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Drop Dead, Juliet!**

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DROP DEAD, JULIET!

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Allison Williams



Drop Dead, Juliet!

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Characters

Capulets Juliet (F) Nurse (F) Lord Capulet (M) Lady Capulet (F) Gregory (F) Sampson (F) Tybalt (F) Non-speaking Capulets (optional)	Montagues Romeo (M) Abram (F) Mercutio (F) Lady Montague (F) A Montague (M or F) Non-speaking Montagues (optional)
Others Shakespeare (M) Prince/Princess (F) Friar/Sister Lawrence (F) Friar John (M) Ophelia (F) Desdemona (F)	

Set

A bare stage with a bier, which serves various purposes in the play.

Author's Note

In writing this play, the biggest battle was to find truthful characters that created their own reality beyond just 'spoofing' *Romeo and Juliet*. I hope you enjoy playing them and that your audience enjoys watching them play.

Thank you to Todd Avery at Jenison High School and his theatre students, especially Amanda Morse and Hope Shangle, who read this script and gave great feedback, and to the whole cast of *Romeo and Juliet* at Jenison, who helped me better understand Shakespeare's play. Thanks also to Zay Weaver, Vince Conaway, and my husband Todd Espeland for their readings and insightful comments. Most of all, thank you to Lindsay Price, editor, dramaturg, friend, and the midwife of a very difficult birth, and to whom I dedicate this play.

Allison Williams

A tomb. Dim light. ROMEO lies dead on the floor, a cup by his hand. JULIET lies sleeping on the bier, her arms folded on her chest. She's in a lovely gown. She awakes.

JULIET: Where is my Romeo?

JULIET sees his body, gets down from the bier, kneels beside ROMEO and discovers that he's dead. She finds a small bottle clutched in his hand and examines it.

Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.

JULIET kisses ROMEO.

CAPULET: (off) Lead, boy. Which way?

JULIET: Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief.

JULIET pulls a dagger from ROMEO's belt and kneels upright.

Oh happy dagger.
This is thy sheath.

JULIET raises the dagger, then stops and puts it down in her lap. She takes a deep breath and raises the dagger again. She stops. She stands up.

JULIET: There rust... There rust and let me...

NURSE: (from the wings, cuing JULIET to make the sound of being stabbed, NURSE's tongue out, eyes popping) Uggghhhh!

JULIET raises the dagger high, then slams it onto the bier, either banging it down or impaling it into the platform.

JULIET: I don't think so!

CAPULETS, MONTAGUES, PRINCE, and NURSE start peeking in from the curtains and muttering "What's going on?" etc.

JULIET: No. No. No!

The OTHER CHARACTERS are not sure what to do. They mutter to one another. The PRINCE steps out to try and rescue the play, hurrying center and blocking JULIET.

PRINCE: A glooming peace this morning with it brings—

JULIET: (*stepping out from behind the PRINCE*) Stop!

The PRINCE is really confused. OTHER CHARACTERS cautiously step in a short distance from the wings. SHAKESPEARE pushes through them and enters. He carries a script and big feather quill pen.

SHAKESPEARE: Sorry, what? Why have we stopped?

JULIET: This is a love story.

SHAKESPEARE: (*pleased with himself*) The greatest love story of all time.

JULIET: So why does it end like this? (*gestures to body of ROMEO*)

SHAKESPEARE: It's a tragic love story.

JULIET: I'll tell you what's tragic – This is my favourite dress. And I've had to sew up the front four hundred times, after soaking it in cold water to get the stains out. Not to mention the searing pain in my abdomen every night. Do you know how excruciatingly horrible it is to stab yourself in the stomach? (*the OTHER CHARACTERS mutter supportively*) And what kind of lame-o plot twist is me waking up three seconds too late?

ROMEO: Shhhh!

JULIET: Don't you 'shhh' me, Mr. Love at First Sight!

LADY MONTAGUE enters fully, followed by the MONTAGUES.

LADY MONTAGUE: She's got a point, there. It is a little contrived.

SHAKESPEARE: You know, you could be replaced with another Nurse.

LADY MONTAGUE: I was just saying.

JULIET: The messenger gets delayed my foot!

FRIAR LAWRENCE enters fully, with FRIAR JOHN.

