

R&J
ONCE IN VERONA

By Scott Alderdice and Bill Shakespeare

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SCENE ONE - THE PROLOGUE

Ok. So, here it is,
Way back, like four hundred years.
Two households – that's families;
In Verona – that's Italy –
They could not bear each other's face
Always fightin', tearin' up the place
And into all this ancient hate
Two kids were born, and it was fate
The pair of them, they got it on
Which did not work – it all went wrong
These kids, they said, were born, star-crossed,
Which meant Fate would make 'em pay a cost
For darin' to believe in love –
For darin' to step up above
The hate and vengeful rage and pain
And now - what were these two kid's name?
One Montague, one Capulet.
One Romeo One Juliet.
And their story? Here. We're tellin' it

SCENE TWO

A throbbing tense bass beat
Deep midnight.
Verona.
Still and quiet
When round the corner
Of the city square
Comes a rowdy hangin' bangin' pair
Of Capulets –
Just enough party in them
To get some trouble started when
They pull up on the cobblestones

And from the shadows, movin' slow –
 'Montagues!'

.....

They eye each other 'cross the square
 'What are they doin' there?'
 'What are we?'

When suddenly –

'D'you bite your thumb at us?'

Which in Verona is a serious

Smack down – a major diss-

'Hey buddy! D'you bite your thumb like this?!'

An' it was on.

Knives and fists and cobblestones!

The word spat out through the night

'The square!' 'Fight!' 'Fight!' 'Fight!'

Tumblin' down the city streets –

Snatchin' weapons – poundin' feet!

When 'Stop! No! Hear me speak!'

.....

Benvolio – a Montague.

'Go home! All of you!

This is not something we need to do.'

'Benvolio!'

An' he was there.

Standin' in the city square.

Tybalt, Master of Arms, Prince of Cats –

Crazy mad enforcer of the Capulets –

'What? Too high now to fight? Too proud?!

Or maybe just too much a coward!'

And with a scream that shook the town

The fight exploded all around

The square became a seething gash

A heaving mess of thrashing slashing flashing blades

And widows made and broken bones
 And glass and stones and gasping screams of agony
 A vengeance hatred tragedy
 Of desperation, strangulation, ruination, abomination –
 This was a city – this was a nation –
 Tearing itself into destruction when –
Huge sound
 The Duke of Verona
 The city governor
 'I am over this. Through!
 You Capulets. You Montague.
 The city streets of Verona flow
 With your blood. Your murder. And our sorrow!
 If ever you break the peace again –
 Through word or action or pain for pain –
 If once you draw weapon, gun or knife –
 I will threaten you your hate-filled life!
 'Now all of you, to your homes!
 And they took their hate – each one alone
 And wrapped it up close and warm.
 And though it left – it wasn't gone.

SCENE THREE

'Where's my son? Where's Romeo?'
 That's his Mum. 'Where 'd he go?'
 So Benvolio gets the gig
 Search high and low and find the kid
 Which around dawn, he fin'lly does –
 'Romeo! What's up Cuz?'
 But Romeo is a trussed up mess –
 Locked up inside; dismayed; distressed.
 He can not think or sleep or eat –
 He's lost and found there on the street –

'If I didn't know I'd take a bet –
 In Love?' 'No! Out of it!'
 'Out of love? That's a gain!
 Who's the girl? What's her name?'
 'What's the point? She friend zoned me.'
 'Then dump her, dude. Press delete.'
 'There's a million babes out there to meet.'
 'Not like her. Like Rosalinde.'
 'O dude. Give me time!'

SCENE FOUR

About then, in the Capulet Estate
 A Young man, began to negotiate
 A clever plan for a safer world,
 'But you understand, it involves your girl.'
 'Juliet? What's this to her?'
 'She is young and vulnerable and, Sir.
 This scrappiness, this war-torn place –
 What chance of happiness? She isn't safe.'
 But I can protect her delicateness
 I can provide her wealth and finesse;
 Servants, and refined company
 All she must needs is come with me.'
 The young man smiled and bowed his head
 'And the price she pays?' 'My marriage bed.'
 'She is too young,' her father cried
 'Girls her age are already brides.
 It is a hungry grasping world
 And I can keep your little pearl
 Still dangled on the string of life,
 But she must surely be my wife.'
 'Tonight the Capulet Fam'ly Ball
 Will gather to this house all

