**Romeo and Juliet**

## Prologue

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|  | Original Text | Modern Text |
|  | *Enter****CHORUS*** | *The****CHORUS****enters.* |
| 5     10 | **CHORUS**  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-crossed lovers take their life,  Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.  The fearful passage of their death-marked love  And the continuance of their parents' rage,  Which, but their children’s end, naught 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. | **CHORUS**  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. |
|  | *Exit* | *The****CHORUS****exits.* |

**Adapted from Act 1, Scene 1**

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|  | **Original Text** | **Modern Text** |
|  | *Enter****ABRAM****and another****SERVINGMAN*** | ***ABRAM****and another servant of the Montagues enter.* |
|  | **GREGORY**  Draw thy tool! Here comes of the house of Montagues. | **GREGORY**  Pull out your tool now. These guys are from the house of Montague. |
| 30 | **SAMPSON**  My naked weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back thee. | **SAMPSON**  I have my naked sword out. Fight, I’ll back you up. |
|  | **GREGORY**  How? Turn thy back and run? | **GREGORY**  How will you back me up—by turning your back and running away? |
|  | **SAMPSON**  Fear me not. | **SAMPSON**  Don’t worry about me. |
|  | **GREGORY**  No, marry. I fear thee. | **GREGORY**  No, really. I *am* worried about you! |
|  | **SAMPSON**  Let us take the law of our sides. Let them begin. | **SAMPSON**  Let’s not break the law by starting a fight. Let them start something. |
| 35 | **GREGORY**  I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list. | **GREGORY**  I’ll frown at them as they pass by, and they can react however they want. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it. *(bites his thumb)* | **SAMPSON**  You mean however they dare. I’ll bite my thumb at them. That’s an insult, and if they let me get away with it they’ll be dishonoured.  *(*SAMPSON [*bites his thumb*](javascript:void(0);)*)* |
|  | **ABRAM**  Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? | **ABRAM**  Hey, are you biting your thumb at us? |
|  | **SAMPSON**  I do bite my thumb, sir. | **SAMPSON**  I’m biting my thumb. |
|  | **ABRAM**  Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? | **ABRAM**  Are you biting your thumb at us? |
| 40 | **SAMPSON**  *(aside to* GREGORY*)*  Is the law of our side if I say “ay”? | **SAMPSON**  (*aside to* GREGORY) Is the law on our side if I say yes? |
|  | **GREGORY**  *(aside to* SAMPSON*)* No. | **GREGORY**  *(aside to* SAMPSON*)* No. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  No, sir. I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir. | **SAMPSON**  (*to* ABRAM) No, sir, I’m not biting my thumb at you, but I am biting my thumb. |
| 45 | **GREGORY**  Do you quarrel, sir? | **GREGORY**  Are you trying to start a fight? |
|  | **ABRAM**  Quarrel, sir? No, sir. | **ABRAM**  Start a fight? No, sir. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you. | **SAMPSON**  If you want to fight, I’m your man. My employer is as good as yours. |
|  | **ABRAM**  No better. | **ABRAM**  But he’s not better than mine. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  Well, sir. | **SAMPSON**  Well then. |
|  | *Enter****BENVOLIO*** | ***BENVOLIO****enters.* |
| 50 | **GREGORY**  *(aside to* SAMPSON*)* Say “better.” Here comes one of my master’s kinsmen. | **GREGORY**  *(speaking so that only* SAMPSON *can hear)* Say “better.” Here comes one of my employer’s relatives. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  *(to* ABRAM*)* Yes, better, sir. | **SAMPSON**  *(to* ABRAM*)* Yes, “better,” sir. |
|  | **ABRAM**  You lie. | **ABRAM**  You lie. |
|  | **SAMPSON**  Draw, if you be men.—Gregory, remember thy washing blow. | **SAMPSON**  Pull out your swords, if you’re men. Gregory, remember how to slash. |
|  | *They fight* | *They fight.* |
| 55 | **BENVOLIO**  *(draws his sword)* Part, fools!  Put up your swords. You know not what you do. | **BENVOLIO**  (*pulling out his sword*) Break it up, you fools. Put your swords away. You don’t know what you’re doing. |
