

Synopsis of Romeo and Juliet - TNT theatre Britain.

Scene 1 The street Verona.

A follower of the Capulet family and a follower of the Montague family argue in the street. It ends in violence. Thybalt (senior member of Capulet family) arrives and joins in, he is restrained by sensible, peaceful Benvolio of the Montague family but men are wounded and blood flows. The Prince(ess) arrives and orders the fighting to stop. She is furious because she has been trying to stop fighting in the street between the two families. She threatens death to those who fight in Verona and departs. Thybalt leaves.

Romeo enters, Benvolio's cousin. Romeo is in love with Rosalyn and is in romantic pain because Rosalyn will not return his love. He is also sad that there is fighting on the streets. He has no interest in the clan violence. He and Benvolio talk and Benvolio tries to cheer Romeo up by saying that there are many women in the world so he should forget about Rosalyn. Romeo says that is impossible and leaves singing a sad song.

Scene 2 Lord Capulet's house in Verona.

Lord Capulet is talking to the Count Paris about his young daughter. Paris is interested in marrying young Juliet Capulet. Her Father (Lord Capulet) is worried that she is too young. But he invites Paris (who is rich, single and foolish) to his house that night where a great ball (party) will take place. There Paris can look over his daughter but also perhaps the other young women of the city and see who he prefers. Lord Capulet seems rather confused – does he want Paris to marry Juliet or not? Yes Paris is rich and powerful but he knows his daughter is rather young.

Scene 3 Street outside Capulet's house.

Lord Capulet calls for his rather stupid servant Potpan. (One of Shakespeare's clown characters). The Lord tells his servant to take his list of guests and invite them to his house for the big party (Ball) tonight. Potpan makes a few mistakes then agrees. Capulet leaves before he understands that Potpan cannot read. Romeo enters sighing for Rosalyn. Potpan asks him if he can read. Romeo says he does, so Potpan asks him to read his master's list of guests. Romeo discovers that Rosalyn is invited to this party so is determined to go even though as a Montague he is hated by the Capulets. Potpan leaves trying to remember all the names on the list. Romeo is happy and thinks that being a masked ball he can enter his enemy's party in disguise.

Scene 4 A room in Capulet's House.

Lord Capulet is in discussion with the Nurse and Juliet. The Nurse is a comic figure but also full of energy and a clever. She is a type of mother to Juliet. Capulet talks to his daughter and asks her if she is interested in getting married. Juliet is shocked but says she will obey her father. The Nurse says that getting married is great honour. When Capulet suggests that Paris might be her husband the Nurse is very impressed. The scene shows that Juliet is given little chance, and also tells us how young Juliet is, (almost 14). Despite this her age father and Nurse are pushing her into getting married to a man she does not know.

Scene 5 A public garden in Verona at night.

Romeo, Benvolio and their rather 'crazy' friend Mercutio are on their way to Capulet's party. They are not invited so they are all wearing masks and full of the energy of youth in doing something daring. Mercutio is teasing and mocking Romeo for being in love with Rosalyn and Benvolio is trying to keep the peace (as usual) and get them safely into the house of their enemies. Mercutio has a famous speech about the fairy Queen Mab, who he says has taken over Romeo when he is dreaming. Mab is a type of little devil that leads us through our desires to madness and excess. Romeo laughs but is himself worried that this night will not go well. The three friends run off through the garden (where the statues seem to come to life when Queen Mab is spoken of) – to get to the dangerous party of Capulet.

Scene 6 Capulet's House – the main hall.

The Party. Most of the characters we have seen so far are here: Thybalt, Capulet, Mercutio, the Nurse, Juliet and Romeo. They dance and have a really good time. At first Romeo is sad as he thinks of Rosalyn but when he sees Juliet he changes – here is a beauty that sweeps him "off his feet". This is love at first sight. But Thybalt recognises Romeo from his voice (as they are all masked). He goes to get his knife to kill Romeo for daring to come into their house. But Lord Capulet stops Thybalt from attacking Romeo, he is very angry with the young man for trying to fight at his party. He also reminds the young "hot head" that the Prince has forbidden fighting in Verona on pain of death. Thybalt is angry that he is held back and there is an argument but Capulet is the head of the family and he wins and begs his guests to forget the argument and enjoy the party /ball. They all dance. Romeo takes the opportunity to dance close by Juliet and she sees him and is equally struck. They dance alone, they create a poem together as they dance (A sonnet of prayer and love). In the poem they kiss, Juliet then kisses Romeo more forcefully than he kissed her. At this moment the Nurse enters. Juliet rushes off. The spell is cast – as if by magic the two young people from opposing families have fallen in love. Romeo only then discovers from the Nurse that Juliet is the daughter of the house, the daughter of his chief enemy. Seeing Capulet approach Romeo runs off. Juliet returns and finds out from the Nurse that Romeo is a Montague. She pauses but she affirms her love. The stage is set for love and death.

