

Romeo and Juliet: WHOOSH!

Once upon a time in the city of Verona, there were two great families: the Capulets and the Montagues. On one side of the city lived **Lord Capulet**, who was rich and powerful. He lived with his wife **Lady Capulet**, who always stood by her man, and they had an only child – a daughter, **Juliet**, who was fourteen. Like most wealthy young girls of the time, Juliet spent most of her time at home, under the watchful eye of her parents, BUT the person she learnt most about the world from was her **Nurse**. The Nurse loved Juliet with all her heart: she had worked for the Capulets since Juliet was born, and she was more like a mum to Juliet than Lady Capulet was. These two whispered their secrets to each other and were the best of friends. The Capulets also had a nephew called **Tybalt** of whom they were very fond, despite his bad temper.

On the other side of town were **Lord and Lady Montague** and their son **Romeo**. Romeo was a lover, not a fighter. He sighed, and he dreamed of perfect love, and the only thing that could distract Romeo from romance were his best friends, **Benvolio** and **Mercutio**. Verona's finest, they strutted around the streets together.

For as long as anyone could remember, the Capulets and the Montagues had hated one another. They scowled and shook their fists at each other. No-one knew what it was about, but the feud was deep and bitter.

WHOOSH!

One day this ancient grudge broke to new mutiny. A gang of **Capulets** and a gang of **Montagues** faced each other in the street. The Capulets shouted, '*Down with the Montagues*' and the Montagues shouted, '*Down with the Capulets!*' and they bit their thumbs at each other, which was the worst insult that you can imagine. And then they all drew out their swords, and cried, '*Cowards!*'

Luckily, at that moment **Prince Escalus** arrived – he was in charge of law and order in the city. So, when he raised his hand, the street fell silent. As he walked between the warring families he declared, '*If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace ... On pain of death, all men depart!*'

WHOOSH!

Meanwhile, the **Montagues** were worried about their son **Romeo**. He was depressed and moody, so they called on his cousin **Benvolio** to find out what the matter was, then hastily moved to a discreet distance and waited to find out what Benvolio could discover. Benvolio tried to cheer Romeo up, but Romeo was in love with a girl called **Rosaline**, who had sworn to become a nun. There was no way she was ever going to return Romeo's love. She would continue to turn her back on him. Benvolio said, '*Be ruled by me; forget to think of her!*' but Romeo simply shook

his head and said, *'O, teach me how I should forget to think.'* And with a hand on his heart, and another on his brow, he wandered off.

WHOOSH!

Love and marriage were also in the thoughts of Verona's most eligible young bachelor, **Paris**. He was very rich, and he was Prince Escalus' nephew, so as he walked around the streets every young woman tried to catch his eye. But Paris made a deal with **Lord Capulet**. When Juliet was old enough she would be Paris' wife. They shook hands on this arrangement, and then **Lord Capulet** decided that he would throw a great big party where Paris and Juliet could be introduced. He sent for a servant, **Peter**, and gave him a long list of guests to invite.

Off Peter set to deliver the invitations. He turned the list one way and then the other, but he could not read, so he went out all around Verona, giving invitations to everyone. **EVEN Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio** got invited by mistake.

WHOOSH!

At the Capulets' house, **Juliet** was getting ready for the big night helped by her **Nurse**. In came her mother, **Lady Capulet**, who announced, *'The County Paris seeks you for his love!'* The Nurse was delighted but Juliet shrugged. She would wait to see what this Paris was like. In came **Lord Capulet** striding around the room, hosting the party, and welcoming the guest of honor, **Paris**. Paris approached Juliet and bowed, she curtsied and away they danced around the room. Meanwhile **Tybalt**, Juliet's cousin, acted as bouncer: he kept a close eye on everything, one hand on his sword. Things were going very well, until **Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio** entered the party in disguise.

Tybalt recognized Romeo's voice and drew out his sword, but Lord Capulet calmed him down, not wanting anything to spoil his daughter's big night. And then it happened, across the crowded room, Romeo and Juliet spotted each other. They fell instantly in love, and moved towards each other. Their fingertips touched, and Romeo bent to kiss Juliet's hand. But suddenly, the Nurse was at Juliet's side, pulling her away, and Benvolio pulled Romeo away. The party was over.

WHOOSH!

But ... **Romeo** did not go home. Instead, he found his way to Juliet's bedroom window. High above him was a balcony. Soon, **Juliet** appeared and called out, *'O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?'* Romeo climbed up the balcony, went down on one knee and asked Juliet for *'The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.'* Juliet, overjoyed, cried, *'If that thy bent of love be honorable, thy purpose marriage, I'll follow thee my lord throughout the world.'*

WHOOSH!

Next morning **Romeo** rushed to see his friend, the local priest, **Friar Laurence**. He begged the Friar to perform a secret wedding ceremony and the Friar, hoping that this might bring peace between the Montagues and Capulets, agreed. The wedding was on. **Juliet** and the **Nurse** sneaked out of the Capulet house, through the streets of Verona to the church, then Juliet knelt with Romeo in front of the Friar, with the Nurse acting as best woman. The Friar blessed their marriage, the nurse threw confetti, and the deed was done. Romeo and Juliet were married.

WHOOSH!

