

Romeo and Juliet – Part 3

John Bandler

A partial adaptation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet created by John Bandler in association with the Theatre Aquarius Playwright's Unit for World Theatre Day 2011. John Bandler and three other playwrights adapted a section each of the original Shakespeare play with no knowledge of the others' creative interpretations until the public performance at Theatre Aquarius, Hamilton, Ontario on March 25, 2011.



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Romeo and Juliet - Part 3

A stage play

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ROMEO AND JULIET - PART 3

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PLOT SUMMARY

Juliet's Nurse and Friar Laurence collude to bring Romeo and Juliet together. Romeo and Juliet are secretly married. On the same day, Juliet's cousin Tybalt kills Romeo's friend Mercutio. In revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt. Romeo is banished from Verona, but hides in Friar Laurence's cell, and speaks of suicide. In spite of her loss, Juliet wants Romeo in her bed and her nurse and Friar Laurence arrange it. In the morning Romeo flees Verona, and Juliet's father insists she marry Paris. Friar Laurence offers Juliet a solution: a faked death followed by escape from Verona with Romeo.

CHARACTERS

ROMEO
JULIET
FRIAR LAURENCE
NURSE

SETTING

Verona

PLACES

Friar Laurence's Cell
A Dream Sequence
Friar Laurence's Cell

SCENE 1: FRIAR LAURENCE'S CELL

ROMEO

I speak of fates worse than death and you speak of potions for sissies and women.

FRIAR LAURENCE

It makes you mellow, my headstrong son.

ROMEO

And, hence, dead to every sensation.

FRIAR LAURENCE

I've an arsenal of medications. To heighten pleasure. To alleviate pain.

ROMEO

Dead to every sensation known to humankind!

FRIAR LAURENCE

Mellow and reasoned.

ROMEO

Banishment! Exile from Juliet! Death!

FRIAR LAURENCE

His Highness spared your life, boy!

ROMEO

What do you know about love?

FRIAR LAURENCE

Cool down!

ROMEO

Love is worth dying for!

FRIAR LAURENCE

Love is worth living for!

ROMEO

What does an old man know--?

FRIAR LAURENCE

By my holy order, I thought you were smart. Married, barely an hour, and you have to go and kill your wife's cousin.

ROMEO

I deserve death.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Imagine. And Tybalt didn't even know about your marriage.

ROMEO

It was for honor, Father. How hollow, how pathetic that rings.

FRIAR LAURENCE

So, take revenge on yourself. Spare your enemies the trouble. Heap more shame on your dear wife. A man's deed matters not. What matters is the intention behind his deed.

ROMEO

Burn me at the stake.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Burning at the stake is only noble if it cleanses an evil spirit.

ROMEO

I am evil.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Virtue can spoil, yet vice returns to virtue through righteous activity and strict obedience to our Lord.

Knocking.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

Consider what all who love you still risk.

More knocking.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

Let the Almighty be your compass.

The knocking becomes urgent.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

Hide yourself, boy. To the darkest corner of the cellar with you. Don't show your face till I call for you. Go! Go, go!

ROMEO exits.

JULIET'S NURSE enters.

NURSE

Death and unhappiness, Father. Death and unhappiness. Mercutio and Juliet's cousin Tybalt lie dead.

(Beat.)

Oh, my back! My head!

(Looking around. Sniffs.)

That smell. You gone and started a fire again? This is the first place they'd check, you know, for Romeo...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Tell me.

NURSE

Romeo... Well, he orders Tybalt and Mercutio to stop. "Hold friends! Friends, part!" Or words to that effect. Imagine. Romeo must have been high on one of your potions. Couldn't stop them. Tybalt rams his sword into Mercutio.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Mercutio started the fight, I'll wager.

NURSE

It was Tybalt, though, the one aching for trouble. But Romeo gives in to him, see, which is more than Mercutio can bear.

(Rubs her eyes.)

Do you have anything for tired eyes?

