

PLOT SUMMARY OF

ROMEO AND JULIET

The play begins with a street fight between two rival families, the Montagues and the Capulets. Benvolio, Romeo's friend, intervenes but is confronted by the fiery Tybalt who hates all Montagues. The Prince stops the brawl and orders both sides to cease feuding under pain of death. Romeo, brooding on his love for Rosaline, is absent from this fight. Benvolio advises him to end his melancholy by finding another woman.

Lord Capulet encourages the courtship of his daughter Juliet by the nobleman Paris and invites him to a celebration that night. Romeo and Benvolio hear of this party from Capulet's servant and decide to attend.

Lady Capulet tries to persuade Juliet to marry Paris. Juliet's old nurse adds comic commentary. Romeo, his friends Benvolio and the madcap Mercutio, gatecrash the Capulet party – and Romeo falls instantly in love with Juliet. He is recognized by the quarrelsome Tybalt. Later that same night, Romeo climbs into the Capulet garden and overhears Juliet confessing her love for him. They defy their hostile families by vowing to marry secretly the next day.

Romeo obtains Friar Laurence's consent to marry them and Juliet's nurse acts as go-between.

Tybalt encounters Benvolio and Mercutio and provokes a swordfight with Mercutio. Romeo arrives and tries to stop them but Mercutio is killed. Romeo, forced to take revenge, kills Tybalt and has to flee. The Prince imposes a penalty of exile on Romeo.

Juliet's nurse brings news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. Juliet despairs. Her father meanwhile arranges for her immediate marriage to Paris. Juliet tries to resist her parents' wishes but even her nurse advises her to forget Romeo. Juliet seeks Friar Laurence's help. He gives her a sleeping potion which will make her appear dead. He will summon Romeo from exile to arrive as she awakens in the tomb and they can escape together. But the plan goes badly wrong. Romeo hears of Juliet's death but does not get the Friar's message explaining the trick. He buys poison and plans to join Juliet in death.

Romeo, at Juliet's tomb, is confronted by Paris. They duel and Romeo kills him. Romeo takes the poison and dies as Juliet awakens. She refuses to leave with Friar Laurence but instead stabs herself with a dagger.

The Prince, the Capulets and Montagues are summoned to the scene of the two dead lovers.

