

ROMEO AND JULIET

Love and misadventure in Verona

CAST LIST

JULIET daughter of Lord Capulet

ROMEO son of Lord Montague

TYBALT cousin to Juliet

LORD CAPULET

Nurse to Juliet

MERCUTIO friend to Romeo

BENVOLIO friend and cousin to Romeo

THE PRINCE OF VERONA

FRIAR LAURENCE

A monk messenger to Friar Laurence

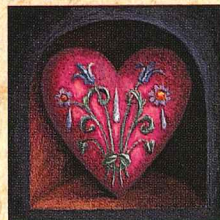
THE SCENE

Verona in the fifteenth century

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

ROMEO; ACT TWO, SCENE TWO



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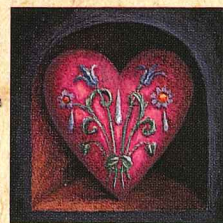
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ROMEO; ACT TWO, SCENE TWO



On a warm summer's evening, the Capulet house was the brightest place in Verona. The walls of the ballroom were hung with silk tapestries. The candlelight from a dozen crystal chandeliers threw rainbows onto the heads of the masked dancers as they twirled through the music and laughter that filled the air.

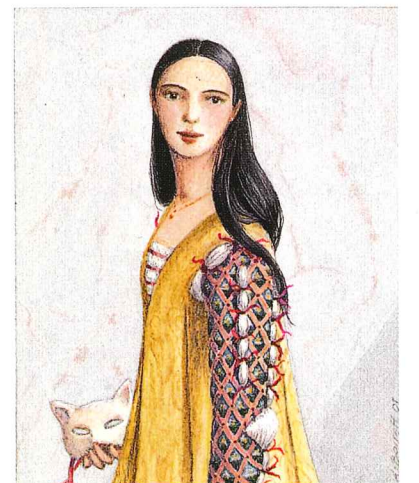
On one side of the room, near a table laden with food and drink, stood a young girl named Juliet. She was the daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet. She had removed her mask and loosened her black hair so that it hung about her shoulders. Her face was radiant and her beauty was obvious to all who looked at her. She seemed unaware that someone was watching her.

A few steps away, a young man stood gazing at her. He had never seen such loveliness before in his whole life.

Surely I must be mistaken! he thought. *Surely if I look a second time, I will find that her eyes are too close together, her nose too long, or her mouth too wide!* Moving slowly toward her, the young man lifted his mask so that he could see Juliet more clearly. The more he gazed at her; the more perfect her face seemed.

Almost without thinking, Romeo pushed his way toward Juliet until he found himself standing at her side. Gently, he took her hand.

Juliet turned her head, her soft brown eyes wide with surprise.



On the other side of the room, Tybalt, Lord Capulet's fiery young nephew, recognized the young man who was holding Juliet's hand. He strode angrily toward the door, but just as he was about to leave, his uncle caught him by the sleeve.

"Where are you going?" asked Lord Capulet.

"To fetch my sword," Tybalt replied. "Lord Montague's son, Romeo, has dared to enter the house!"

"Leave him!" said Lord Capulet.

There was a terrible, ongoing feud between the Capulets and the Montagues, and the Prince of Verona had forbidden any more fighting between the two families.

Tybalt's face was ashen with rage. "But tomorrow Romeo will boast to his friends about how he danced at the Capulets' ball and escaped without being noticed! He will make both of us look like fools!"

Lord Capulet put his hands on Tybalt's shoulders, forcing him to stop and listen. "I hate the Montagues as deeply as you do, Tybalt," he said. "Our two families have been at war with each other for as long as anyone can remember—but the Prince's word is law in this city, and there is to be no more fighting. You understand? Now if you cannot control your temper like a man, go to your room and sulk like a boy!"

Tybalt broke free from his uncle's grasp and glared across the room at Romeo. "You will pay for this one day, Montague!" he vowed softly. "I will make you pay!"

