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Romeo and Juliet

CHARACTER/ACT BREAKDOWN

KEY CHARACTERS:

Romeo Montague...*young lover of Juliet*

Juliet Capulet...*young lover of Romeo*

Juliet's nurse...*Juliet's confidant, nanny*

Friar Laurence...*confidant to lovers*

Tybalt...*cousin to Juliet*

Mercutio...*Romeo's close friend*

Count Paris...*a nobleman in love with Juliet*

Lady Capulet, Capulet...*Juliet's parents*

Lady Montague, Montague...*Romeo's parents*

ACT ONE:

The Capulets and the Montagues are brawling at the very beginning of the play...this has evidently been happening for years and shows no signs of letting up. The Prince of Verona (where we lay our scene) puts his foot down and decrees that anyone who starts another fight (within the two households, or their social groups) will face the death penalty.

While this was happening, Romeo was busy sighing over his latest love, Rosaline. His friends show up to poke fun at him for being in love with love...in whatever form it currently takes. Mercutio leads the banter with Romeo.

Juliet is now old enough to be married, in fact almost past her prime at 13. Her parents are determined for her to marry Paris and her mother lays the pressure on. Juliet circumnavigates this by explaining that marriage hadn't really occurred to her, but that she'll keep it in mind. This is outrageous to her mother...

The Capulets are throwing a costume party...Romeo, Mercutio and their friends crash the party with Romeo thinking that he might just catch a glimpse of Rosaline. However, who he sees is a girl who takes his breath away, fairer than all and any...he in fact instantly

falls in love with her. Juliet sees a boy who leaves her speechless and falls in love with him on sight. She learns too late that the young man is Romeo Montague, he that she is Juliet Capulet...they are untouchable to each other. Their families will keep them apart at all cost, and they both know it.

ACT TWO:

The only obstacle to their love for each other is their names. Nonetheless, they pledge their undying love to each other, and Romeo runs off to Friar Laurence for help in their elopement. He hasn't heard about any of it yet, so he thinks Romeo is speaking about Rosaline...he finds Romeo's professed love to Juliet fickle. Romeo convinces him that he's in earnest, and it suddenly occurs to the Friar that this marriage might just patch things up AT LAST between the warring families.

Meanwhile, Tybalt is on the warpath. He saw Romeo and company at the party and wants to avenge the impropriety of their presence as Montagues at a Capulet party.

Romeo makes the arrangements with the Friar for his elopement with Juliet, consulting also with Juliet's nurse to seal the deal.

ACT THREE:

Soon after this secret marriage, Tybalt catches up to the Montague boys...Mercutio is there and in rare form, while Romeo shows up on the scene a bit later (just having been wed). Now that Romeo is related by blood to Tybalt, he declines to fight. Mercutio steps in to deal with Tybalt, rather appalled by Romeo's weakness...or so he thinks. Tybalt kills Mercutio when Romeo tries to end the fight.

Too much pressure. Romeo, seeing his friend slain, is understandably unhinged. He hunts down Tybalt and kills him, revenging Mercutio's death. By now, the prince has heard about the whole thing---violations galore. Romeo has already carried out the death sentence that should have fallen on Tybalt for slaying Mercutio, but the prince frowns on Romeo's act of vigilantism, so he banishes Romeo from Verona.

Romeo runs to the Friar, who maintains his hope that someday he will be able to reveal the clandestine marriage, which will reverse all of the bitter, bloody fighting.

Juliet is conflicted; her cousin is dead, killed by her husband's hand. On the other hand, her cousin killed her husband's best friend. In the end, she takes Romeo's side. Meanwhile, her parents decide to hasten the forced marriage of their daughter to Count Paris. She is, essentially, powerless to stop them.

ACT FOUR:

The friar tries to slow down the Capulets' wedding plans. She is, after all, already married! With Juliet, he hatches a plan: he provides a powerful drug which will make Juliet appear to be dead for 42 hours. After the family lays her to rest in the family tomb, he will break into the tomb and rescue her. Meanwhile, he sends Romeo a letter explaining said events and then he can come take her away.

Juliet takes the drug and the next morning she is found...seemingly dead. They carry her to the family tomb.

ACT FIVE:

Well, the letter never reaches Romeo...and instead, he hears the news that Juliet has died.

He buys poison, with the intention of killing himself next to Juliet's body...if they can't be together in life, then they will be together in death.

The friar learns that his letter did not reach Romeo, so he heads to the Capulet tomb to take Juliet with him till he can reach Romeo.

But...the timing doesn't quite work.

Romeo gets to the tomb before the friar, and encounters Paris who is mourning for Juliet. They fight and Romeo kills him. He breaks into the tomb and takes the poison at Juliet's side.

Juliet's drug wears off just as the friar arrives...he tries to get her out, but she sees the dead bodies around her and refuses to follow. The Friar becomes frightened and flees, temporarily. Juliet takes Romeo's dagger and stabs herself, thus following him in death.

The prince arrives and the friar tells the entire tale. With the whole truth out and dead bodies littering the stage, the families finally reconcile and end their feud...too late.

