

ROMEO AND JULIET

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

NARRATOR	A helpful guide to the audience, who sometimes can get lost during Shakespeare performances.
ROMEO	The foolish and rash young Montague who falls in love with Juliet.
JULIET	The foolish and enthusiastic Capulet who falls in love with Romeo.
BENVOLIO	Cousin to Romeo, and slightly more sensible.
MERCUTIO	A friend to Romeo, and not any more sensible.
TYBALT	A loyal member of the Capulet family, and not at all fond of Romeo.
FRIEND	A friend of the Capulet family who accompanies Tybalt.
FRIAR	The holy man who marries Romeo and Juliet.
LADY CAPULET	The mother of Juliet.
MR MONTAGUE	The father of Romeo.
PRINCE ESCALUS	The prince of Verona, who is a little OCD. And a little full of himself. And just a little plain, old nuts.
GERTRUDE	The only sensible one of the whole bunch, Gertrude is a Venezuelan sloth (yes, you read that right) who hangs out with the Friar.

SCENE 1: FLAPPING EARS

(The streets of Verona...)

NARRATOR

Welcome my friends, to the streets of Verona, the city in Italy where this story takes place. To your right you will see the Capulets Tybalt and... uh... his friend... uh...

FRIEND

Ted.

NARRATOR

Ted? Really? Ted? *(Friend shrugs)* Okay... and his friend Ted. To your left you see Benvolio... wave hello, Benvolio... who is a cousin of Romeo Montague. That fellow next to him is *not* Romeo, however, but Romeo's good friend Mercutio, a name meaning Swift-Footed Bearer of Crunchy Cereal.

MERCUTIO

It doth not!

NARRATOR

Or something like that. *(Mercutio and Narrator glare at each other, Narrator clearly enjoying giving Mercutio a hard time)* So here we have a clash of the Montagues and Capulets, and as you shall see, they don't care for each other.

TYBALT

(To his friend)

Look yonder, good fellows.
Do you also see
the scoundrels Mercutio and Benvolio?

FRIEND

Indeed, but not their friend Romeo.
Still should we do them great offense.
Say I that we
bite our thumbs at them.

NARRATOR

Ooo... a thumb bite in Verona is quite the insulting gesture!! Why, you ask? It derives from a long tradition of nail biting in cultured circles of the Venezuelan Riviera, where rebellious sloths would charge out of the jungle and...

MERCUTIO

It doth not!

NARRATOR

No, really. The sloths would come out from the trees in large numbers

(A couple of sloths enter to demonstrate...)

MERCUTIO

Two? Thou consider *two*
as a large number?

NARRATOR

(Pause)

Sometimes there were more. Anyway, they would rush at the villagers bearing their lethal colonial muskrats, and the only way the vill—

(The sloths are armed with muskrats wearing colonial hats)

ROMEO

I think thou meanest muskets.

NARRATOR

(Considers this, then just as he appears to agree...)

No, I'm pretty sure it was muskrats.

MERCUTIO

Be this important
To our tale
of Romeo and Juliet?

NARRATOR

You never know. Sloths are sneaky like that. Where were we?

MERCUTIO

Thumb biting.

NARRATOR

Ah yes. Well, it's an insulting gesture. Even worse than this.

(Puts thumbs on temples and wiggles fingers)

TYBALT

Thumb biting
A good and suited insult indeed,
But I fear we must find other means
For upon close inspection I do see
That I have left my home
With nary a thumb to bite.

FRIEND

Then perhaps...
We might flap our ears at them.
Most grievously.

TYBALT

A strong and worthy plan
Let us waste not the day,
but engender forth for some
Desultory wagging.

MERCUTIO

Do you flap your ears at us, sir?

TYBALT

I *do* flap my ears, sir.

MERCUTIO

Do you flap your ears *at us*, sir?

TYBALT

No, sir, I do *not* flap my ears at you, sir, but I
flap... my... ears, sir.
And, when the wind is so,
I waggle my head as well,
Making no claim to a waggle's intended target.
Do you quarrel, sir?

MERCUTIO

Quarrel sir! No, sir.

TYBALT

If you do, sir, I am for you I serve as good a man as you.

BENVOLIO

Will we stand here and endure such abuse
From the likes of Capulet puppets such as these
Who clearly flap their ears
and waggle their heads with ill intent?

MERCUTIO

Let honor be defended!!

(They fight.)

PRINCE ESCALUS

(Entering...)

Ah-hem!! *(Fighting stops)*
What skulduggery and ill-intended broo-ha-ha is this?!
While you waggle your ears and flap your heads
These streets see no peaceful concourse.

MERCUTIO

It is the prince
In all his princely glory

TYBALT

Indeed
But misinformed upon
The nature of our ill-deeds
For it was our *ears* that flapped
And *heads* a-waggle,
Not the twixt be-twain

PRINCE ESCALUS

I care not
what did flap
and which did waggle
Be it ear, or head, or any other part
belonging to a paper bag
The next who fights
is great in trouble
Now cut it out
I mean it.
Seriously.

(Grumbling, all exit.)

SCENE 2: MEET ROMEO

(Another Veronese street...)

NARRATOR

Now it is finally time to meet our unfortunate lovers, *(adjective based on puppet)* Romeo and *(adjective based on puppet)* Juliet. They do not know each other yet, but will meet when Mercutio sneaks Romeo into a Capulet party.

ROMEO

I've such a crush on Rosaline,
But my affections she does not return!