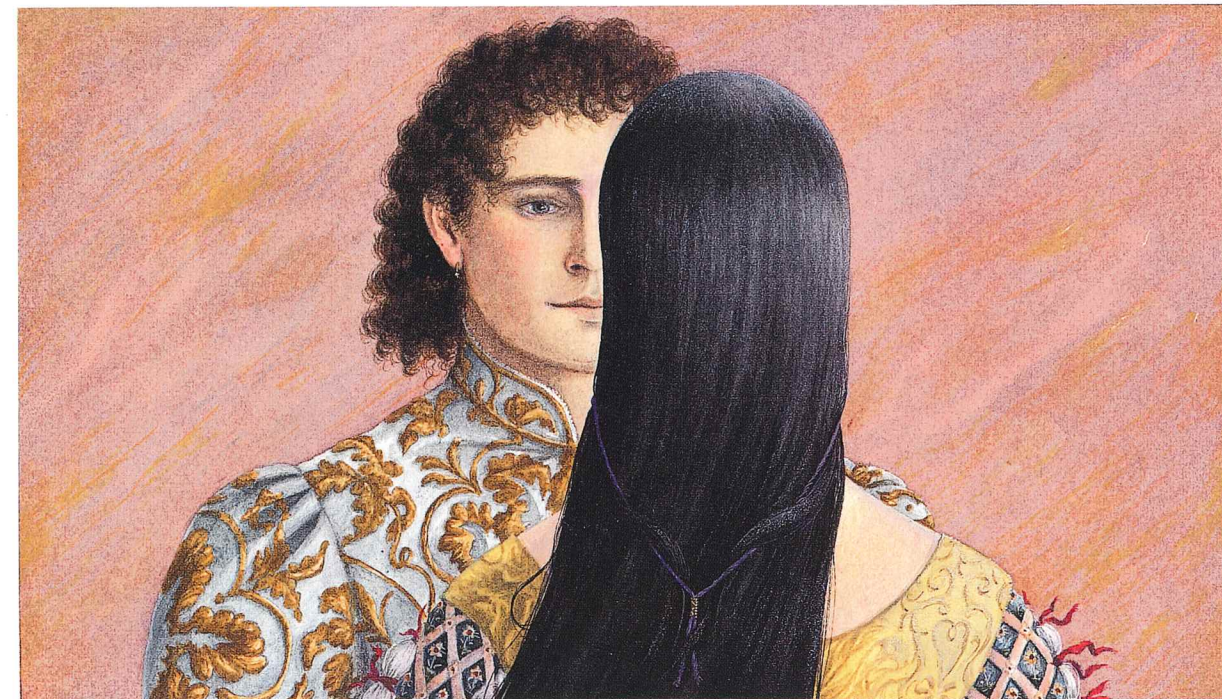
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Juliet glanced at the young man beside her. She noticed his tightly curled brown hair and startlingly gray eyes, which were filled with shyness and wonder. His mouth was curved in a half-smile, and though it made her blush to look, Juliet found that she could not take her eyes from his face, or her hand from his.

"My lady," Romeo said, "if my hand has offended yours by holding it, please forgive me."

"My hand is not offended, sir," said Juliet, smiling at him, "nor am I."

Some power that neither of them understood had drawn them together like moths to a flame. They kissed, and the ballroom, the musicians, and the dancers seemed to disappear, leaving them feeling as though they were the only two people in the world.



When their lips parted, Romeo looked at Juliet and thought, *All those other times when I thought I was in love, I was like a child playing a game. This time, I am truly in love. I wonder if she feels the same?*

Before he could ask, an elderly woman bustled up to them. "My lady," she said to Juliet, "your mother is asking for you."

Juliet frowned, shrugged helplessly at Romeo, then turned and walked away.

Romeo caught the old woman by the arm. "Do you know that lady?" he demanded.

"Why, sir, she is Juliet, Lord Capulet's daughter," said the woman. "I've been her nurse since she was a baby. I know who you are, too, young man. Take my advice and leave this house before there's trouble!"