|  | *Enter****TYBALT*** | ***TYBALT****enters.* |
|  | **TYBALT**  What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?  Turn thee, Benvolio. Look upon thy death. | **TYBALT**  What? You’ve pulled out your sword to fight with these worthless servants? Turn around, Benvolio, and look at the man who’s going to kill you. |
|  | **BENVOLIO**  I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,  Or manage it to part these men with me. | **BENVOLIO**  I’m only trying to keep the peace. Either put away your sword or use it to help me stop this fight. |
| 60 | **TYBALT**  What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word,  As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.  Have at thee, coward! | **TYBALT**  What? You take out your sword and then talk about peace? I hate the word peace like I hate hell, all Montagues, and you. Let’s go at it, coward! |
|  | *They fight Enter three or four****CITIZENS****, with clubs or partisans* | ***BENVOLIO****and****TYBALT****fight. Three or four* ***CITIZENS****of the watch enter with clubs and spears.* |
|  | **CITIZENS**  Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!  Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues! | **CITIZENS**  Use your clubs and spears! Hit them! Beat them down! Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues! |
|  | *Enter old****CAPULET****in his gown, and his wife,****LADY CAPULET*** | ***CAPULET****enters in his gown, together with his wife,****LADY CAPULET****.* |
| 65 | **CAPULET**  What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho! | **CAPULET**  What’s this noise? Give me my long sword! Come on! |
|  | **LADY CAPULET**  A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword? | **LADY CAPULET**  A crutch, you need a crutch—why are you asking for a sword? |
|  | *Enter old****MONTAGUE****and his wife,****LADY MONTAGUE*** | ***MONTAGUE****enters with his sword drawn,together with his wife,****LADY MONTAGUE.*** |
|  | **CAPULET**  My sword, I say! Old Montague is come,  And flourishes his blade in spite of me. | **CAPULET**  I want my sword. Old Montague is here, and he’s waving his sword around just to make me mad. |
|  | **MONTAGUE**  Thou villain Capulet! Hold me not. Let me go. | **MONTAGUE**  Capulet, you villain! *(his wife holds him back)* Don’t stop me. Let me go. |
| 70 | **LADY MONTAGUE**  Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe. | **LADY MONTAGUE**  You’re not taking one step toward an enemy. |
|  | *Enter****PRINCE ESCALUS****, with his train* | ***PRINCE ESCALUS****enters with his escort.* |
| 75     80     85 | **PRINCE**  Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,  Profaners of this neighbor-stainèd steel!—  Will they not hear?—What, ho! You men, you beasts,  That quench the fire of your pernicious rage  With purple fountains issuing from your veins,  On pain of torture, from those bloody hands  Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,  And hear the sentence of your movèd prince.  Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,  By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,  Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets  And made Verona’s ancient citizens  Cast by their grave-beseeming ornaments,  To wield old partisans in hands as old,  Cankered with peace, to part your cankered hate.  If ever you disturb our streets again,  Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace. | **PRINCE**  *(shouting at the rioters)* You rebels! Enemies of the peace! Men who turn their weapons against their own neighbors—They won’t listen to me?—You there! You men, you beasts, who satisfy your anger with fountains of each others' blood! I’ll have you tortured if you don’t put down your swords and listen to your angry prince. *(*MONTAGUE*,*CAPULET*, and their followers throw down their weapons)* Three times now riots have broken out in this city, all because of a casual word from you, old Capulet and Montague. Three times the peace has been disturbed in our streets, and Verona’s old citizens have had to take off their dress clothes and pick up rusty old spears to part you. If you ever cause a disturbance on our streets again, you’ll pay for it with your lives. |