MERCUTIO

It presents thee not well to be
so enamored of merely one.
By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
Examine other beauties.
Tonight there will be a party;
At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Supps the fair Rosaline whom thou so lovest,
With all the admired beauties of Verona
Go thither; and, with unattainted eye,
Compare her face with some that I shall show,
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.

ROMEO

(To Narrator)

If thou wouldest be so kind
As to untangle this maze of words...

NARRATOR

What's that?

ROMEO

What sayeth he?

NARRATOR

Oh. He said, er, saideth, that Rosaline may be cute, but there are way cuter girls at the Capulet's party, and you should go check them out.

ROMEO

Really?

(Narrator shrugs, then to Mercutio...)

I doubt thy words,
But if this party is fair
And hath those little hot dogs
wrapped in blankets
Then I shall accompany thee
to prove thy wrongness.

SCENE 3: MEET JULIET

(The Capulet's manor...)

NARRATOR

And here we have Juliet and her mother.

LADY CAPULET

Tell me, daughter Juliet,
How stands your disposition to be married?
The fair Paris seeks you for his love.

JULIET

The whole city?

LADY CAPULET

Nay, not the city
But a gentleman of like name
Just as fair
Yet with fewer street lamps

JULIET

I had not thought of it.
For as all in Verona know
Boys have cooties.
Still, if it be your wish
I shall look upon him,
But if you do not approve,
I shall not look long.

SCENE 4: THE LOVERS MEET

(The Capulet's manor...)

NARRATOR

Evening has come, and we join the Capulet's party just as Romeo and Mercutio arrive. Only a few moments after, Romeo catches his first glimpse of Juliet, and is immediately stricken with the delightfully incurable ailment known as... *(sing-songy)* love.

ROMEO

Oh what lady is that,
which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder puppeteer?

MERCUTIO

Nay, my friend,
Cast not your favor
Upon those winds
For she is...

(Romeo stops listening and wanders towards Juliet)

(Quietly, resigned...) The daughter of Capulet

ROMEO

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

If I profane with my unworsted hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

Sorry?

MERCUTIO

He wants to kiss you!

JULIET

Then why did he
not sayeth so?

(They kiss.)

JULIET

You kiss by the book.

ROMEO

(Looking at a big book onstage somewhere...)

Good idea.

*(Puppets step back from each other, and then
deliberately move over to the book and kiss again)*

LADY CAPULET

Juliet, would you please attend me.

(Lady Capulet and Juliet move off.)

ROMEO

(To Mercutio...)

You were saying-eth
By what name sails
this angelic beauty
through starlit heavens?

MERCUTIO

Juliet.
Her name is Juliet
Daughter of your
father's greatest enemy.

ROMEO

She's a Capulet?!
Oh, dear. That really stinketh.

(Romeo storms off as Juliet returns.)

JULIET

Fair gentle, who was that pulpy man
with the lovely *(some feature of puppet)?*

MERCUTIO

His name is Romeo
son of Montague.

JULIET

(Spoken with the same inflections as Romeo's line)

He's a Montague?
Oh, dear. That really stinketh.

SCENE 5: THE BALCONY

(The balcony of Capulet's manor...)

NARRATOR

Late that night, Romeo returns to the home of the Capulets, in hopes of seeing Juliet again. He hides in the shadows in fear of being spotted by guards...

(Gertrude marches by in guard uniform...)

...eventually finding a balcony where Juliet stands, gazing out at the stars.

ROMEO

But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

JULIET

Oh, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou *Romeo*?

GERTRUDE

(Interrupting...)

Why can't she see him? He's right there.

FRIAR

No, no. "Wherefore" means "why". You know, "for what reason".

GERTRUDE

That seems a little rude. I think Romeo is a nice name.

FRIAR

It's that he's a Montague that's the problem, not that his first name is "Romeo".

GERTRUDE

But she said "wherefore art thou *Romeo*".

FRIAR

Well, she is upset about his family, not his first name. Trust me. Oh, and it's *wherefore*, not whereforest. That would be someone who turns into trees in the moonlight.

JULIET
(Clearly annoyed)

Do you mind? I'm *performing* here.

Oh, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?

(Nasty glare back at the audience puppets when she realizes she said the line wrong...)

GERTRUDE
See, I told you it's wherefo—

JULIET
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO
I take thee at thy word

JULIET
What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

GERTRUDE
(Interrupting...)
A little help?

FRIAR
That is old English for "Hey, it's kinda creepy, you're sneaking around under my balcony like this."

ROMEO
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
In truth, what is in a name?
It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a paper bag.

JULIET
I... I... I was poised
to say those very words to you.

ROMEO

That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;

JULIET

This becometh most spooky indeed
It is like you taketh the words
Directly from upon my lips!
Those very words
That otherwise I might have been famous
for their utterance!

ROMEO

Oops.

JULIET

But if my kinsmen see thee, they will murder thee!
Or perhaps implore thy bag-like nature
To contain a child's lunch.

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow.
If thy purpose be not marriage, well... (*wait a beat...*)
I'm not that kind of puppet.

ROMEO

Honorable are my intents,
and so tomorrow you shall see.
And as for now, I say
Good night.

JULIET

Good night.

ROMEO

Good-bye.

JULIET

Good-bye.

ROMEO

Bon nuit.

Bon nuit, my love. JULIET

Buenos noches. ROMEO

You hang up first! JULIET

No, *you* hang up first! ROMEO

(The rest of the cast comes and drags them off stage.)