FRIAR LAURENCE

Go on, woman.

NURSE

Well, Mercutio doesn't die right off. And Tybalt prances back, raging... Ferocious, Romeo was. Oh, Benvolio says he tried to stop them. Anyway, Romeo sees what he's done, and good and scarpers before the law shows up.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Tybalt kills Mercutio, so Romeo kills Tybalt.

NURSE

We traipse into the morgue, the Prince, the lords and their ladyships, all dolled up. As usual, she's thirsting...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Lady Capulet?

NURSE

Any Montague will do. Anyone. "Off with his head." So my Lady and Benvolio have this standoff right in the Prince's shadow. Benvolio then gives it his finest, says Romeo's as pure of heart as His Imperial Eminence himself: swears Romeo jumped in, right between Tybalt and Mercutio, to separate them. Still, the old Prince decides, as always, decides...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Renders...?

NURSE

Decides.

FRIAR LAURENCE

His verdict?

NURSE

Verdict, yes. Right on the spot. Has all God's truth at his rosy fingertips, the Prince does, straight from Benvolio.

(Beat.)

Oh, my! Kind Friar, might I sit down?

FRIAR LAURENCE

There would have been bystanders. Witnesses.

NURSE

My back's killing me... Come to think of it, why weren't you at the morgue? Everyone who's anyone in Verona showed up.

(Beat.)

Do you have anything to cure an old back? Something special?

FRIAR LAURENCE

I'm afraid, there's no cure for time-wasted bones.

NURSE

My master's page, I swear, he was on his way to the apothecary; got waylaid by today's goings-on.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Next time, dear lady, perhaps find yourself a bed instead of the wall?

NURSE

(suddenly giggly)

Next time? A bed? A bed? Oh Friar! You charmer you. I'm all of-a-flutter!

(Pause. Serious again.)

But I do need a refill, Father. Good 'n' quick. You must have a rafter-full of those special vials.

(Beat.)

Anyway, the Prince rants 'n' raves about feuds 'n' street-fights, and the such...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Madam!

NURSE

Yes, your lordship?

On hearing herself addressed as "madam," she loses her train of thought. She shifts uncomfortably, winces at her aching back.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Answer me one thing then go, attend to your Lady Juliet. What did the Prince say?

NURSE

Romeo's banished from Verona. Henceforth and forthwith. Banished. Never to return. Pain of death.

A few moments of silence.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Lady Juliet knows?

NURSE

(looking around)

Where's young Romeo, sir?

FRIAR LAURENCE

Tell her he's safe. Go discreet, gentle lady.

FRIAR LAURENCE moves as if to usher the NURSE to the door. But the NURSE finds herself a chair and sits down wearily.

NURSE

Indeed, there she was, my Lady Juliet, sir, in her boudoir, achin' for her Romeo. Armed to the hilt with her laciest frillies and perfumed undies, sharpening her guile.

FRIAR LAURENCE is now stricken with pain.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Jesus, Mary and Joseph. I'll need a dram of that brew myself.

NURSE

I give her laundry the full treatment, and her young ladyship a honeymoon bath, besides, and I make her bed neater than usual, and puff up her down bolsters. Would have done the very same for my own flesh and blood. Oh, yes. She'd have been Juliet's age, pretty much exact... Where was I? Yes. With that rope ladder Romeo asks me to bring. And Juliet, waxing eloquent. God is my witness, I've warned that girl against overdoing her pining and venting from her very own balcony. Anyone could be listening in. Anyone. Day 'n' night, in the alleyways, there's ponces and pimps on the prowl, leaping over respectable people's walls, takin' their pick of our young uns. Juliet might as well post her maidenly cravings in the taverns and brothels, don't you think...? Where was I...? It's her wedding night, poor girl; and she rambles on and on into the night.

(Wagging her finger.)

Ah, but she's the sly one. Preparing to play all innocent and convincing, like, at the same time. Got the gift of the gab, our young Juliet has, and the hang of a man, if you'll excuse my language. And still only thirteen!