FRIAR LAWRENCE: That part is a little far-fetched. If I needed a man to go with me, why would I enter the plague-stricken house?

SHAKESPEARE: Fine, fine, I'll give that bit to Friar John. He's the dumb one.

FRIAR JOHN: Hey!

CAPULETS enter fully. Everyone is onstage now.

JULIET: Love stories don't end with funerals, they end with weddings!
And people living happily ever after!

ALL: Yeah!

SHAKESPEARE: Excuse me, I am the greatest playwright in history and
I know what I'm doing!

JULIET: You can't be that good if everyone can do your plays for
free. It's the same thing every night! Wake up, fall in love, get
married, Ugghhhh. *(the sound the NURSE cued her to make, with
the same gesture and expression)* Wake up, fall in love, get married,
Ugghhhh. I am not doing this any more.

SHAKESPEARE: You can't quit!

JULIET: Did I say quit? Did anyone say quit? I'm not quitting. I just want
a better story. More love. Less Ugghhhh.

*JULIET holds out her hands for the script and
pen. SHAKESPEARE looks around at the OTHER
CHARACTERS – he's about to prank JULIET. He hands
her the script and pen. She holds the script upside
down and doesn't know what to do with it. She turns it
right side up. She turns it upside down. She sets it on
the bier, holds the pen clenched in her fist and tries to
write on the paper.*

SHAKESPEARE: *(clears his throat)* Most Elizabethan women didn't read
or write.

JULIET: I get invitations!

SHAKESPEARE: They're announced.

*JULIET looks around. A male MONTAGUE sniggers.
JULIET seems like she might cry. Instead, she whips
around, grabs the dagger from the bier, and advances
on SHAKESPEARE. The OTHER CHARACTERS step
back from her and huddle with one another.*

JULIET: I'm sure we can figure out a better story if we just have a little
goodwill, hmmm? Good Will? *(she threatens SHAKESPEARE with
the dagger, then smiles sweetly)* Thank you for writing in a dagger.
I'm sure it's going to come in handy.

SHAKESPEARE: Goodwill. Yes. Um. Perhaps you'd like to be in another play? The Taming of the Shrew ends with a wedding, and I'm thinking of putting in a sister...

JULIET: I've seen what happens to Kate in Act 3.

SHAKESPEARE: Most people find it funny.

JULIET: Kate doesn't.

SHAKESPEARE: It's sometimes hard for the characters themselves to appreciate the overall effect...

JULIET: You think Hermia likes being abandoned in the woods by her boyfriend every Midsummer night?

SHAKESPEARE: It ends with a wedding. It ends with three weddings.

JULIET: After being dragged through mud!

LADY CAPULET: And that Tempest is so wet. Miranda's never going to shake that head cold.

SHAKESPEARE: It's a classic.

JULIET: More like a class-suck if you ask me. Patriarchy and oppression on every page – what have you got against women, anyway? How come there's not more of us here?

SHAKESPEARE: The Elizabethan acting company—

LADY MONTAGUE: (*steps forward*) You can't tell me some 12-year-old boy knows more about being a woman than I do.

ALL WOMEN: Yeah! (*WOMEN start to move out of their huddles*)

SHAKESPEARE: Quiet down this minute all of you!

NURSE: You can't make us!

SHAKESPEARE: Oh yes I can! I don't have to write this play, you know. I have a great idea for an existential meditation set in Denmark.

LADY MONTAGUE: Yeah, that'll pack 'em in.

SHAKESPEARE: You can't do this! You're—you're fictitious.

JULIET: You're a ghost. We're even.

SHAKESPEARE: How come you remember the ending, anyway? Usually everyone just goes back to the green room and gets ready to start over!

JULIET: Four hundred years and it starts to sink in, Willy. If you don't write us a better story—without Uggghhh—then I'm going to show up in every other play you write. That girl you're thinking of?

SHAKESPEARE: Ophelia?

JULIET: Come here, Ophelia!

A dazed-looking girl with flowers in her hair steps out of the wings.

Your boyfriend's faking that mental illness. Dump him.

OPHELIA, shocked, bursts into tears and runs out.

SHAKESPEARE: You can't do that!

JULIET: Oh yes I can. You think of us and we're there. You think we don't talk to each other when you're not around? You think we don't compare plots? I'm not just words on a page, this is my life.

