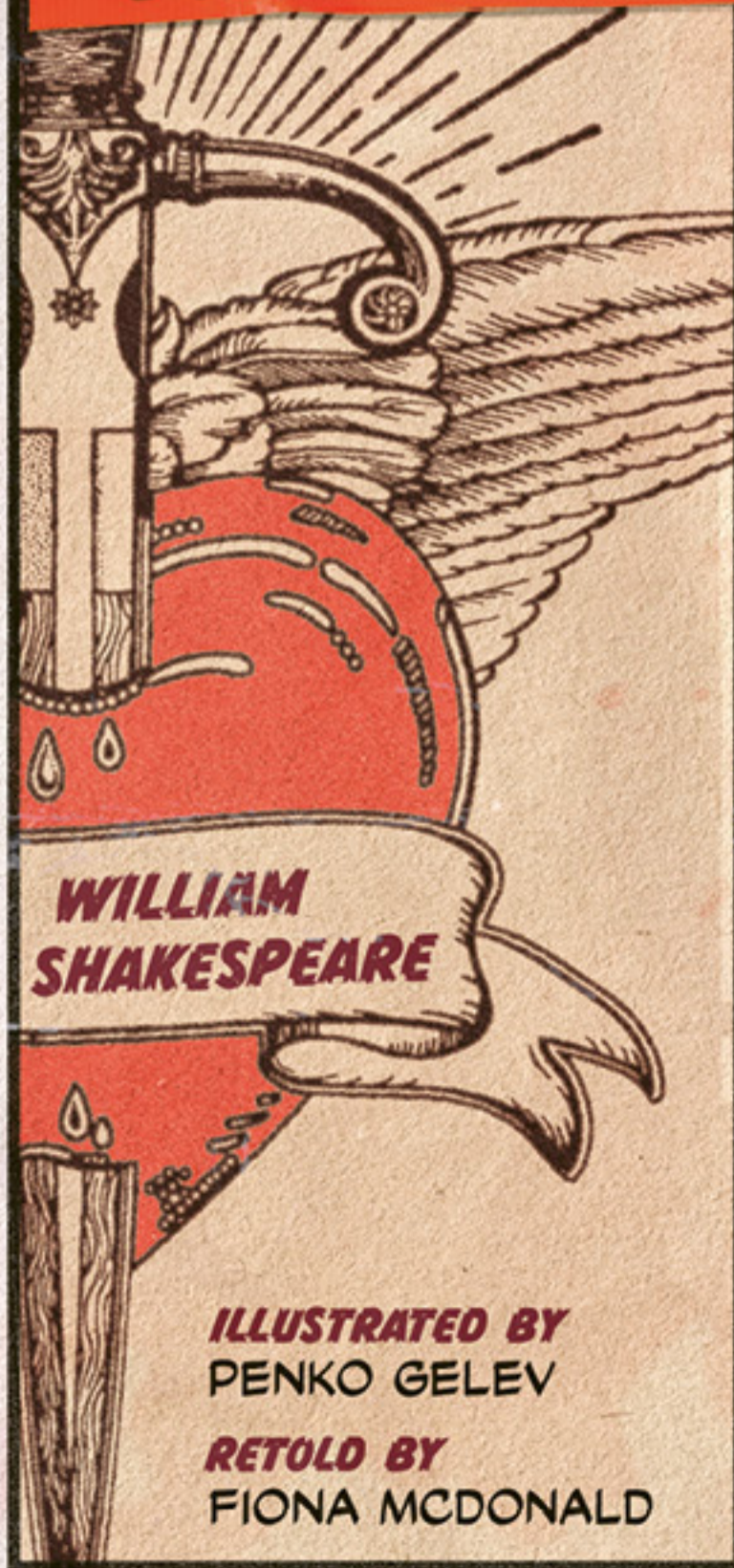


Romeo and Juliet

THE ULTIMATE GRAPHIC RETELLING TO
GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE CLASSICS



**ILLUSTRATED BY
PENKO GELEV**

**RETOLD BY
FIONA MCDONALD**





ROMEO



JULIET



MERCUTIO, ROMEO'S FRIEND



TYBALT, JULIET'S COUSIN



FRIAR LAURENCE



NURSE



LORD CAPULET, JULIET'S FATHER



LADY CAPULET, JULIET'S MOTHER



LORD MONTAGUE, ROMEO'S FATHER



LADY MONTAGUE, ROMEO'S MOTHER



PARIS



BENVOLIO, ROMEO'S COUSIN



ESCALUS, PRINCE OF VERONA

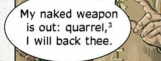
IN VERONA, A TOWN IN NORTH ITALY, TWO NOBLE FAMILIES, THE MONTAGUES AND THE CAPULETS, ARE AT WAR BECAUSE OF AN 'ANCIENT GRUDGE'. FROM THESE HOUSES, TWO 'STAR-CROSSED' YOUNG LOVERS WILL MEND THE QUARREL BETWEEN THEIR FAMILIES BY FALLING IN LOVE - AND DYING. READ ON TO FIND OUT HOW THEIR TRAGIC STORY UNFOLDS...



ALL SEEMS QUIET IN VERONA'S BUSY PIAZZA.²



Draw thy tool! Here comes of the house of Montagues.



My naked weapon is out: quarrel,³ I will back thee.



Do you bite your thumb⁴ at us, sir?

No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.



Do you quarrel, sir?

Quarrel sir? No, sir.

HOWEVER, TWO CAPULETS, SAMPSON AND GREGORY, ARE HUNGRY FOR A FIGHT.

THEY RUN INTO ABRAHAM AND BALTHASAR, TWO MONTAGUES. SAMPSON TRIES TO PROVOKE ABRAHAM BY MAKING A RUDE GESTURE.

THE MEN KNOW THEY SHOULD NOT ARGUE IN A PUBLIC PLACE, BUT ABRAHAM QUICKLY RISES TO THE BAIT.



I serve as good a man as you.



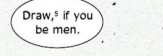
No better.



Yes, better, sir.

You lie.

SAMPSON CLAIMS THE CAPULETS ARE BETTER THAN THE MONTAGUES.



Draw,⁵ if you be men.



A FIGHT BREAKS OUT...

1. star-crossed: ill-fated. 2. piazza: public square. 3. quarrel: start an argument. 4. bite your thumb: a rude gesture, done by flicking your thumb out from behind your front tooth. 5. draw: pull out your sword.