Scene 7 Outside the garden of Capulet's House. Night.

Mercutio and Benvolio are drunk. They have left the party and are looking for Romeo. They try to "conjure" him – as if they have magic powers but fail. Romeo is avoiding them. They think he is looking for Rosalyn as they know nothing of his new passion for Juliet. Drunk, they stagger home to their beds. Romeo has been watching them, and now climbs the wall into the garden of the house. In his dream world it seems as if the statue of Cupid (God of Love) comes to life and helps him over the wall. He sees Juliet with a light at her bedroom window. Once again he is swept away by his love for her and overpowered by her beauty. He hides as Juliet descends from her room and stands on her balcony which looks over the garden. There she speaks aloud of her love for Romeo and how she does not care what his name is, "for a rose by any other name would be as sweet". Romeo hears her and rushes forward and proclaims that he is there, he will do anything for her love. There follows a famous scene where Romeo climbs up to the balcony and declares his wild, impulsive love and Juliet also offers love but is more practical. Eventually Juliet proposes marriage. Romeo happily agrees. The Nurse calls to Juliet. She has to go back to her room or Romeo will be discovered and perhaps killed. So Romeo runs off and they agree to exchange messages tomorrow and that Romeo will arrange everything for the (secret and fast) wedding.

Scene 8 Early morning the same day in a field near Verona.

Friar Laurence is collecting herbs and medicinal plants. He is found by Romeo, who he knows well and it is clear that Romeo has been awake all night. Friar Laurence thinks he has been chasing Rosalyn. But Romeo confesses that he has forgotten Rosalyn and now is in love with Juliet, the daughter of his "great enemy". Friar Laurence is amazed. Romeo asks the priest to marry him and Juliet today. Once again he is shocked but agrees because he sees this as a way of bringing the two warring families together and making peace. Romeo rushes off to give the news to Juliet.

Scene 9 A square in Verona, daytime.

Mercutio and Benvolio are drinking coffee with hangovers from the night's party. Mercutio is worried. He knows that Thybalt has not forgiven Romeo for coming uninvited to the Capulet party and has sent a letter challenging Romeo to a duel. Mercutio warns Benvolio that Thybalt is a master swordsman and fencing expert and will surely kill Romeo in a fight. Romeo enters. Mercutio teases him for being up all night with women and not drinking and joking with the boys.

The Nurse enters with Potpan the clown servant. The Nurse has come on a secret mission from Juliet to find out if Romeo is true and will really marry her.

Mercutio now teases her and all the boys sing her a rude song which the Nurse rather enjoys. Mercutio and Benvolio exit to lunch and the Nurse has the chance to ask Romeo if he is sincere. Romeo tells the Nurse that he is and that he has arranged for Juliet to marry him at Friar Laurence's church that very afternoon. The Nurse races off to tell Juliet of this wonderful arrangement.

Scene 10 Friar Laurence's Church.

Romeo and Juliet are married by Friar Laurence in a secret ceremony. He hopes that this dangerous act will be blessed not cursed.

Scene 11 The street in Verona daytime. Summer.

It is hot, Mercutio and Benvolio are drinking wine again. Gangs of youths are out on the summer street. There is danger in the air. Thybalt enters. Mercutio mocks him and starts to pick a fight. As usual Benvolio counsels peace. Then Romeo enters and Thybalt, furious, tries to pick a fight with him. Romeo is now Thybalt's cousin through marriage to Juliet. So Romeo refuses to fight, but cannot say why as his marriage is still a secret. Mercutio thinks that Romeo is being a coward by not fighting (as he too knows nothing of the wedding). So Mercutio takes up the challenge and fights Thybalt. Romeo tries to stop the fight but as he does so, he distracts Mercutio so Thybalt stabs him. Thybalt runs off. Mercutio tries to joke as usual but he is seriously wounded. Romeo is crushed, blaming himself. Benvolio helps Mercutio into a house but returns to tell Romeo that "brave Mercutio is dead". Romeo is so upset that he forgets his marriage to Juliet and now only wants revenge for his friend's murder. He challenges the "triumphant" Thybalt. They fight and despite Thybalt's skill, Romeo kills Thybalt. Benvolio is horrified. If the Prince catches Romeo he will be executed. Romeo sees what a fool he has been and how now his marriage to Juliet is in danger. He runs off. Love gives way to Death, Death has triumphed.