SHAKESPEARE: I'll write you out!

JULIET: Maybe that works on messengers, servants, and spear-carriers, but you can't forget a major character and you know it. We just stick in your head until you have to get us out. If you ever want to write another play again, it's time for another draft.

SHAKESPEARE: Well... what do you have in mind?

JULIET: First. More women.

SHAKESPEARE: No!

JULIET: Desdemona!

A worried woman (DESDEMONA) steps out from the wings.

Start hand-washing your handkerchiefs or someone's going to steal one and use it to set you up.

DESDEMONA: What?

JULIET: Just trust me.

DESDEMONA nods and exits.

SHAKESPEARE: Stop doing that!

JULIET: (*threatening SHAKESPEARE with the dagger*) I will personally tell every single character what you're going to do to them. I will make a guest appearance in every play you ever write. I will haunt your dreams until you cannot write another word.

SHAKESPEARE: Fine. Fine. Fine! Do your own story and see what happens.

JULIET: Friar Lawrence! (*FRIAR LAWRENCE steps forward*) You're Sister Lawrence now. (*FRIAR LAWRENCE whips off her monk robe to reveal a nun's habit*) Prince, you're a Princess. (*PRINCE takes off her cape and buttons it around her waist as a skirt*) Anybody who hasn't come on yet, you're a girl, OK? All right, everyone, we're going back to the beginning! (*EVERYONE exits hurriedly into the wings, adjusting their clothing and mumbling lines from Romeo and Juliet*) Act one, scene one, get out here!

SHAKESPEARE: It's Gregory and Sampson. Come on, boys! (*JULIET raises her eyebrows at him*) Girls. I'll... re-name them later. Right.

JULIET and SHAKESPEARE stand aside. SAMPSON and GREGORY enter from one side, ABRAM and some other MONTAGUES (mixed gender) from the other. Some are wearing swords. They all look to SHAKESPEARE, who shrugs. They look to JULIET.

JULIET: What goes here? I'm not on 'til scene three.

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, it's such a bad script, I'd be embarrassed to say.

JULIET: (*calling into the wings*) Titania!

SHAKESPEARE: Fight! They fight!

JULIET: Do some fighting stuff, all right?

They take up manly positions, with GREGORY and SAMPSON squaring off against ABRAM and the MONTAGUES. SAMPSON begins, a bit theatrically.

SAMPSON: Draw thy tool—here comes of the house of Montagues.

GREGORY: Haha, you said 'tool.'

SAMPSON: Quarrel, I will back thee.

GREGORY: (*dubious*) Let us take the law of our sides: let them begin.

SAMPSON: I will bite my thumb at them.

SAMPSON bites her thumb at ABRAM. The MONTAGUES mutter angrily among themselves.

ABRAM: Do you bite your thumb at us, lady?

SAMPSON: I do bite my thumb, ma'am.

ABRAM: Do you bite your thumb at us? (*a la De Niro*) Are you bitin' your thumb at us? Are you bitin' your thumb at us? I don't see anybody else here, you must be bitin' your thumb at us! I got a thumb for you right here, and some elbow, too!

ABRAM bites her thumb, then flaps her elbow at SAMPSON. The MONTAGUES give each other high-fives and signs of approval.

SAMPSON: Oh yeah?

SAMPSON bites her thumb, flaps her elbow, and wiggles her hand on her head a la Three Stooges, making a 'weeweewee' sound.

ABRAM bites her thumb, then does one round of the chicken dance, holding up her hands and "talking" with them four times, flapping both elbows like chicken wings four times, and wiggling her body and bending her knees and then coming back up. SAMPSON and GREGORY look at each other – it's time for the big guns. They both quickly execute a round of the Macarena (or whatever dance is current).

A MONTAGUE: (*worried, to ABRAM*) We just got served by the Capulets!

ABRAM: All right, Capulets! Dance-off!

Very loud music plays. If you can get a techno version of Greensleeves, that would be perfect. ABRAM, SAMPSON, GREGORY, and MONTAGUES begin to try to out-dance one another.

JULIET: (*shouting over the music*) This is awful!

SHAKESPEARE flourishes his pen like a conductor and the music gets softer so he can be heard.

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, isn't it?

