles. Lady Capulet tells Juliet that Paris, a young count and cousin of the Prince, wishes to marry Juliet. Juliet is told that she will meet him at the party that night, and she is asked if she can like him. She states that she will try if that is what they want her to do.

Later that evening, Romeo, Benvolio, Mercutio, and around five or six other men are making their way to the party. Mercutio tends to be a joker, and he makes fun of Romeo because of his attitude about love. Romeo then says he dreamt that it wasn’t a good idea to go to the party. Mercutio then says that dreams lie, and he begins a long speech about dreams. The speech becomes so strange that Romeo stops him and tells Mercutio that he speaks nonsense.

The group attends the party, but while they are there, Tybalt recognizes Romeo. He wants to kill Romeo, but Capulet refuses. As long as Romeo is there and causing no trouble, Capulet doesn’t want the Prince’s wrath on his house. It isn’t long before Romeo sees Juliet, and all thoughts of Rosaline vanish. The two exchange words and are instantly attracted to one another. Of course, as the guests leave, both Romeo and Juliet learn that each have fallen in love with their enemy.
After the party, Romeo sneaks away from his friends and cousin. He hides in the orchard below Juliet’s window. Juliet appears and talks to herself about her love for Romeo. Unable to contain himself, Romeo leaps out from hiding. They talk to each other of love and each vows love to the other. Juliet says she will send her Nurse to Romeo tomorrow, and he is to tell her when and where they will be married.

The next morning Romeo tells Friar Laurence about his plans to marry Juliet. He agrees to help the two lovers because he hopes that the marriage will end the feud between the two houses.

Romeo meets up with Benvolio and Mercutio. Mercutio teases Romeo saying he left them to be with Rosaline. The Nurse comes soon after their dialog, and Romeo tells her that he wants Juliet to meet him at Friar Laurence’s cell. She agrees to tell Juliet the meeting place.

Juliet waits impatiently for the Nurse’s return. When the Nurse arrives, she doesn’t tell Juliet the news right away. She is teasing Juliet, but she finally tells her the details of the plan. Juliet meets Romeo and Friar Laurence marries the two.
Romeo and Juliet  

Act 3 (III)  

This act returns to Mercutio, Benvolio, and the other men. They speak of how unusually hot the day is which can often cause people to anger quicker than usual. Soon Tybalt and some other Capulets confront Mercutio asking if he knows where Romeo is hiding. Romeo soon enters and Tybalt challenges him to a duel, but Romeo refuses saying that he must love Tybalt now (of course we know why – he married Juliet). However, Mercutio draws his sword and fights Tybalt. Romeo tries to stop the fight, but accidentally gets Mercutio mortally wounded. Mercutio dies.

Romeo becomes so enraged that he challenges Tybalt. Romeo eventually kills Tybalt. The Prince learns of the deaths, but because Romeo killed Tybalt for killing Mercutio, Romeo is given the chance to leave Verona forever. If he is found within the city he will be executed.

Juliet grieves for both Tybalt and Romeo. She has conflicting emotions about the events that have taken place, but she eventually gains her composure and stands behind her husband. She tells the Nurse to find Romeo and have him come to her before he leaves the city.

Romeo goes to Friar Laurence. All Romeo can think about is dying, but the Friar chastises him for not thanking God for the Prince’s mercy. The Nurse enters and also scolds him for his lack of strength. Romeo tries to stab himself with a dagger, but the Nurse snatches it away. Friar Laurence tells Romeo to stop his crying and demands that he see Juliet. He then says that Romeo should stay out of the city until they can tell everyone about his marriage to Juliet and beg the Prince to pardon him. Romeo leaves to see Juliet one last time.

Juliet and Romeo spend his last night in Verona together and he leaves. Lady Capulet enters her room and tells Juliet that Capulet has decided she will marry Paris that week. Juliet is of course angered by it. Capulet threatens to disown her if she does not marry Paris so she reluctantly agrees. When he leaves, she asks the Nurse what she should do, but the Nurse says she should marry Paris because Romeo is essentially dead if she can’t see him. Seeing that the Nurse will not help her, she lies and says to tell her mother that she is going to Laurence’s cell for confession because she disobeyed her father.
Romeo and Juliet

Act 4 (IV)

Paris tells the Friar that he is marrying Juliet on Thursday of that week. Juliet enters and Paris leaves. Juliet asks the Friar to help her, and he comes up with a plan. He gives her a potion that will make it appear as if she has died in her sleep. It will last for 42 hours and she will awake in the tomb. He will send a letter to Romeo to let him know what is happening so Romeo can be there to let her out of the tomb. Juliet takes the poison and returns home.

Juliet acts as if nothing is wrong and continues to make the others believe she is preparing to marry Paris. While everyone is busy with the wedding preparations, Juliet takes the poison. They find her body the next morning.
Romeo and Juliet

Act 5 (V)

While Romeo waits in Mantua, his servant comes and tells him that he saw Juliet being placed in the Capulet tomb. Romeo is not ready to believe she is dead. He buys a poison that will kill him instantly and leaves to see if her death is truth. In the meantime, Friar Laurence sends the letter to Romeo, but it is too late.

When Romeo gets to the tomb, he encounters Paris. The two men fight and Romeo kills Paris. He enters the tomb and sees Juliet. Thinking she is dead he drinks the poison and dies instantly. The Friar races to the tomb, but he is too late and sees Romeo dead on the floor beside Juliet. She awakens to find Romeo dead beside her. The town guards can be heard so the Friar leaves. Juliet takes Romeo’s dagger and stabs herself.

Montague, Capulet, and the Prince arrive. The Friar explains everything that has happened. Montague and Capulet finally see how much damage their feuding has done so they decide to end the war between their houses. As the Prince says, "[It is] a glooming peace this morning with it brings. / ...For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo. (V, iii, 305-310)