FRIAR LAURENCE

If I may ask, Nurse, who tutored Juliet on such matters?

NURSE

Oh, she's got her tutors, all right. I should know. Many's the cravings her papa can't resist... Likewise, my Lady Capulet, when she's into the grape-sauce. Get my drift? Ha! Deceit's in that girl's veins. My lips are sealed.

FRIAR LAURENCE

And then? After her maidenly speech into the eager summer windows of Verona?

NURSE

I told you. I bounce into the orchard with the rope ladder. Break her the news gently... Still, she lashes out at Romeo for killing her cousin; for deceiving her. Wants to do herself in. She's my very life. From the moment she took my dead Susan's place. But, Father, you have this soft spot for Romeo; you would bear untold wrath and violence against you.

FRIAR LAURENCE

He's my good pupil, Nurse, a good boy.

NURSE

He's not your son by chance, is he?

ROMEO enters.

FRIAR LAURENCE

We couldn't let him defile an unwed Juliet. Seeing them married was just.

NURSE

I bear good tidings, gentlemen. Juliet's come around, wants Romeo to come to her tonight. She asked me to bring this.

She brings out a ring, holds it out to ROMEO. ROMEO takes it, kisses it.

ROMEO

What joy! Juliet loves me!

FRIAR LAURENCE

Go, Romeo. Climb into your wife's bed. Then fly until we can announce your marriage and make peace between your families. We'll petition the Prince to pardon you.

(To NURSE.)

Make certain no one else strays into Juliet's bedroom.

FRIAR LAURENCE ushers ROMEO and the NURSE to the door, where he embraces ROMEO.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

Be assured, Romeo. We'll be in touch.

ROMEO and the NURSE exit.

FRIAR LAURENCE sinks to his knees and makes the sign of the cross.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Vanish, my son, please vanish, before others, more skilled and ferocious than Tybalt, find you.

Dark.

SCENE 2: A DREAM SEQUENCE

This is an alternative, dream state. But whose dream? Is it ROMEO's, JULIET's, FRIAR LAURENCE's, or the NURSE's? Perhaps they are all dreaming. Perhaps it's a universal dream. One can't be certain. The actions are slower than life.

ROMEO is center stage. FRIAR LAURENCE stands stage left. JULIET enters. Her NURSE enters. JULIET approaches ROMEO. Her NURSE joins FRIAR LAURENCE.

The action unfolds on a grassy hillside overlooking a city. FRIAR LAURENCE and the NURSE are watching.

ROMEO extends his hand to JULIET. She shakes her head "no." He looks down, searches for something, bends down, snaps an invisible stalk at ground level, picks an invisible flower. He holds it out, offers it to JULIET.

Apparently seeing his hand empty, she gestures a query. Her demeanor suggests, "what are you holding?" ROMEO raises his hand to his nose, then offers her the pretend flower again. She understands. She takes it and surprises him by plucking its invisible petals, one by one, miming, "he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me..."

Each petal she lets flutter to the ground. She hesitates when she reaches what seems to be the final petal. At last, she plucks it. From her raised eyebrows and the shy downturn of her lips, it seems that this last petal signifies "he loves me not."

JULIET lets the last petal fall, drops the beheaded flower-stalk, and takes ROMEO's face in her hands. Kisses him lightly, as if in consolation. He pulls himself closer. They fall to their knees. He edges closer. She keeps him at bay.

He moves to kiss her lips. She turns her head away, offers him her open palms instead. They press against each other's palms, and rock. Having fun. He kisses each of her hands and, in turn, each of her fingertips.

She lets him put his finger to her lips. Finally, she allows him to kiss her mouth.

They kiss.

He craves more; he touches her breast. She resists, but playfully. He stops, then searches the ground, picks up a pebble. She queries him with a look of "what now?" He sinks to the ground. Sits. She follows suit.