JULIET: Can't you just give me a chance? Give me one chance to change my story. Help me. Please. You're the one who knows how to do this.

SHAKESPEARE surveys the dancing CAPULETS and MONTAGUES, then looks to JULIET. He takes a deep breath.

SHAKESPEARE: All right, I'll help. (*JULIET hugs him*) Watch the dagger!

JULIET: Make them stop. Please.

SHAKESPEARE jumps into the scene.

SHAKESPEARE: Part, fools, you know not what you do!

The music stops. The PRINCESS enters.

PRINCESS: Rebellious subjects! Enemies to peace,
Profaners of this neighbor-stained steel—
Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground!

GREGORY and SAMPSON exit. So does the PRINCESS. MONTAGUES except ABRAM exit opposite.

ABRAM: (*to SHAKESPEARE*) O where is Romeo, saw you him today?

SHAKESPEARE: Right glad I am he was not at this fray. (*waves pen to summon ROMEO, who enters*) See where he comes. So please you step aside.

ABRAM exits. ROMEO strikes a dramatic pose and sighs. JULIET laughs at him. SHAKESPEARE crosses to ROMEO, leaving JULIET.

SHAKESPEARE: What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

JULIET: (*from side*) Yeah. You're young, hot, and rich—what have you got to be depressed about?

ROMEO: Not having that which, having, makes them short.

SHAKESPEARE: In love?

ROMEO: Out of her favor where I am in love.

JULIET goes to SHAKESPEARE, grabs his arm, and drags him back to her side.

JULIET: Wait a minute, we don't meet for another four scenes.

ROMEO: (*to audience*) Alas that love whose view is muffled still
Should without eyes see pathways to his will.

SHAKESPEARE: Right now he's in love with the fair Rosaline.

JULIET: Rosaline?

SHAKESPEARE: Your cousin.

JULIET: What!? She's got a moustache you could strain soup with!

ROMEO sighs.

SHAKESPEARE: Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind—

JULIET: And therefore is wing-ed Cupid painted blind, yeah, I've heard it. He never said anything about Rosaline.

SHAKESPEARE: He forgets her as soon as he sees you.

JULIET: Just like that? In love one minute, out the next?

ROMEO: O she is rich in beauty!

SHAKESPEARE: That's Romeo.

JULIET: What a weenie! So how do I know he's really in love with me?
What if it's just another passing fancy?

SHAKESPEARE: It probably is.

JULIET: What!?!?

SHAKESPEARE: Come on, you're thirteen, he's sixteen, you'll get over it.

JULIET: No I won't!

SHAKESPEARE: That's what they all think. I could do you a nice shipwreck. You'd wash ashore, disguise yourself as a boy, spend days thinking your brother's drowned—

JULIET marches over to ROMEO.

JULIET: (*seductively*) Hi there.

ROMEO: (*barely notices her*) Hi. (*sighs*)

JULIET: There's a party at the Capulet's tonight.

ROMEO: That's nice.

JULIET: Everyone's invited except our mortal enemies.
I pray come and crush a cup of wine. Rest you merry.

ROMEO sighs. JULIET crosses urgently back to Shakespeare.

JULIET: Do something!

SHAKESPEARE: (to ROMEO) At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Sups the fair Rosaline, whom thou so loves. (ROMEO perks right
up) Go thither.

ROMEO: How will I get in? I'm a Montague!

*JULIET whips a tiny Lone Ranger mask from the
bosom of her dress and gives it to ROMEO.*

JULIET: Wear this.

ROMEO: This is tiny! There's no way! I'm gonna get caught!

JULIET: It's a well-known Shakespearean tradition that someone
wearing the same clothes and hairstyle will instantly becomes
unrecognizable by wearing a tiny mask.

ROMEO: (looks at mask) Really?

JULIET: Sad but true. (aside to SHAKESPEARE, with dagger) You have to
get him to my party.

*She steps aside. SHAKESPEARE goes over to ROMEO
and indicates JULIET.*

SHAKESPEARE: It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

ROMEO: Not really my type.

*SHAKESPEARE and ROMEO exit. As they exit,
SHAKESPEARE waves his pen and the lights change.
LADY CAPULET and NURSE come on tentatively,
bringing a bench between them.*

LADY CAPULET: Are we still in?

JULIET: How now, mother?