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That night, Juliet couldn't get to sleep. She could only think of Romeo. It was warm and the moonlight was shining on the trees in the orchard below. Juliet stepped out onto her balcony, but she was so troubled by

what her nurse had told her that she hardly noticed how lovely the orchard looked.

"How can I be in love with someone I should hate?" she sighed. "Oh, Romeo, why did you have to be a Montague? If you had been born with any other name, I could tell you how much I love you!"

Romeo stepped out of the shadows of the trees into the moonlight. "Call me your love," he said. "It is the only name I want!"

Juliet looked down from her balcony and gasped. "How did you get here? If anyone catches you, they will kill you!"

"I climbed the orchard wall," said Romeo. "I had to see you again! I have loved you from the moment I first saw you, and I wanted to know if you felt the same."

Juliet's face brightened with joy, then darkened into doubt. "How can I be sure of your love?" she said. "How can I be sure that you will not forget me as soon as tonight is over?"

Romeo looked up into Juliet's eyes and saw the way the moonlight shone in them. He knew he would never love anyone else. "Meet me at Friar Laurence's chapel at noon tomorrow, and we shall be married!" he declared.

"Married?" laughed Juliet. "But we have only just met! And what will our parents say?"

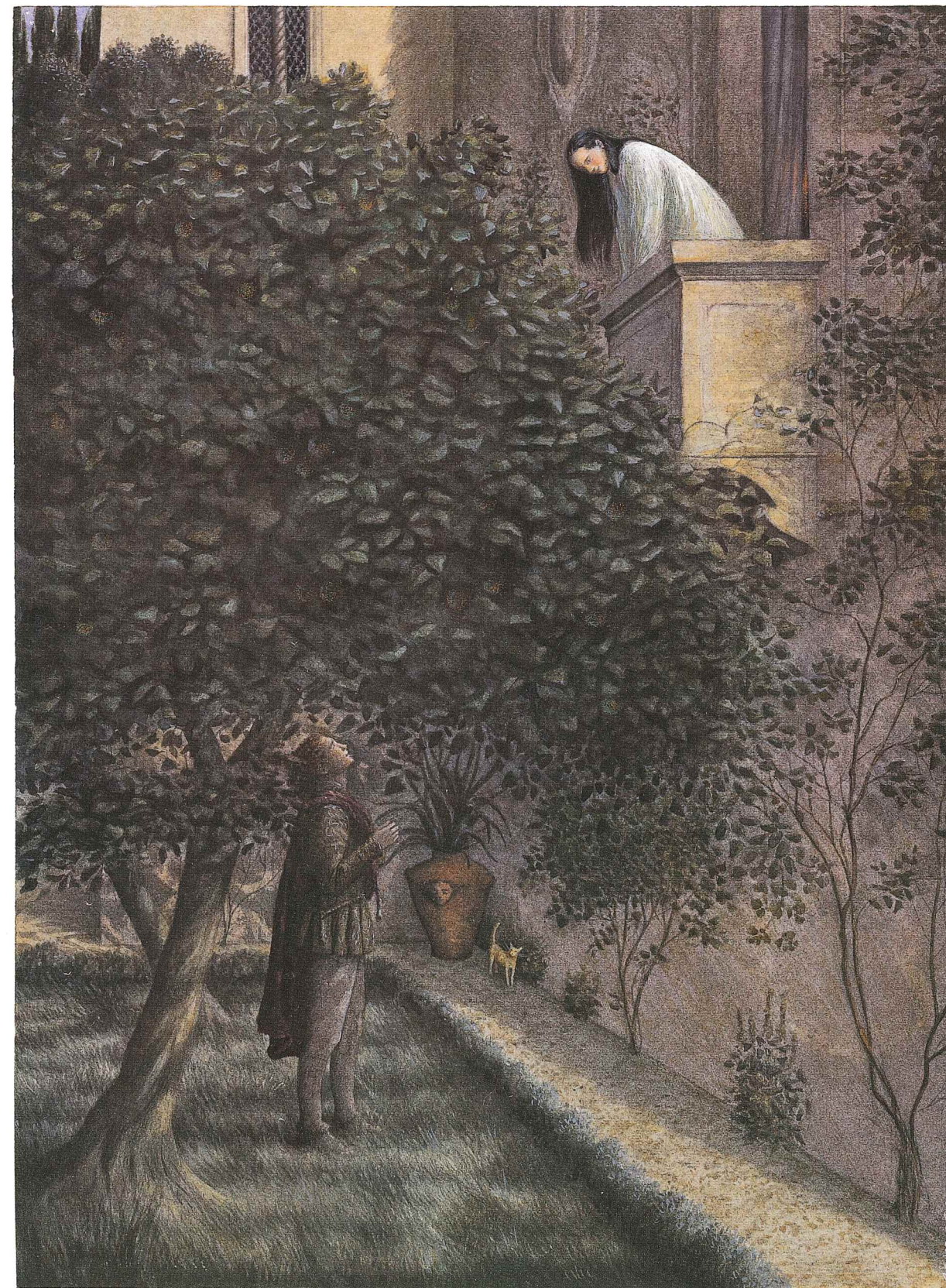
"Do we need to meet more than once to know that our love is real?" said Romeo. "Must we live apart because of our families' hatred?"