The beautiful young glittering things
 Of Verona town to dance and sing,
 Look on them – take your pick.’
 ‘You play me Sir, and with respect,
 I’ve made my pick. It’s Juliet.’
 ‘Servants! Someone! A messenger.
 Take about the town this register.
 Spread the word. Invite them all
 To the Capulet Family Ball!
 Your name, good Sir, so you won’t be harassed
 By Security and then be bashed and embarrassed.’
 ‘My name, Monsieur, is Mister Paris.’

SCENE FIVE

‘This one, Romeo. This one’ – ‘No.’
 ‘Check it this one, this one, this one – ‘Bro’
 ‘You’re wasting time,
 The only girl here on my mind,
 Is Rosaline. Rosaline!’
 ‘Excuse me, Sirs,’ came a voice real slow –
 ‘But I wonder if either you Gentlemen know,
 The people on this invite list –
 For reading I’ve no confidence –
 Now isn’t that a coincidence – ‘
 And when Romeo ran his eye –
 ‘O My God! Ben! It’s Rosaline!
 We’re goin’ to this -?’
 ‘Capulet Ball.’
 ‘The Capulet’s?! Dude – all
 Our enemies are in that place.’
 ‘We’ll wear masks man–hide our face!’
 ‘You’ve heard of stalking? Just gotta say...’
 And the messenger went on his way.

SCENE SIX

Let's take a pause – cause we aint yet –
 Met our girl – Juliet.
 She's sitting in her room alone–
 Where in her time, chaperoned
 By a Nurse or trusted family friend
 All her youthful days she'd spend
 Waiting for that fateful call –
 'Juliet! It's the Family Ball!'
 'Put on something elegant
 With a little trashy suggestive hint
 Of fun times to be investigated –
 You don't want to be relegated
 To virgin status all your life.'
 'She wants to be a good man's wife!'
 said her Mother to the foul mouthed Nurse.
 'Well you can't do too much worse
 Than your Mother did at her first dance –"
 'Juliet, this is your chance –'
 ' -To get up close to a pair of pants.'
 'To find some gentle true romance.'
 'But what if I don't want a man?'
 'O My God!' ' She's a lesbian!'
 'No, I'm just saying I'm still young –
 What if I just want some fun – '
 'Don't be vulgar.' 'Don't be dumb.'
 'Now let's get you dressed.' 'We'll find someone.'

SCENE SEVEN

Outside the Ball,
 Keepin' it low;
 Benvolio -
 Romeo

And a cool arsed dude –
Mercutio
Rude and brash
The dude was flash
As a dagger
Glittered in jewels.
Born to shatter
Hearts and rules
'Romeo',
said Mercutio,
'This evening that you've organized,
You don't mind if I fraternize
With that little babe called Rosaline?'
'She wouldn't give you that much time.'
'Half that much is all I need
To finish up my true love's deed!'
'I think that I just saw my death!'
Romeo had snatched his breath
'I had a premonition too...'
'Oh yeh – wha'd yours say to you?'
'We hang out here my friend then I'm afraid
We are never gonna get you laid!'

SCENE EIGHT

The Capulet Family Ball
Was a garish raging festival
Of lights and sights to blow your mind
Trays of drinks of every kind,
Tables piled with delicacies,
And through halls and floors and balconies
'Girls! Of beauties glamorous
Just lucky I'm feeling amorous!'
Romeo had slipped right off