LADY CAPULET: Good... we're good...

JULIET: How now, mother?

LADY CAPULET: Is it still the same?

JULIET: I'm working on it. How—now—mother?

LADY CAPULET: Do you still... um... (*indicates 'die horribly'*)

JULIET: I don't know yet. How now mother?!

LADY CAPULET: They're so touchy at this age.

JULIET: (*through a gritted-teeth smile, trying to stay in the scene*) I'm not a child, I'm thirteen.

LADY CAPULET and NURSE give each other the grownup look. They set down the bench and tidy up any draping on the bier, as if they are fussing in a garden at home.

NURSE: Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Then the trouble really starts.

JULIET: I heard that!

NURSE: Tell her about the... you know...

LADY CAPULET: Do I have to?

NURSE nods.

Nurse, give leave awhile,
We must talk in secret.

NURSE exits. LADY CAPULET is very nervous.

Nurse, come back again,

NURSE enters.

I have remember'd me, thou's hear our counsel.

JULIET: Make up your mind. Sit! (*JULIET points the dagger. NURSE sits on bench*) Sit! (*JULIET points the dagger. LADY CAPULET sits. JULIET sits on the bier.*) Madam, I am here, what is your will?

LADY CAPULET: Younger than you
Here in Verona, ladies of esteem,
Are already made mothers.

JULIET: Are we going to have that talk [about the rich gift of my virginity]? 'Cause I already read the booklet from Verona Health Services. (*For G rating, cut part in brackets*)

LADY CAPULET: Thus then in brief:
The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.

NURSE: (*gushes*) A man, young lady. Lady, such a man—

JULIET gives her a look, she shuts up.

LADY CAPULET: Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

JULIET stands, moves center, waves the dagger.

JULIET: Lights, please. (*Nothing happens. She waves the dagger harder.*)
Lights! (*Nothing happens. She looks into the wings and threatens with the dagger.*) Lights!!

OTHER ACTORS enter with flashlights covered in pink gels.

SHAKESPEARE: (*looks out from wings*) What's going on?

JULIET: I'm trying to have a dramatic moment.
(*to audience and LADY CAPULET, very dramatically*)
How stands my disposition to be married?
It is an honour that I dream not of.
I'll look to like, if looking liking move,
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.
(*satisfied, to SHAKESPEARE*) Now that's drama. And nobody had to die. Now I'm going to go pick out some falling in love music.

JULIET poses, waves her arms theatrically, and runs out.

LADY CAPULET: We follow thee, Juliet! (*exits after JULIET*)

NURSE: (*steps into light circle*) Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days!

The ACTORS turn off their flashlights in the middle of her line and exit.

NURSE: Hey! (*she grabs the bench and exits with it after JULIET*)

Enter ROMEO, SHAKESPEARE, MERCUTIO, all in tiny masks.

ROMEO: An we mean well in going to this masque,
But 'tis no wit to go.
I dreamt a dream tonight.

MERCUTIO: And so did I.

ROMEO: Well what was yours?

MERCUTIO: (*looks uncomfortable, then aside to SHAKESPEARE*) I don't usually do this part. I'm a serving maid at the party.

SHAKESPEARE: So do those lines.

MERCUTIO: (*brightly*) More ale, sirrah? (*ROMEO and SHAKESPEARE wait*) That's it.

ROMEO: Look, if there's nothing you have to tell me, I think I'm going to go see if Rosaline wants to have coffee—

JULIET: (*from wings*) I don't hear lines!

ROMEO: Who's that shrew?

JULIET: I heard that! (*JULIET appears, bearing an axe, the dagger stuck in her belt*) Guess what I found on the props table? (*to MERCUTIO*) Come on, tell him your dream. You have dreams, right? Say whatever you want, this part never makes sense anyway.

SHAKESPEARE: It's poetry!

JULIET: Fine. Make some of it rhyme. Hey, Rosaline!

JULIET shoulders the axe and walks off whistling a riff from an action movie. SHAKESPEARE waves his pen and they start again.

ROMEO: I dreamt a dream tonight.

MERCUTIO: And so did I.

ROMEO: And what was yours?