A part of Juliet knew that for them to marry would be mad and impossible. But another part of her knew that if she sent Romeo away now, she might never see him again. She wasn't sure she could bear that. "Yes!" she said. "Yes, I believe what we feel for each other is true! And yes, I'll meet you tomorrow at the chapel at noon!"

So the next day Romeo and Juliet were married.

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The bell in the clock tower of the cathedral rang twice. The main square



of Verona sweltered in the hot sunshine and the air shimmered. Two young men were lounging beside a fountain. The taller of the two, Romeo's closest friend, Mercutio, dipped a handkerchief into the water and mopped his face. "Where is he?" he demanded irritably. "He should have been here an hour ago!"

His companion, Romeo's cousin Benvolio, smiled at Mercutio's impatience. "Some important business must have detained him," he said.

"A pair of pretty eyes, more like!" snorted Mercutio. But as he glanced across the square, he saw Romeo hurrying toward them. "At last!" Mercutio said sarcastically. "I was beginning to think that the Queen of the Fairies had carried you off in your sleep!"

"I have great news!" said Romeo. "But you must promise to keep it a secret!"

Mercutio looked curiously at his friend. "Oh?" he said.

"I am in love," said Romeo.

Benvolio laughed; Mercutio groaned and shook his head. "You are *always* in love!" he cried. "A girl only has to look at you sideways to make you fall for her."

"It's more than that this time," said Romeo. "I am in love with—"

"Romeo!" interrupted a harsh voice.

Romeo turned and saw Tybalt with a group of sneering Capulets. Tybalt's right hand was resting on the hilt of his sword. "You were at my family's house last night," he said. "Now you must pay for your insolence. Draw your sword!"

Romeo's eyes flashed with anger, then grew calm. "I will not fight you, Tybalt," he said. "It would be like fighting one of my own family."

"What a weak man!" jeered Tybalt. "You're as cowardly as the rest of the Montagues."

"Romeo!" gasped Mercutio. "Are you going to stand and do nothing while he insults your family?"

"I must," said Romeo. "You don't understand. I have no choice."



"But I do!" snarled Mercutio. His sword flashed in the sunlight as he drew it. "If you want a fight, Tybalt, I'm your man!" he cried.

In a movement too fast to follow, Tybalt brought out his sword, and the two young men began to fight at a dazzling speed.