When suddenly his world just stopped –
‘She doth teach the torches to burn bright!
I never saw true beauty ‘till this night.’
Romeo chased her through the crowd –
And that’s when Tybalt turned around –
‘This man’s a Montague!’ he fumed
‘Fetch my sword. This chump is doomed!’
But Warlord Capulet had seen
Tybalt’s move and intervened
‘What’s causing you such trouble, friend?’
‘A Montague Uncle, has slimed in.’
‘Romeo? There’s no bad in him.’
‘Not once I’ve stuck my blade in him.’
‘Hot! Too hot you are to see!
Have you forgot the Duke’s decree?’
There’ll be no trouble here be made.
So take a pill. Put up your blade.’
‘This is an insult to the family.’
‘Are you the head honch now? Or Me?’
‘The Duke’s words get them in your head.
You cause a fight – you end up dead!
Juliet felt a gentle hand –
‘If I profane with my unworthiest hand – ‘
He was a young striking man –
‘My lips two blushing pilgrims stand,’
His eyes, his fingers, words, his lips –
‘To smooth that touch with a tender kiss.’
‘Madam!’ The Nurse just dropped in.
‘What news, girl? What’s happening?’
When suddenly alarms rang out
And Tybalt’s men with weapons out
Stormed the Hall – ‘Lock the doors!’
The crowd erupts! The crowd roars

Romeo and Benvolio
Leap out through a basement window
'What man was that?' cries Juliet.
'That you were kissing?' 'Well, I guess.'
'That man young Miss, is a Montague.
Which means a problem, girl. For you.'

SCENE NINE

In the panic - in the chaos
Romeo got himself way lost
And raced into a cobbled lane
'Romeo!' they called his name –
But Romeo was spun right out –
He needed time to work stuff out –
He hauled himself up on a wall
And as again his name they called
He dropped down on the other side
So when Mercutio and Ben arrived
'Let him go. He's gone to ground.
You can not find what won't be found.
Romeo – good night! Adieu!
As you treat Fortune, dude, it's true
The Lady Fortune she treats you.

SCENE TEN

Romeo turned around
Blossoms softly floating down
Where was he
In all these trees
An orchard maybe
Standing in the moonlit night
When a light
Went bright in an upstairs window

And right before Romeo
'That's her. The girl - for certain,'
Stepped out through her bedroom curtain
'Romeo, Romeo,'
- who dived back in the shadow,
'Wherefore art thou Romeo?'
What was this girl's game?
'Deny thy father and refuse thy name,'
What was his?
He was sweating?
Shaking?
What was this?
He was hangin' on her ever'y breath
His heart was bustin' out his chest.
'And for that name take all of me!'
'I take thee at thy word -!'
She screamed!
'Who hides out there?'
'Me!'
'Romeo?'
'In one go!'
'Are you stalking me?'
'No - I - ! Yes! Probably.'
'If my cousin Tybalt finds you - '
'Let him come!
For you I'd take on anyone!'
'You're quite cute when you're being dumb.'
'I have to say, with all respect
Juliet
You up on that balcony
Are quite possibly at least to me
The hottest girl in my reality.'
'Is that a compliment?'

'I think that's how it was meant.'
And Romeo climbed up next to her –
'You're pushing your luck, aren't you, Sir.'
'I'm just following my instincts, true,'
'And where do you think that gets you?'
'Nowhere, I'm already here.'
Them's the words a girl wants to hear.
All night they spent on the balcony
Talking and keeping company
And a little extra curricular
Nothin' too particular
Until suddenly the dawn was there
'You have to go. If they find you here – '
'I'm comin' back – '
'No. It's too dangerous.'
'What? You mean this is us?'
We're done?'
'No – I – '
'This town is nothin' this town is one
great mess of hate and death –
And now we find something
That makes me believe in one thing,
That makes me believe in life – '
'Then you'll have to make me your wife.'
'Are you kidding me?'
'That's the only way that we can be
Together – they won't part us.
What? Do you want to keep seeing others?'
'No. It's just...OK.'
'When do you want to do this?'
'Today?'
'Sounds like a plan to me.'
'Then you are going to marry me?'

'Juliet,' he got down on his knee –
 'Will you please marry me?'
 'I'll think about it.'
 'What?'
 'OK!
 I wish it were already day!'
 'Juliet!' Day had arrived.
 'The Nurse is calling –'
 'I'll just hide – '
 'No. You have to go.'
 And Romeo climbed down real slow.
 'I'll send the Nurse to know where and when.'
 'I'm getting married! What just happened then?'