MERCUTIO: (*gradually getting spookier*)

That Queen Mab came me by.
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone.
In the International Pancake House we sat
But it wasn't th'Pancake House, you know what dreams
Are like, and then she said, Mercutio
Why dost thou waste thy time with Romeo?
When thou couldst be abroad with me a-leap
Tickling a parson's nose as he lies asleep
And then I realiz'd I wore but drawers
Having no wit to put my clothes upon
All look'd at me from o'er their plates and laughed
And then my elbow knock'd upon the syrup,
And there was blueberry syrup all over the table, and the

waitress came over, only it wasn't the waitress, it was Sir Francis Drake, dressed as a waitress—

ROMEO: Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace.
Thou talk'st of nothing.

MERCUTIO: Hey, I listen to your dreams.

SHAKESPEARE: Supper is done and we shall come too late.

ROMEO: I don't wanna go.

SHAKESPEARE: All right, I'll bring it to you.

SHAKESPEARE waves his pen and the party begins. All the CAPULETS are present, as are LORD and LADY CAPULET, the PRINCESS, and anyone else not recognizably a Montague. People are dancing. ROMEO sees JULIET. Their eyes meet and lock. Some Barry White-type music begins to play. They slowly and dramatically cross to each other.

ROMEO: Excuse me, miss, have you seen Rosaline?
Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.

JULIET: What?! (ROMEO turns away. JULIET grabs SHAKESPEARE.) He's supposed to fall in love with me!

SHAKESPEARE: Don't you think love at first sight is a little contrived?

JULIET strides over to ROMEO.

ROMEO: Did you find Rosaline?

JULIET: She couldn't come. She's entering a convent tonight. In Sicily.

ROMEO: Ay, me!

JULIET: Why don't we dance?

ROMEO: Um, I...

JULIET looks to TYBALT and gestures her over with the dagger. TYBALT walks over.

TYBALT: Is there a problem here?

JULIET: Why, no, Cousin Tybalt. Have you found any Montagues at the party? I know how you like to slice them open, remove their intestines, and decorate your room with them.

ROMEO: Intestines?

TYBALT: This by his voice should be a Montague.
Let me just go and fetch my slicer.

JULIET: Come on, Tybalt, would I be dancing with a Montague?

ROMEO: Of course she wouldn't! Excuse us, gotta dance!

ROMEO and JULIET begin to dance traditional-Elizabethan-looking steps, twirling and touching palms, walking back and forth, etc. The PARTY GUESTS are also dancing, drinking, forming conversational groups, etc.

JULIET: Isn't there something you want to say to me here?

ROMEO: So, uh, how long has Rosaline been your cousin?

JULIET: Some sort of sonnet?

ROMEO: Oh! Yeah! (*rummages for piece of paper*) I've been working on this all day! There's so many rhymes! Be mine, for all time, I love your spine...

JULIET snatches the piece of paper and throws it away, then prompts him with his line.

JULIET: If you profane with your unworthiest hand...
This holy shrine...

He doesn't pick it up so she continues.

...the gentle sin is this:
Your lips, two blushing pilgrims ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

ROMEO: Good pilgrim, you do wrong my hand too much
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

ROMEO frantically disengages his hands and puts them palm to palm with JULIET's hands.

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

JULIET: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

ROMEO: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO holds his hands prayerfully and mouths "help me" at MERCUTIO.

JULIET: O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:
They pray: grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET tries to kiss ROMEO, who ducks.

ROMEO: Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake!

JULIET: Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take!

JULIET grabs, dips, and kisses ROMEO.

ROMEO: (*spluttering*) Then have my lips the sin that they have took!

JULIET: Give me my sin again!

JULIET goes to kiss ROMEO again. ROMEO screams, runs, comes face to face with TYBALT, screams, runs back to JULIET who now has the dagger out, screams again. The PARTY GUESTS start to be aware of the disturbance and begin to look at ROMEO and JULIET.

JULIET: (*holding the dagger*) Thou knowst I am a Capulet. Your life is your foe's debt. Be at my balcony in ten minutes or I'll tell cousin Tybalt on you. And be poetic! (*she realizes that everyone else at the party is staring at them*) So, yes, isn't this dagger nice? I'll just put it in my dress. Great party, I'm sure it will be over any minute now.

SHAKESPEARE takes the cue and waves pen. Party GUESTS exit, leaving ROMEO, SHAKESPEARE and JULIET.