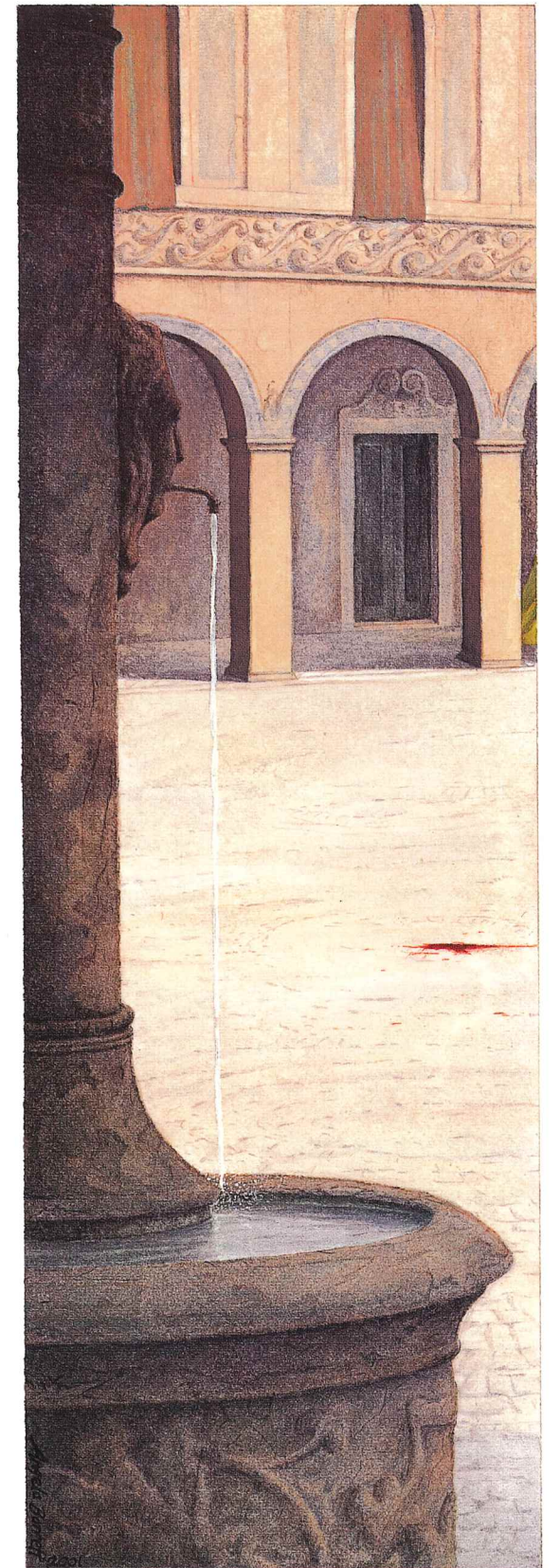
"Help me to stop them, Benvolio!" pleaded Romeo. He caught Mercutio from behind, pinning his arms to his sides. As he did so, Tybalt lunged forward and drove the point of his sword through Mercutio's heart, killing him!

"A plague on both your houses," he whispered with his dying breath.

When Romeo realized that his friend was dead, rage surged through him and his hatred of the Capulets brought a bitter taste to his mouth. "Tybalt!" he cried, drawing his sword. "One of us must join Mercutio in death!"

"Then let our swords decide who it shall be!" Tybalt snarled.

Romeo hacked at Tybalt as though Tybalt were a tree that he wanted to cut down. At first, the watching Capulets laughed at Romeo's clumsiness, but as Tybalt began to



fall back toward the center of the square, their laughter died. It was obvious that Tybalt was tiring and finding it difficult to defend himself.

At last, Romeo and Tybalt stood face to face, their swords locked together. Tybalt's left hand fumbled at his belt and he drew a dagger. Romeo, seeing the danger, clamped his left hand around Tybalt's wrist, and they stumbled and struggled with each other.