SCENE ELEVEN

Footsteps ringing' on cobblestones
 But Romeo's not racing home.
 He runs out to the edge of town
 To an old church broken down
 Where a priest lives in semi-exile
 Out of favour for a while
 Romeo bursts in his room
 'I'm getting married!' 'When?' 'This afternoon!'
 'I warn you boys time after time.
 Have you knocked up Rosaline?'
 'Rosaline? Who are you speakin' of?
 No! It's Juliet , man I love!'
 'Juliet? Of the Capulet?'
 'Impressed ya, hey? Yeh, I bet.'
 'Have you heard of the Family feud?'
 'We're above all that. It's cool. It's good.'
 'They will string you from the nearest tree.'
 'I spent all night on her balcony.'

‘On her balcony or her bedroom?’
 ‘Does it matter?’
 ‘You’re getting married. Soon.’
 ‘You bring the girl. I’ll get it done.’
 And Romeo began to run.

SCENE TWELVE

Verona in the summer heat
 Was too hot and cross out on the street
 But Mercutio and Benvolio
 Were on the trawl for Romeo;
 ‘No one’s seen him since last night.’
 ‘If Tybalt found him – ‘He’ll be right.’
 ‘Tybalt’s put it round the town
 Romeo is going down
 For breakin’ in their fam’ly Ball –
 ‘With the Duke’s law? That’s Tybalt’s call.’
 When round the corner racing fast –
 ‘Romeo!’ ‘Shows up at last!’
 ‘Where have you been?! You’re irresponsible!
 Ben was worried sick! Inconsolable!
 And you just turn up with a silly grin.
 Look at this. What is up with him?’
 ‘I had some business to attend – ‘
 ‘O dreamin’!’ ‘What’s her name then?’
 ‘Her name is – ‘ ‘Good day gentlemen!’
 The Nurse was there with a stern face.
 ‘That’s her? Dude. You disgrace!’
 ‘Is there a Romeo standing near.’
 ‘That’s me.’ ‘That’s him. Be gentle dear.’
 ‘Don’t you gentle me, you loud mouthed lout.
 Now leave us be. Go on. Get out!’
 ‘Now if you lead her on young man – ‘

'No! Nurse! I have a plan!
 And Romeo led the Nurse away
 'I want to marry her. Today!!'

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Juliet sitting
 On her own
 In her room fretting
 All alone.
 'It's three hours since I sent the nurse!
 Maybe she missed him! No! Worse!
 Maybe he has changed his mind!
 O! I'll die a sad old virgin bride.
 In my room I'll be hanging found
 In my tattered shredded wedding gown!
 Stop! uncool! You're being weird.
 A fool lives life by what she fears.
 I'm sure that it's all innocent
 Why it's three minutes past twelve now since I sent
 That savage old crabbing crone
 And still she hasn't come back home.
 O being old is a mortal sin –
 And that's when the Nurse walked in.
 O Nurse! O Love! O bestie friend –
 Have you news from him to me did send.
 O I am old and I am sick
 My back is sore my head is thick.
 Just a moment just to catch my breath
 How canst thou be so near to death
 When thou hast breath to whinge and wail
 O if thou art so ghostly pale
 I'll relieve thee weight of the news you've got –
 My God my girl are you so hot?!

Art thou so jumpy, primed and moist
 For this boy's arms and charms and – voice?
 Well a message, yes, he gave, he did –
 Now what was it the young knave said?
 'Juliet, you must pray.'
 'That's it?' 'Mmm – today.'
 'I must pray?' That's all you've got?
 'At the crumbled Church. Three oclock.'
 'I am to spend my life in prayer?
 Is he trying to kill me with despair?'
 I have to say you're looking harried
 For a girl who so soon will be married!
 Yees! Now you get it. Now you're in.
 'I feel like I must do something.
 I need to pluck and curl and bathe'
 'And don't forget the bits to shave!'

SCENE FOURTEEN

She's late
 'I'll wait', said Romeo
 'I aint got no place to go.
 If she backs out
 I'll top myself.'
 'You have an unhealthy fascination,'
 Said the priest, 'with death and desolation
 I can only think for one so young
 You gain a sort of morbid fun
 From daring an untimely death
 Beware! Waste not one single breath
 Life, just one is all that's gived
 Don't wish it gone before it's lived.
 Take every chance you can in life –
 And look! Here finally comes your wife.