(*to SHAKESPEARE*) Come on, I'm gonna lose him here, I need a balcony.

SHAKESPEARE: Let's learn how to write a scene change. Now, I usually have Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo cross through here—

JULIET threatens into wings with dagger.

JULIET: Balcony!

GREGORY and SAMPSON appear with a cardboard railing that sits on the floor. They hold it there.

What's this?

GREGORY: Balcony.

JULIET: It's on the floor.

SHAKESPEARE: Did you do any playwriting research? Then how do you know what kind of balcony it's supposed to be?

JULIET: But usually I look over into the orchard and—

SHAKESPEARE: Doesn't 'usually' end with Uggghhh?

ROMEO: Do you need me for this or can I just go find—

JULIET: What is your thing with Rosaline!?!

ROMEO: She's a lot easier to get along with! And I thought, as long as we're changing the story anyway, maybe I can just end up with—

JULIET: It's called Romeo and Juliet, not Romeo and Rosaline!

ROMEO: What's in a name?

*ROMEO tries to exit, SHAKESPEARE waves the pen.
ROMEO is zonked into staying.*

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

JULIET: Lights!

*GREGORY and SAMPSON pull out flashlights and
shine them on JULIET.*

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

ROMEO: I'm over here.

JULIET: *(shoots him a dirty look, starts over)* O Romeo, Romeo,
wherefore art thou—

ROMEO: *(raises his hand)* Um... ?

JULIET: Shhh! O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore—

ROMEO: I'm! Right! He-ere!

JULIET: Would you quit interrupting?

ROMEO: "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" *(he points with hands to indicate 'right here')*

JULIET: Wherefore doesn't mean where. It means why. I'm not asking where you are, I'm asking why you are.

ROMEO: Well, the mommy Montague and the daddy Montague love each other very much—

JULIET: Why you are Romeo! Named Romeo!

ROMEO: I had an Uncle Romeo.

JULIET: Why you are Romeo Montague! The son of my family's dearest enemies! The man I'm supposed to hate above all others! And yet I love thee! Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say 'Ay.'

ROMEO: No.

JULIET signals for ROMEO to climb up. There is no way for him to climb up, because the balcony will break if he gets on it. He leans over the balcony and offers JULIET his cheek. JULIET kisses ROMEO passionately, knocking the balcony over and falling on top of ROMEO. She pins him to the floor. GREGORY and SAMPSON pry the balcony out and take it off.

JULIET: Romeo—

If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow.
No ring, no fling, Romeo! *(she gets up and poses romantically)*
Good night, Good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say goodnight 'til it be morrow.

JULIET leans down and kisses ROMEO again. SHAKESPEARE waves his pen and the lights change. ROMEO struggles to his feet and shakes JULIET's hand. JULIET holds ROMEO's hand and forces it to his mouth so that he'll kiss her hand. ROMEO frees his hand and wipes it on his pants. Then he tries to wipe his mouth on his pants but he can't reach, so he wipes his mouth on his sleeve. TYBALT enters with a pack of CAPULETS from one side. TYBALT sees ROMEO and draws her sword.

TYBALT: Well if it isn't Romeo Montague.

ROMEO screams and runs off. MERCUTIO enters with a pack of MONTAGUES from the other side.

TYBALT: Juliet? A word with you?

JULIET: Well, you've already interrupted my romantic moment, what do you want?

TYBALT: Since we're changing the story, I don't wanna Uggghhh.

JULIET: If you don't Uggghhh, Romeo won't get banished.

TYBALT: And then you live happily ever after, right? What's the problem?

JULIET: Our love has to be legendary. It has to triumph over great obstacles. Nobody wants to do a play about two nice kids who fall in love and get married no problem. This is not Farmington Hills Side Story. (*local wealthy suburb/neighborhood*)

TYBALT: I'm a girl now. I thought you were going to be nice to the girls.

JULIET: But the story has to—

TYBALT: More love, less Uggghhh, right?

JULIET: Yes, but— (*JULIET realizes that everyone is standing around watching them argue*) Don't you people have parts to play? Go menace each other or something! Where's Romeo? Shakespeare! Get me Romeo! (*to TYBALT*) Just do the scene and I'll get back to you.

MERCUTIO: Well if it isn't Tybalt, Prince of Cats. Rrrrow. (*MERCUTIO makes a little clawing gesture*)

TYBALT: I am for you.