UNAWARE OF THE THREAT FROM TYBALT,¹ ROMEO BOLDLY TAKES JULIET'S HAND AND LEADS HER TO A QUIET SPOT AWAY FROM THE OTHER GUESTS. HE APOLOGISES FOR HIS ROUGHNESS.



My lips, two blushing pilgrims,¹ ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.



JULIET TOO HAS FALLEN IN LOVE...



Let lips do what hands do!



You kiss by th'² book.⁴

LOST IN EACH OTHER, THE TWO YOUNG LOVERS KISS, THEN KISS AGAIN.



Madam, your mother craves a word³ with you.

JUST THEN, THE NURSE INTERRUPTS THEM WITH A MESSAGE FROM JULIET'S MOTHER, LADY CAPULET.



RELUCTANTLY, JULIET TEARS HERSELF AWAY, LEAVING ROMEO ALONE WITH THE NURSE.



What is her mother?

ROMEO ASKS THE NURSE WHO JULIET IS, HER ANSWER SHOCKS HIM.



Her mother is the lady of the house.



Is she a Capulet? O dear account! My life is my foe's debt.¹

ROMEO IS DEVASTATED. HE REALISES HE'S FALLEN HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE WITH A CAPULET, HIS FAMILY'S BITTER ENEMY.



Away, be gone, the sport is at the best.²

Ay, so I fear; the more is my unrest.³

HEARING THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS, ROMEO LOOKS UP. IT'S BENVOLIO. NOW ROMEO KNOWS WHO JULIET IS, HE'S HAPPY TO LEAVE THE PARTY.



I thank you, honest gentlemen. Good night.

SEEING THEM LEAVE, LORD CAPULET BIDS THEM GOODBYE.



BENVOLIO, ROMEO AND MERCUTIO LEAVE THE CAPULET MANSION.



Come on, let's to bed.

INSIDE, LORD CAPULET REALISES HOW LATE IT IS AND HEADS UPSTAIRS WITH LADY CAPULET.



What's he that follows there, that would not dance?

His name is Romeo, and a Montague, the only son of your great enemy.

JULIET IS KEEN TO KNOW WHO HER HANDSOME STRANGER IS. HER NURSE TELLS HER HE IS A MONTAGUE. JULIET REALISES SHE HAS FALLEN FOR SOMEONE THAT SHE IS SUPPOSED TO HATE.