In Juliet raced at a fearsome rate
 'I'm sorry I know, I'm a little late!
 And she pitched herself on Romeo –
 'Now! Come on! You two – take it slow!
 This hook-up needs some consecrating
 Before you two get with consummating'.

SCENE FIFTEEN

The late noon heat was smothering
 On Verona's streets, hovering;
 Like trouble was just waiting –
 Like a storm would soon be breaking -
 'Mercutio!' Tybalt called from 'cross the street.
 'Where's your low life friend ? Too scared to meet?'
 'Not scared of you,' Mercutio hit his feet –
 'An' who you callin' scum you creep?'
 'You diss my friends
 then her it ends
 Right here. Right now!'
 Their weapons were half-pulled out –
 When – 'We are in the public view!
 ' You know', said Ben, ' what the Duke will do,
 To people start this fight again.
 Step back. Step back!'
 And then, right then –
 'Romeo finally does appear!'
 'Tybalt, what are you doing here?'
 'You dare you scum to speak to me?!'
 Tybalt smashed him to the street!
 'Romeo - get up and fight!'
 'Tybalt, I've got eve'ry right
 To kick your head a cross the square,
 But I won't fight! Man - anywhere!

I can't say why –
But try – just try –
To let it go!
'O? Cool - No!
Tybalt smashed him down again!
'Romeo, what's with you man?'
Mercutio was getting stressed
Romeo was in a mess –
'You scum! You filthy Montague!'
'Romeo, what's wrong with you?!'
Romeo was bashed up bad –
'Tybalt!' Mercutio had
'enough 'a this shit!
How 'bout, you little prick
You mess with me!
'I guess what will be WILL BE!!'
Their blades were out;
They flew about –
'Mercutio!
We been told!
'Get him off!
Ben locked Romeo in a hold
'The Duke is gonna bust your arse!'
Mercutio kicked out fast
And Tybalt landed on his arse -
'No!' 'Romeo!'
Grabbed Mercutio
And like it happened real slow
Tybalt stabbed his steel low!
'Aaaaargh!!'
And high-tailed it up a lane.
'Are you hurt?' 'Just a little pain –
But it's enough to do me in.

You held me, man! You helped him!
'I was tryna help'
Aoooh! Send me to Hell!
Ben! Ben!
Ben grabbed his friend –
'Curse you Capulets!
You Montagues!
You killed me man!
No excuse!
Romeo spun
His hands were numb
His heart was torn
'Mercutio's gone!
'Juliet!
'Here comes that scumbag Capulet!
'Tybalt! Either you or me
Will keep Mercutio company!
Their blades flashed, slashed, clashed
Across the cobbled street they crashed
'It's death man! Death, for civil strife!
When Romeo ended Tybalt's life.
'Run! Run! Can't you hear!
The Duke is coming! Disappear!
'He's gotta follow his 'no fights' rule!
'O! I am Fortune's Fool!

SCENE SIXTEEN

They gathered there,
In the square –
Blood dripped cobblestones
Everywhere –
'Who did this?'
The Duke's roar

'We take his life
 who breaks my law!
 'Tybalt slew Mercutio!
 'Who then was killed by Romeo!
 'In self defence!
 'What's that to me?
 To pardon killers
 Sets murderers free!
 'From tomorrow dawn
 Let Romeo be gone
 From this town –
 Vanished.
 On pain of death
 Romeo is banished!'

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Juliet was waiting in her room,
 Dreaming of what might happen soon –
 When Romeo climbed her balcony –
 To do battle with her virginity -
 Her mind was bouncing wild and free
 With every little fantasy
 Of what she might, and what might he –
 And what might they –
 'O Come night!
 Begone this day!
 When in the nurse sadly came –
 Her face a haggard mask of pain –
 'He's gone. He's gone!
 I can't believe –
 I saw him lying in the street –'
 'Dead?'
 Aye!' she howled in grief.