His hands behind his back, hidden from her, he juggles the pebble (puts it in his left hand).

He shows her his clenched fists. She touches his left hand. He teases her, gesturing, offering her his right fist.

Playful, she shakes her head "no." He offers her his right hand again. She refuses again, taps his left hand.

He pauses, opens his right hand. It's empty. She frowns. He opens his left hand. There's the pebble, exactly where he put it. She's pleased. She'd guessed correctly. She smiles. They embrace. Laughing with joy, they fall to the ground.

The lights on the lovers fade.

But the scene progresses, the dreaming continues... ROMEO and JULIET are making love...

Alongside, sinking into pessimism and remorse, FRIAR LAURENCE and JULIET'S NURSE engage in dialogue...

NURSE

There's a chill about this place, Father.

FRIAR LAURENCE

There, Nurse, you see the only thing worth living for. Yes. And the only thing worth dying for.

NURSE

I hear Lord Capulet, Father.

FRIAR LAURENCE

What does he say?

NURSE

He's screaming monstrous obscenities at my lady Juliet.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Face it, Nurse, I beg you, stay with the flow.

NURSE

I'd be grateful for a good word in the Abbott's ear, Father.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Let the Prince exile me to the furthest outpost of Venice.

NURSE

The lovers will be disinherited.

FRIAR LAURENCE

This is no way to make peace between Capulet and Montague.

NURSE

How will they live? How will they eat?

FRIAR LAURENCE

By aiding and abetting, with scant reservation, a union between their only surviving children?

NURSE

I'll be there to nurse Juliet's baby.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Capulet will have the offspring murdered.

NURSE

I'll be tossed into the street.

FRIAR LAURENCE

See, Nurse, I'm crazed on my own potions, trapped in the final chapter of my life. Where on earth did we think they'd live after I married them?

NURSE

Lord and Lady Capulet would wish a plague for Juliet's dowry.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Hung from a meat-hook; half-dead, disemboweled; or mercifully stabbed in the back by one of Tybalt's kin, nobly avenging Juliet's defilement by a Montague son.

NURSE

In his own eyes, every man is noble.

Dark.

SCENE 3: FRIAR LAURENCE'S CELL

FRIAR LAURENCE

Did he comfort you?

JULIET

Sweetly, Father. Then he fled.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Safely to Mantua.

JULIET

Mother's sending a man there to kill him for killing Tybalt.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Your dear mother?

JULIET

My dear mother's done with me. My father's done with me.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Your nurse has been good to you.

JULIET

She let us down. Wants me to forget my vows, disavow Romeo. Marry Paris right away.

FRIAR LAURENCE

She's only frightened for you.

JULIET

I must go to Romeo at once.

Pause.

FRIAR LAURENCE

What did your father say, Juliet?

JULIET

My father?

FRIAR LAURENCE

Yes, dear. What did he say to you?

A silence.

JULIET

If I refuse Count Paris, my father will offer my virginity to the highest bidder, then see me starve in the gutter.

A silence.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Does Lady Capulet know you're here?

JULIET

Nurse knows.

FRIAR LAURENCE

She'd have guessed.

JULIET

I told her I would come here for confession.

Pause.

FRIAR LAURENCE

What are you willing to do?

JULIET brings out a dagger. Holds its point to her neck.

A long silence.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

I have a better idea.

JULIET

I must see Romeo.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Your trail must neither lead here nor end here.

JULIET

You're sending me home?

FRIAR LAURENCE

I'll give you a drug. It'll seem like you killed yourself.

FRIAR LAURENCE rummages for a vial.
Finds it, turns back to JULIET.

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)

In the morning, you'll appear dead. They'll take you to the Capulet vault. We'll send for Romeo, and he'll come and take you with him when you wake up.

JULIET

Give me the vial.

FRIAR LAURENCE

You're not afraid?

JULIET

(reaching out)

Give me that vial.

Lights fade as FRIAR LAURENCE hands
JULIET the vial.

Dark.