Later, on the streets of Verona, tensions were running high. **Benvolio** and **Mercutio** were out and about. It was hot and sticky and Benvolio could see that trouble was brewing. He said to Mercutio, *'The day is hot, the Capulets abroad, / And if we meet we shall not scape a brawl, / For now is the mad blood stirring.'*

Sure enough, along came **Tybalt** with his gang from one direction, and **Romeo** from another. Tybalt, still angry that Romeo had crashed the party, drew his sword and challenged Romeo, saying, *'I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee!'* But Romeo held out his hands in peace, and would not fight. Mercutio couldn't stand by and see his friend Romeo insulted, so he drew out his sword, and fought with Tybalt. Romeo tried desperately to stop them, but as he jumped in between them, Tybalt stabbed Mercutio under Romeo's arm, and Mercutio fell to the floor. Romeo desperately tried to help his friend but Mercutio, with his last breath, said, *'A plague on both your houses!'* and died!

Romeo leapt up with fury burning in his heart. Now he faced Tybalt and drew out his sword. Back and forth they parried, until Romeo stabbed Tybalt right through the heart and Tybalt fell to the floor, dead. There was a moment of disbelieving silence, then Romeo ran away. Just at that moment, in came **Prince Escalus** with his police officers. The officers took hold of all the young men. In ran **Lord and Lady Capulet** and **Lord and Lady Montague**. They gasped in horror when they saw the bodies of Mercutio and Tybalt. Lady Capulet turned to the Prince and cried bitterly, *'I beg for justice, which thou, Prince, must give! Romeo slew Tybalt, Romeo must not live!'* But Benvolio fell on his knees and told the Prince what had happened, and the Prince, hearing how Romeo had tried not to fight, was merciful. He declared, *'For that offence, immediately we do exile him hence.'* Lady Montague was so upset at the thought of never seeing her son again, she died of grief.

WHOOSH!

Back at Juliet's house, **Juliet** was pacing up and down in her room, waiting for Romeo, when in came the **Nurse** with the terrible news: *'Tybalt is killed, and Romeo is banished.'* Juliet was horrified: she wept, then sent the Nurse to find Romeo. The nurse went straight to **Friar Laurence** and found **Romeo**. Once again, in secret, the Friar and the Nurse arranged for Romeo to climb up to Juliet's window. (Ssh!) Then they tiptoed away, leaving Romeo and Juliet to enjoy their wedding night.

WHOOSH!

Next morning, **Romeo** and **Juliet** were lying in each other's arms, saying a last tearful goodbye, when there was a knock at the door. Romeo leapt up, climbed out through the window and down the balcony as quickly as he could, and ran off to exile in Mantua. In burst **Lady Capulet** and the **Nurse**. Lady Capulet pulled her daughter to her feet, dried her tears and told her that it had been arranged for her to marry Paris next Thursday.

Juliet stamped her foot and said '*No!*' but then in came her father, **Lord Capulet**. When he heard that Juliet had refused Paris, he was incredibly angry. He went up to Juliet, as close as he could, and jabbed a finger into her face, warning her: '*An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend. An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets!*' Then he stormed out, closely followed by Lady Capulet and the Nurse. Juliet was alone. She went to see the **Friar**, who came up with a cunning plan. Into a little bottle, he put a pinch of herbs. He gave it a shake and handed it to Juliet. It was a sleeping potion that was so strong, it would make her appear dead. The Friar wrote a letter to Romeo explaining the plan and asking him to come and take Juliet away to Mantua. Friar then gave the letter to **another priest** to take to Romeo in Mantua.

WHOOSH!

That night, **Juliet** went to her bedroom alone. She took out the bottle, swigged the sleeping potion and fell, as if dead, to the floor. Next morning, the day of the wedding, the **Nurse** came to wake the bride-to-be. She shook Juliet gently, then more vigorously, but she could not wake her and cried '*O woeful day!*' In came **Lady Capulet**, **Paris**, **Lord Capulet** and the **Friar**. They gasped, and shook Juliet, but no one could wake her. She was surely dead! So, they lifted her up to take her to her funeral.

WHOOSH!

Meanwhile the **priest** carrying the letter for Romeo was suspected of having the plague and was kept from travelling by **two armed guards**. They would not let him leave and the letter was never delivered to Romeo. Meanwhile, in Mantua, **Romeo** was sitting sighing and pining for his wife when in came his servant **Balthasar** to tell him the news that Juliet was dead. Romeo was devastated, so much so that he wanted to die. He bought a tiny bottle of deadly poison, which he put in his pocket, then set off back to Verona to the tomb where Juliet lay.

WHOOSH!

At the tomb lay **Juliet**, as still as stone, mourned by **Paris**, who knelt by her body and wept. In came **Romeo**. They drew swords and fought until Paris was wounded and died. Then Romeo reached into his pocket and pulled out his little bottle of poison; drinking it down, he kissed Juliet one last time, and cried, '*Thus with a kiss, I die*'. Moments later, Juliet stirred and awoke. When she saw Romeo dead, she pulled out his dagger and stabbed herself. Just then, in rushed

Friar Laurence, the Prince, Lord and Lady Capulet, and Lord Montague. As one, they drew back in horror. The Prince was first to speak. He stepped forward, saying, *'Where be these enemies? Capulet? Montague? See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate ... all are punished.'* Lord Capulet held out his hand to Lord Montague. They shook hands and made peace. Then, all Verona stood to pay their respects to the young lovers as the Prince declared,

'For never was a story of more woe, Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.'

The End