Scene 13 The street.

The soldiers and people of Verona cry out that there have been murders and fighting, that Thybalt and Mercutio are dead and that Romeo is a murderer.

Scene 14. Juliet's room at Capulet's house.

Juliet is excited. She looks forward to the night when her husband Romeo will be smuggled into her room with the ropes that the Nurse has taken him. But the Nurse has heard the news. She tells Juliet that Romeo has killed her cousin. At first Juliet is so shocked that she blames Romeo and starts to hate him but then she recalls that they are married and she must be loyal to her new husband. The Nurse now tells her that the Prince has exiled Romeo, he may not enter Verona again or he will be killed. Juliet thinks of suicide, but the Nurse says that they will find a solution and that she has arranged for Romeo to come to Juliet's room tonight to say his farewell – even if it is dangerous.

Scene 15. Juliet's room and balcony the same night.

Romeo emerges from the bedroom with Juliet. They talk and kiss. She tries to make him stay as it is not sunrise yet. But they hear the birds singing and know that he must go. Caught between love and death, happiness and sadness, beauty and loss they part. The God of Love, Cupid, blesses them.

Juliet's father enters as the sun rises. He tells her he has good news for her. He has arranged for her to marry the rich and young Count Paris in three day time. He expects Juliet to be happy. But Juliet is angry and rejects Paris without daring to tell her father that she is already married to the son of his great enemy. Father Capulet is furious and says that he will throw his daughter out on the street if she does not obey him and storms off. Juliet asks the Nurse for advice. The Nurse betrays her love, telling Juliet to forget Romeo and marry Count Paris. Juliet pretends to agree, The Nurse leaves and Juliet expresses her fury and anger at this betrayal of true love. She does not know what to do now, so goes to the only person she can now turn to: Friar Laurence.

Scene 16 A church.

Friar Laurence meets Juliet. He already knows of the terrible situation. Marrying twice is impossible and illegal. He has a plan but it is dangerous. Will Juliet agree with his frightening plan? Yes, she says, she will do anything to stay true to Romeo and avoid marrying Count Paris. The Friar is an expert in herbs and medicine. He has a special liquid that if Juliet drinks will make her appear dead. So his plan is that she drinks it the day of her wedding. The family will think her dead and put her in the family tomb (a place where the dead are not buried but laid in cloth on stone shelves). Meanwhile the Friar will send to Romeo who is exiled in nearby Mantua and he will lead him to the tomb. There when Juliet awakes will be her husband Romeo. The two of them can escape to Mantua and the Friar will reveal everything to the Prince and hope for forgiveness. Juliet agrees.

Scene 17 The Capulet's house.

Juliet drinks the potion and goes to sleep. The next morning: the guests are arriving for the wedding. Everyone is happy. Paris is there. They dance. The Nurse goes to wake Juliet and finds that she is dead. She cries for help. The bride is dead!

Scene 18 Near Mantua. A terrible wild place of exile.

Poor people gather around a fire. Romeo is there. Alone and lonely. he dreams distressing dreams. Benvolio enters and sadly tells her husband that Juliet had died. Romeo in despair tells Benvolio to go and swears he will lie by Juliet that very night. He buys poison from the figure of death who sits huddled around a fire with beggars. Romeo sets off for Verona.

Scene 19. Friar Laurence's church.

The Friar discovers that the letters he sent to Romeo, were not delivered. Romeo does not know that Juliet is only seeming to be dead. The Friar is very worried, he will go to the tomb and be there himself when Juliet awakes and then take her to Romeo in Mantua. He hurries to the tomb.

Scene 20. The Capulet Family Tomb. Verona.

Romeo arrives at the tomb before the Friar. He breaks into the tomb and finds Juliet lying there, seeming to be dead. He wonders that she is still beautiful and if Death has preserved her to become Death's lover. He kisses her and then drinks the poison so he can lie beside her forever. Just as he dies Juliet starts to wake. But it is too late. The Friar enters, he sees Romeo and goes into despair. He takes the waking Juliet and asks her to go with him and escape the tomb. But she refuses and sends the Friar away. In the background the noise of soldiers as the news of Romeo's return is known. Juliet has not much time. She kisses the poison lips of her husband but there is not enough poison left to kill he. So she kills herself with the "happy dagger". The world's two most famous lovers are united in love and death for all time.

The Prince enters and sees the two dead lovers. She asks that all Verona be reconciled in peace. Love triumphs through death. Yet:

"Never was there a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo".

The end.

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