Tybalt flicked out a foot, intending to trip Romeo, but instead he lost his own balance and the two enemies tumbled to the ground. Romeo fell on Tybalt's left hand, forcing the point of the dagger deep into Tybalt's chest. He felt Tybalt's dying breath warm against his cheek.

A voice called out, "Quick! The Prince's guards!" and the Capulets scattered.

Benvolio helped Romeo to his feet. "Come now, before it is too late," he said, but Romeo did not hear him. He stared at Tybalt's body, and the full realization of what he had done fell on him like a weight. *I have killed Juliet's cousin! he thought. She cannot love a murderer! She will never forgive me! How could I have let myself be such a fool!*

He was still staring at Tybalt when the Prince's guards reached him.

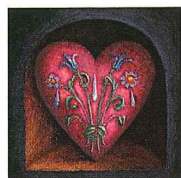
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That night, the Prince of Verona passed judgment on Romeo. "The hatred of the Montagues and Capulets has cost two lives today," he said. "I want no more bloodshed. I will spare Romeo his life, but I banish him to the city of Mantua. He must leave tonight. If he is ever found in Verona again, he will be put to death!"

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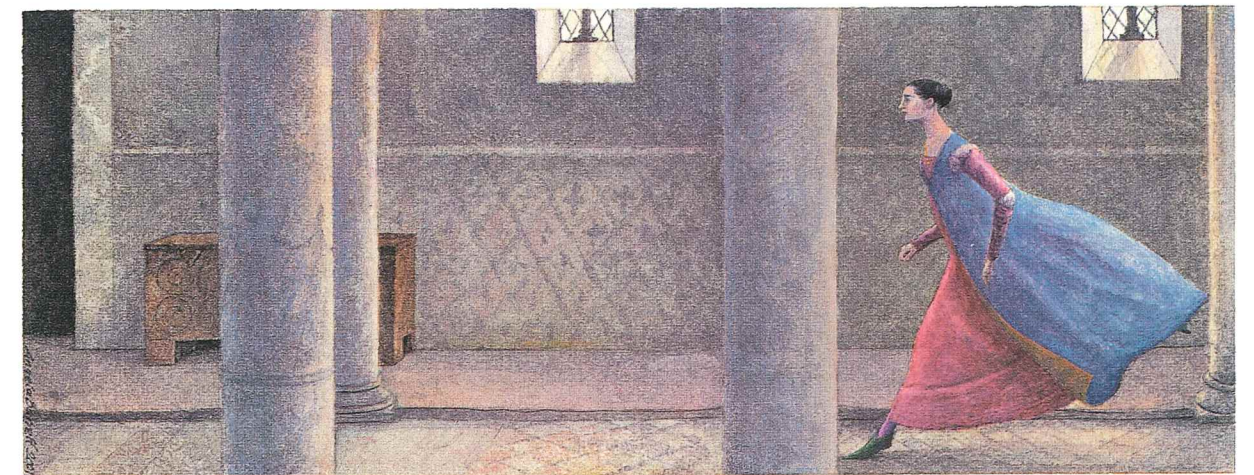
When Friar Laurence heard the news of Romeo's banishment, he was deeply upset. He had already married Romeo and Juliet in secret, hoping that one day their love would overcome the hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets—but it seemed that the hate had been too strong. After

his evening meal, the Friar went to his chapel to say a prayer for the young lovers.



As he knelt in front of the altar, Friar Laurence heard the sound of the chapel door opening and footsteps racing up the aisle. He stood, turned, and saw Juliet, who flung herself sobbing at his feet.

"Help me, Friar Laurence!" she begged. "My father wants me to marry Count Paris, but I'd rather die than forsake Romeo."



"Do not despair, my child," Friar Laurence urged. "Surely you can reason with your father?"

"I could not bring myself to tell him about Romeo," Juliet sobbed. "I pleaded Tybalt's death had made me too full of grief to think of marriage. But Father would not listen and the wedding is to take place tomorrow."

Friar Laurence looked troubled. "There may be a way for you and Romeo to be together, my child, but it is dangerous," he said.