My only love, sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late.⁴

1. pilgrim: a visitor to a holy place – Romeo compares his lips to pilgrims as he worships Juliet's beauty. Romeo's name means 'pilgrim to Rome' in Italian. 2. palmer: pilgrims carried a palm leaf to show they had been to Jerusalem. 3. palm to... kiss: pilgrims touch hand to hand when they pray. 4. You kiss... book: You kiss like someone who has studied romantic novels – in other words, very well! 5. craves a word: wants to talk.

1. Oh dear... debt: There's a terrible price to pay, as I'm dependant on my enemy. 2. the sport... best: the best part of the party is over. 3. the more... unrest: if only you knew why I'm so worried. 4. Too early... late: I saw him too soon as a stranger, and I found out too late who he was.



JULIET HURRIES TO SEE FRIAR LAURENCE, NOT KNOWING THAT PARIS IS VISITING THE FRIAR TO ARRANGE THEIR MARRIAGE. BUT THE FRIAR IS TRYING TO DELAY THE CEREMONY, KNOWING FULL WELL HE HAS ALREADY MARRIED JULIET TO ROMEO.



On Thursday, sir? The time is very short.



Now, sir, her father counts it dangerous that she do give her sorrow too much sway, and in his wisdom hastens our marriage.

PARIS EXPLAINS THAT JULIET'S FATHER IS KEEN TO SPEED UP THE MARRIAGE AS HE IS WORRIED THAT JULIET IS SO UPSET AT TYBALT'S DEATH.



I wish I knew not why it should be slowed.



Happily met, my lady and my wife!

THE FRIAR TRIES TO LOOK PLEASED FOR PARIS, BUT IS SECRETLY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN LORD CAPULET FINDS OUT ABOUT JULIET'S MARRIAGE TO ROMEO.

AT THAT MOMENT, JULIET APPEARS, LOOKING FLUSTERED. PARIS IS DELIGHTED THAT SHE HAS TURNED UP, THINKING IT A HAPPY COINCIDENCE.



That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.

That 'may be' must be, love, on Thursday next.

What must be, shall be.



Juliet, on Thursday I will rouse¹ ye.

Till then, adieu,² and keep this holy kiss.

JULIET WANTS TO TALK TO THE FRIAR ABOUT ROMEO BUT CAN'T SAY A THING WITH PARIS THERE. PARIS IS EAGER TO TALK ABOUT THE WEDDING, BUT JULIET IS RELUCTANT.

FINALLY, TO GET RID OF PARIS, JULIET PRETENDS SHE LEAVES TO MAKE HER CONFESSION. PARIS HAS SO SHE CAN BE ALONE WITH THE FRIAR.



O, shut the door and when thou hast done so, come with me

— past hope, past cure, past help!



If in thy wisdom thou canst not help... with this knife I'll help it presently.¹



Hold, daughter, I do spy a kind of hope.

ONCE PARIS HAS GONE, JULIET BURSTS INTO TEARS.

JULIET IS SO UPSET THAT SHE THREATENS TO KILL HERSELF WITH A DAGGER.

THE FRIAR CALMS JULIET DOWN AND TAKES THE KNIFE FROM HER.



Take thou this vial,² being then in bed, and this distilling liquor³ drink thou off.



When the bridegroom in the morning comes to rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead.⁴



In the mean time, against shalt thou awake,⁵ shall Romeo by my letters know our drift,⁶ and hither shall he come.

THE FRIAR REVEALS HIS PLAN: THE NIGHT BEFORE HER WEDDING TO PARIS, SHE MUST SWALLOW A POTION THAT WILL MAKE HER LOOK DEAD.

WHEN PARIS FINDS HER EVERYONE WILL THINK SHE'S DEAD AND SHE'LL BE BURIED IN THE FAMILY VAULT.⁸

WHEN THE POTION WEARS OFF, THE FRIAR AND ROMEO WILL BE WAITING. THEN JULIET AND ROMEO CAN LEAVE VERONA AND START A NEW LIFE.



Give me, give me! O tell not me of fear!



I'll send a Friar with speed to Mantua, with my letters to thy lord.



Love, give me strength! Farewell, dear Father.⁷

JULIET TAKES THE VIAL. THE FRIAR WARNS HER THE POTION IS NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED.