TYBALT and MERCUTIO fight with swords back and forth across the stage. The CAPULETS and MONTAGUES cheer them on and react to the blows. Both fighters are really good, but MERCUTIO is winning. SHAKESPEARE runs in, dragging ROMEO, who carries a piece of paper.

ROMEO: What rhymes with "hair of raven silk?" (*if JULIET has dark hair, make it 'yellow' silk*)

JULIET: You're supposed to be in this scene!

ROMEO: No I'm not, I'm supposed to be singing beneath fair Rosaline's window!

JULIET: You two-timer!

ROMEO: I don't even like you! Drop dead, Juliet!

JULIET: You villain!

MERCUTIO and TYBALT have ended up in a clinch behind ROMEO. MERCUTIO's back is to JULIET. JULIET screams, pulls out the dagger and lunges at ROMEO, who ducks. She stabs MERCUTIO by mistake.

SHAKESPEARE: The Prince expressly hath
 Forbid this bandying in Verona streets!
 Away Tybalt!

TYBALT: I didn't do anything!

SAMPSON: Come on, Tybalt! You're gonna get caught!

CAPULETS run out. TYBALT is in shock. JULIET drops her dagger, aghast.

JULIET: Mercutio! I'm sorry – I didn't mean –

MERCUTIO: So maybe second serving maid wasn't a great part, but I never got stabbed!

JULIET turns to TYBALT, who hugs her. They stay together. ROMEO and SHAKESPEARE grab MERCUTIO and ease her to the ground. MONTAGUES gather around.

MERCUTIO: I am hurt. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave woman. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a woman to death.

ROMEO: Courage, man, the hurt cannot be much.

MERCUTIO: Excuse me, who's bleeding here? I see one gaping wound in the abdomen – that would be Mercutio's gaping wound! And whose spleen is suffering contusions? Mercutio again! Oh— Oh—there's an elevated white blood cell count, as the immune system fights the infectious poisons come from Tybalt's dirty sword blade! Whose could it be?

ROMEO: Mercutio's?

MERCUTIO: Got it in one.
 A plague on both your houses!

MERCUTIO dies. The MONTAGUES are solemn.

ROMEO: (to JULIET) Are you crazy? Are you insane?
 Again, in triumph, and Mercutio slain?
 Now, Juliet, take the 'villain' back again!

ROMEO grabs the dagger, lunges at JULIET, who ducks. ROMEO stabs TYBALT. JULIET catches TYBALT, who dies in her arms.

ROMEO: O, I am fortune's fool!

MERCUTIO: (*wakes up*) Yeah, now you pretty much have to marry her or she'll never forgive you for stabbing her cousin. A plague on both your houses! Don't forget to tip your waitresses! Thank you and goodnight!

MERCUTIO dies again.

ROMEO: Hence will I to Sister Lawrence' cell,
Her help to crave and my strange tale to tell.

ROMEO exits with dagger. PRINCESS enters and sees the dead bodies.

PRINCESS: Where are the vile beginners of this fray?

SHAKESPEARE: An envious thrust from Tybalt hit the life of stout Mercutio,

JULIET: (*still holding TYBALT*) It did not!

SHAKESPEARE: (*aside, to JULIET*) If you get banished, the play ends here. (*to PRINCESS*) Tybalt, here slain, whom Romeo's hand did slay.

PRINCESS: Romeo slew him, he slew Mercutio.
Who now the price of his dear blood doth owe?
Why can't you people stop fighting? I mean, is that so hard?
Can't you walk down the streets of Verona and say "hello" like everyone else instead of stabbing each other at the slightest provocation?

SHAKESPEARE: Good subtext.

PRINCESS: Immediately we do exile Romeo hence.
If he comes back to Verona—

PRINCESS draws her finger across her throat.

PRINCESS and MONTAGUES exit, bearing the body of MERCUTIO.

JULIET: (*still holding TYBALT*) Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds!
Come night, come Romeo, come thou day in night,
Come, civil night—O, here comes my Nurse!

NURSE enters.

Nursie, we have to talk. Can you give me a hand here?

*JULIET gets up and starts to drag TYBALT's body off.
The NURSE weeps loudly and takes center stage.*



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