Friar Laurence took a tiny bottle of blue liquid from the pouch at his belt. "Drink this tonight," he said, "and you will fall into a sleep as deep as death. Your parents will believe that you are dead and will put your body into the Capulet tomb—but in two days you will wake, alive and well."

"And Romeo?" said Juliet.

"I will send him a message explaining everything," said Friar Laurence. "After you wake, you can go to Mantua in secret."

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And so, on the morning of Juliet's wedding to Paris, the screams of her nurse woke the whole Capulet house.

When the news of Juliet's death reached Benvolio, he rode straight to Mantua to find Romeo. One of the travelers he passed on the way was a monk, who recognized him. "Lord Benvolio!" he called out as Benvolio approached. "I have a letter for your cousin Romeo from Friar Laurence!"

"Out of my way!" Benvolio shouted back. "I have no time to stop!"

The monk watched as Benvolio galloped by on the road to Mantua. At that speed, the monk judged, Benvolio would be in the city before evening.

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When Benvolio told Romeo that Juliet was dead, Romeo was heartbroken. For hours, he lay sobbing on his bed, while outside day turned into night. During that time, Benvolio stayed at Romeo's side, but he had no idea how to comfort his grief-stricken friend.

It was almost midnight before Romeo grew calm enough to speak. He sat up and wiped away his tears with the back of his hand. "I must go to her," he said.

"But the Prince has banished you!" Benvolio reminded him. "If you are seen on the streets of Verona, it will mean your death."

"I am not afraid of death," said Romeo. "Without Juliet, my life means nothing. Go wake the grooms and tell them to saddle my horse."

When Benvolio left, Romeo searched through the wooden chest at the foot of his bed until he found a green glass bottle that contained a clear liquid. "I shall drink this poison and die at Juliet's side!" he vowed.

Romeo left Mantua at daybreak, refusing to let Benvolio accompany him. Once out of the city, he traveled along winding country tracks so that he could approach Verona without being seen. It was night when he arrived. With the hood of his cloak drawn up to hide his face, he slipped through the city walls unrecognized.