'O then bury me in my wedding sheets!
 My husband dead!
 How? Why?'
 'Your husband took Tybalt's life!'
 'My husband?'
 'Romeo!
 That monster, bastard - !'
 'No!
 How dare you speak of him that way!'
 He murdered Tybalt,
 What should I say?
 That the Duke was wrong to banish him?
 The town all cried - "punish him!"'
 'Banish?' 'For his crime.'
 'Banish?' ' For all time.'
 'O then end all life. End me .
 I am married to a man I'll never see.
 Banished?! Banished?!
 The Duke should not just use that word -
 The Duke should come and take his sword
 And plunge it through my screaming heart -
 Banished! How can I live apart -? '
 'Juliet.
 Don't fret. Don't fret.
 I will climb out beneath
 This mountain of my own cruel grief,
 And I will find your man,
 Your Romeo.
 I know where he ran -
 Where he will go.
 I will bring him here to you,
 Your Montague, will be here soon.
 I will bring your husband

To your room’.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

Romeo was busted, broke and wrecked.

‘I may never more see Juliet!’

‘You have your life!

You’re life at least.’

But Romeo glared at the Priest.

‘There is no life without Juliet!

Every dog and cat, every little pet

May look on her, but I may not –

What peace, life, hope here have I got?

Just right then, the Nurse busted in –

‘Where’s Romeo? I must speak with him.’

‘Nurse, how is Juliet?’

‘A mess.’ ‘O and I’ve caused it!

‘Where in this mongrel lurking frame

Have I such power to hurt and maim?

I’ll rip it out!’

‘Hold they hand!

Man! What are you about?!

Fate is with you. Got your back.

You survived Tybalt’s attack!

The Duke commutes your sentence –

Spares your life.

And Juliet still loves you –

Still your wife!

And yet you whinge and wail betide.

Fortune Fool! is on your side!

Now get you gone to Juliet

Make it right with her before you get

Out of town – to Mantua.

Go to ground. I’ll send a man to you

With news from here – what’s going on.
The Duke will hear you did no wrong
And how you married Juliet
And that’s when he will surely let
You come back home.
Be calm. Be strong.
To Juliet, go, my son.
But before dawn, be sure you’re gone.
Letters I will convey to you.’
‘My life I’ll live to repay you.’

SCENE NINETEEN

So this story’s rated PG
So unfortunately,
We don’t get to see
What went down, hot and wet
Between Romeo and Juliet –
But while the kids were getting laid,
Downstairs a deal was getting made
Where the warlord ole man Capulet
Though Paris had not actually yet
Met his daughter, Juliet –
He agreed Paris could get
Married to her – Juliet.
‘Next Thursday’s good!’ the War Lord said,
“Wife! Tell the girl before you go to bed’.

SCENE TWENTY

Come dawn,
Romeo was forlorn,
climbing from the balcony –
‘Do you think we will ever be
together again, side by side?’

'It's a sure thing.' Romeo lied.
'I have this fear grabs my heart,'
'This is not the end it's our start.
'Daughter,' came her Mother's call.
And Romeo leapt down from the wall.
'You called me, Mother?'
'Yes, your Father
Has the best of news.
He has decided that you should choose
That Paris man, to marry soon.'
'Marry?' 'Thursday afternoon.'
'But I am still for Tybalt, mourning.'
'Daughter, just a little warning,
Your Father has made up his mind - '
'Well,' came his voice, 'How'd she find
our happy news?' 'She has a mind,
I think, to refuse.'
'No, I mean, I'm grateful. Yes.'
'What? Grateful? Stop. What is this?
Are you in charge now, little Miss?'
'No father, please, it's just that - '
'Hold your peace! Ungrateful brat!'
And Julie's Dad then took a turn.
'It makes me mad. It makes me burn!
Day! Night! Work! Play!
Every moment of every day
I try to keep you safe and well
In this Montague murdering hell.
A man I try to find for you
Of wealth and name, and when I do?
'I'm too young. I need more time!'
This is not an offer to decline!
Do not beg! Nor wail nor cry!