THE FRIAR PROMISES THAT HE WILL SEND A MESSENGER TO ROMEO SO THAT HE WILL KNOW THE PLAN.

JULIET THANKS HIM AND LEAVES, CLUTCHING THE POTION IN HER HAND.

1. rouse: wake up. 2. adieu: farewell.

1. with this knife... presently: if you can't help me, I'll stab myself with this knife. 2. vial: bottle. 3. distilling liquor: drink that spreads through a body. 4. there art thou dead: you will seem dead. 5. vault: tomb. 6. against... awake: to be ready when you wake. 7. drift: plan. 8. Father: Catholic priest.

In perhaps his most famous play, *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare created one of the greatest yet most tragic love stories ever told. Even people who have never read or seen the play know the names of the young lovers. Many of the play's lines are well known and newspaper headlines still use the word 'Romeo' today to describe a male lover. The play was first published in 1597, but it was written down from memory by three of the actors who had performed the play. A much more accurate version was published two years later in 1599.

These two versions were both printed as quartos, flimsy books that were made up of sheets of paper folded twice to make four leaves. Neither version was supervised by Shakespeare himself, so they don't always agree, and later versions create even more uncertainty, so that modern editions of the play often differ from one another.

A BORROWED TALE

Like many other playwrights of the time, Shakespeare rarely invented the storylines for his plays, but borrowed them from earlier works. The tale of *Romeo and Juliet* was first written down by the Italian Masuccio Salernitano in 1476. Over the next hundred years, it was rewritten by several French and Italian authors.

In England the story of the two doomed lovers was well known thanks to a poem published in 1562 by Arthur Brooke, *The Tragical History*

of *Romeus and Juliet*. This was the main source for Shakespeare's play, along with another version of the tale written by William Painter in 1567, *The goodly Historie of the true and constant love between Rhomeo and Julietta*. So even without Shakespeare's prologue (introduction), many of the audience would already know how the story would end – the thrill came from seeing how the plot unfolded. Shakespeare, however, made some big changes to Brooke's version which added to the drama. For example, Brooke's story stretches over nine months, but in Shakespeare's tale everything happens in just a few days: *Romeo and Juliet* fall in love instantly and almost straight away things start to go horribly wrong, forcing them to take increasingly desperate action. Shakespeare also made characters such as Mercutio, the Nurse and Tybalt much more important, adding to the drama and intrigue of the play.

PERFORMING THE PLAY

Though records are not entirely clear, the play was perhaps performed for the first time in 1595 at James Burbage's Theatre, just outside the City of London. It was the first ever purpose-built playhouse. The Theatre had an open stage and could hold around 3,000 people, with seating split over three levels and a cheaper standing area in the centre for poorer audience members. It had several doors at the back of the stage, allowing the actors to make quick exits and

appearances.

Shakespeare made his *Juliet* very young – just 13 years old – as it was common for young teenage girls to marry at the time the play is set (the Renaissance – see page 44). The part would have been played by a boy of the same age, as women were forbidden from acting. *Romeo* may have been played by one of the young apprentices; the leader of the company, Richard Burbage, usually played the lead role in Shakespeare's plays, but he was 28 and would have appeared too old. Shakespeare may well have gone to rehearsals to give directions to the actors, working with a musician and a dancing instructor for the ball scenes and with Burbage in the fight scenes.

Tudor audiences loved violent plays and were fascinated by swordplay. Demonstrations of fencing were often seen on the stage alongside plays, so it's likely that many of the actors in *Romeo and Juliet* were also expert swordsmen. In 1598, Ben Jonson (a good friend of Shakespeare's) was arrested for duelling with and killing fellow actor Gabriel Spencer. Jonson got off with manslaughter rather than murder, and was punished by being branded with a 'T' on his left thumb. But in 1613 King James I changed the law, so that anyone caught duelling could be punished by death – like the Prince's threat to execute any Montague or Capulet who 'disturb our streets again'.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID

In 1662, writer Samuel Pepys saw the first production of the play since the restoration of Charles II to the throne after the English Civil War. He thought it was 'the play of itself the worst that I ever heard in my life, and the worst acted I ever saw!'

In 1672, poet John Dryden was more kind, praising the play and in particular the character Mercutio: 'Shakespeare showed the best of his skill in his Mercutio, and he said himself, that he was forc'd to kill him in the third Act, to prevent' being kill'd by him.'



A modern-day map of Italy showing Verona and Mantua (called Mantova in Italian).