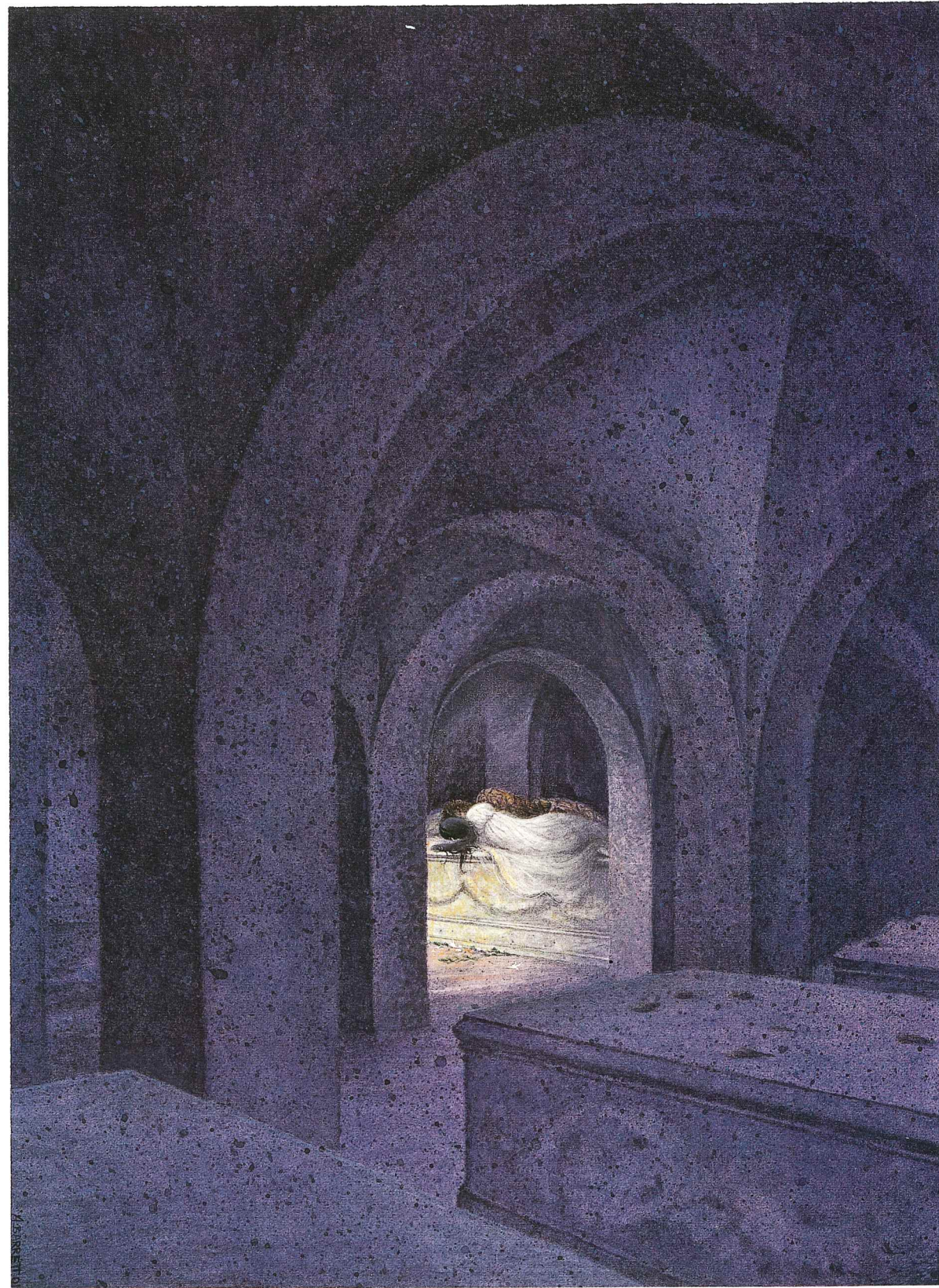
He went straight to the Capulet tomb. It was almost as if someone had expected him, for the door was unlocked and the interior was lit by a burning torch.

Romeo looked around and saw Tybalt's body, pale as candle wax. Then he saw Juliet, laid out on a marble slab, her death shroud as white as a bridal gown. With a cry, Romeo rushed to her side and covered her face with kisses and tears. "I cannot live without you," he whispered. "I want your beauty to be the last thing my eyes see. We could not be together in life, my sweet love, but in death nothing shall part us!"

Romeo drew the cork from the poison bottle and raised it to his lips. He felt the vile liquid sting his throat. Then darkness swallowed him.

For a time, there was no sound except the spluttering of the torch. Then Juliet began to breathe. She opened her eyes and saw Romeo dead at her side with the empty poison bottle in his hand. At first, she thought she was dreaming. But when she reached out to touch Romeo's face and smelled the bitter scent of the poison, she knew that the nightmare was real. Friar Laurence's plan had gone terribly wrong. She cradled Romeo in her arms and rocked him, weeping into his hair. "If you had only waited a little longer!" she whispered. She kissed Romeo





again and again, desperately hoping that there was enough poison on his lips to kill her too.

Then she saw the torchlight gleam on the dagger at Romeo's belt. She drew the weapon and pressed its point to her heart. "Now, dagger, take me to my love!" she said, and pushed with all her strength.

Friar Laurence found the lovers a few hours later. They were huddled together like sleeping children.

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When Romeo and Juliet died, the hatred between the Montagues and Capulets died with them. United by grief, the two families agreed that Romeo and Juliet should be buried together. They paid for a statue of the lovers to be set over the grave, and on the base of the statue these words were carved:

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



The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head:
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things.

THE PRINCE OF VERONA; ACT FIVE, SCENE THREE