I tell you this – I do not lie!
Next Thursday you'll your husband meet
Or I will throw you in the street!
'You can't do that!' 'Hold your tongue!!'
The Nurse stood up – he knocked her down!
I am the Master of your choice.
Your life and blood -
I am your voice!
You will not answer Nay or No.
To your marriage you will go!
Or you will starve – skin and bone
For you'll be cast out of this home!
Now I have said! And I am done!
Do not reply! Anyone!
'Mother – ' 'Do not speak to me.
Your Father rules this family.'
'Nurse, can you tell me what to do?'
'Yes. Here's some advice for you.
Romeo can not come home.
Which, honey leaves you all alone.
Your marriage – no one knows.
So perhaps you can just let it go
And marry then this Paris guy
Oh you'll learn to love him – if you try –
And if you don't, well, as I said
Your marriage to Romeo...is dead.
'You speak that from the heart?'
'Else from my soul I ever part.'
'Well, I must to church to confess
I caused my father such distress.
No, I will go alone.'
She left the nurse there on her own.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

'But why?' the Priest discussed
with Paris, 'Why must
this wedding be so rushed?'

'Her Father just
wants it that way.'

'And the girl, I trust,
has had her say?'

'Why don't you ask her. Here she comes.

My darling wife! My little one!'

'Not your wife, good Sir.

Not yet.'

'Oh, playing coy,

Juliet.'

'Father, may I speak with you?'

'About our marriage? About we two?'

'About tender matters – private cares
that a girl alone with her priest shares.'

'I'll leave you then – till we are wed.

Just three more sleeps till you're in my bed.

One kiss young Miss, before I go.'

And then he kissed her, long and slow.

'Father!' when he slammed the door,

'I swear I'll stab myself before

They make me cheat on Romeo!

You married us. You surely know

Before I betray body and soul –

I'll end them both!' 'Girl! Hold!'

'What is it with you kids and knives?

Alright, since you've pledged your lives

To be together or be dead

There is one chance,' the old Priest said.

'Tell me!' 'OK. Here it is.

Tonight in bed, you take – this!
 A concocted mix – very strong.
 Once you've dropped it – before long
 A numbness will creep through your veins
 Until no sign of life remains.
 No heart, no heat, no sight or breath –
 You'll be a stiff and cold and pale as death.
 And in that state for forty hours
 You'll be bereft of all life's powers:
 Now in the morning, come the day
 In bed they'll find you – passed away.
 And to the family crypt they'll carry you
 And there, in sorrow, there bury you.
 Now to Romeo, I will write
 And he will come by stealth of night
 And when the forty hours is due
 There he'll be waiting beside you
 And together you may flee this strife
 And live a long and love-filled life.'
 'Give me!' 'Be true! Be strong!'
 'Love gives me strength!' And she was gone.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

Juliet returned, subdued and sad
 And apologized to her Dad
 For giving him bad attitude,
 'I didn't mean to be so rude'.
 'I'll keep you,' Nurse said, 'company –'
 'No, this I have to do. Just me.
 I'm getting ready for my wedding day.
 Goodnight.' And then she slipped away.
 And all alone, Juliet
 Palmed the little tablet –

'What if this is to poison me
 So no one knows he married me
 To Romeo? No. No.
 His heart is good. I must let go.
 What if once I'm in the tomb
 I wake before my Romeo come?
 O! What a fearful thought –
 Will not I then be in darkness caught
 Up in horrors of the mind
 stumbling, clawing as though blind –
 And choke and gag on putrid smells
 And in this fear-wracked rancid hell
 Will not I, in frenzied dread
 Pluck at Tybalt lying dead
 And the ghosts of all my family past,
 Will shriek and howl and groan and grasp
 And in this anguished mad distress
 Of undead spirits and rotting flesh
 Will not I snatch up some kinsman's bones
 And in terror at my echoed moans
 In groveling mewling lonely pain
 Will not I smash out my desperate brains?!
 O! I see, I think, Romeo
 Pursued by Tybalt's angry ghost – NO!
 Romeo, come. Come find me.
 This I drink, [my love,] for thee'.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

The cries of grief and anguish
 Are an international language
 'Asleep, my lamb? Come, up you get!
 The Nurse went to wake Juliet
 'You sleep well now, yes you might

For you don't sleep much on your wedding night.'
 And that was when her whole world changed.
 Always the same. The sound of pain.
 'Dead! Dead! My Lady's gone!'
 The house was up. 'What is wrong?'
 And soon the House of Capulet
 Was howling with remorse regret
 Above it all the Priest held sway,
 'We must bury your child today'.
 And so in sorrow they wrapped her in
 The gowns she wore for her wedding
 And in the crypt of family Capulet
 They laid to rest Juliet.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

A day's long ride from Verona Town
 Romeo was hunkered down
 When, 'Balthazar, what brings you here?'
 'I have hard news for you to hear.'
 And when Romeo had listened through –
 'You're wrong! No! It can't be true.'
 'I saw her buried, man. It's done!'
 'Has the Priest sent letters?' 'No. None!'
 'I'm going back there'. 'Are you mad?
 They'll cut you down!' 'I had
 One chance. One chance for happiness –
 And this is what Fate brings me? This?!
 Then I defy you stars. Leave me! Go!
 There is a dealer that I know
 Can supply a lethal mix
 More deadly than a basilisk -
 Juliet! Come what may, come what might
 I will lay with you tonight!'

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

So here's the cruel twist of fate,
 A letter was sent – but didn't make
 It to Romeo. 'I got help up'.
 Said the fool Priest who stuffed it up
 'So who delivered my letter then?'
 'No one. Here it is again.'
 'Juliet will be waking soon
 On her own in a rank dark tomb!'

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

So what could now happen worst?
 Paris turns up at the tomb first –
 With some busted heart caterwauling notion
 Of strewing flowers in devotion
 When from the shadows, from the gloom,
 Romeo arrived at the tomb –
 He's like possessed, an insane case –
 'You dare to desecrate this place?!'
 Screams Paris who steps up to him.
 'Boy, back off, you aint gonna win.
 I have rid through half the night
 And if I swear you make me fight
 I'll rip your body limb from limb
 And strew the bits around this tomb!
 Begone! Go! Run away!
 A madman saves your life today'.
 But Paris like a dull-wit fool
 Thinking money has the rule
 Throws himself at Romeo
 Whose grief and rage and sorrow
 Burst from him like a savage beast

And like a demon bad unleashed
 He smashed through Paris.
 Bashed trashed cashed in Paris.
 And when it was done –
 Like he just hung - there
 In the air –
 His breath ragged with despair
 He turned and broke the tomb doors through –
 'Juliet, I come to you.'

SCENE TWENTY – SEVEN

Our story here goes South real fast –
 Romeo stopped – rocked – aghast –
 'Juliet. My love. My Wife.
 Death hath not robbed all signs of life.
 I will stay with thee. Here is our start.
 And never from your side depart'.
 And from his coat the lethal mix
 He held it close there in his fist –
 'One kiss,' he gasped, 'one final kiss'.

SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT

The Priest arrived all too late
 Just as Juliet began to wake
 'Friar! Where is Romeo?'
 'Come, child. We must go.
 Fate has conspired too cruelly –
 No! Girl! Look at me!' But Juliet had to see –
 'Romeo.' 'Juliet – 'No! Go!'
 'There's nothing left!' 'I know. I know'.
 'What is here? Poison?'
 And then she knew the reason –

‘You thought that I was gone?’
 She kissed his lips. ‘Thy lips are warm.’
 And Juliet picked up his knife,
 And with one thrust, she took her life.

SCENE TWENTY-NINE THE EPILOGUE

Two households – that’s families.
 In Verona. But it could be
 Anywhere in any nation
 We all know the situation.
 People with no tolerance
 Prejudice and ignorance
 Abuse and hate and grand suspicion
 Of custom, skin or brand religion
 Two kids who paid the ultimate cost
 Cause their sense of self and future’s lost
 In a tangle of shame
 A mangle of blame
 What’s right and wrong
 Where you belong
 Truth and lies
 Before your eyes
 Are photo-shopped,
 Compromised –
 Traumatized
 Legitimized
 Full of lies
 Kanye - Trump
 They’re all the same –
 They want cash
 They want fame
 But for all we little folk
 Who build our lives on dreams of love

And Dreams of hope;
This story here is just for us.
This story is for justice.
We are the blood and bones of history
We're the future too. You and me.
Two kids. Romeo and Juliet
One Montague. One Capulet.
That's their story we told here.
By a bad-assed dude called - Bill Shakespeare.

THE END