

ROMEO AND JULIET: SIX VERY BUSY DAYS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Robert Wing

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ROMEO AND JULIET: SIX VERY BUSY DAYS

By Robert Wing

SYNOPSIS: Everyone knows the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, but few realize that the “greatest love story of all time” takes place only over six days. That's right, Romeo and Juliet fall in love, marry and die all within six days of meeting each other! *Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days* riotously re-imagines the misadventur'd piteous overthrows of the iconic star-cross'd lovers. Farcically irreverent yet surprisingly faithful to Shakespeare's language and storyline, *Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days* blurs the line between slapstick and educational drama the same way *Romeo and Juliet* blurs the line between comedy and tragedy. Fast-paced and fun, this play may be performed by a handful of actors or dozens and dozens. It can also be staged simply and affordably - or as elaborately as desired!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 MEN, 4 WOMEN, 15 EITHER)

CHORUS #1 (m/f)(18 lines)
CHORUS #2 (m/f)(11 lines)
CHORUS #3 (m/f)(9 lines)
CAPULET #1 (m/f)(11 lines)
CAPULET #2 (m/f)(8 lines)
MONTAGUE #1 (m/f).....(3 lines)
MONTAGUE #2 (m/f).....(2 lines)
BENVOLIO (m)(12 lines)
TYBALT (m)(14 lines)
PRINCE ESCALUS (m)(2 lines)
ROMEO (m)(71 lines)
MERCUTIO (m).....(16 lines)
JULIET (f)(49 lines)
NURSE (f)(8 lines)
TREE #1 (m/f)(13 lines)
TREE #2 (m/f)(8 lines)
FRIAR LAWRENCE (m)(7 lines)
CROWDMEMBER #1 (m/f)(2 lines)
CROWDMEMBER #2 (m/f)(3 lines)

CROWDMEMBER #3 (m/f)(3 lines)
CROWDMEMBER #4 (m/f)(6 lines)
CROWDMEMBER #5 (m/f)(5 lines)
CROWDMEMBER #6 (m/f)(1 lines)
LADY CAPULET (f).....(14 lines)
LORD CAPULET (m).....(8 lines)
PARIS (m).....(4 lines)
APOTHECARY (m)(7 lines)
ROMEO’S MOTHER (f).....(2 lines)

Please note that these roles may be doubled-up, maybe even tripled-up to accommodate smaller casts. Or more roles, such as crowd members, may be added to accommodate larger casts. (The Chorus roles are especially accommodating. They may be divided up any way the director wishes.)

ABOUT STAGING THE PLAY

Again, it’s all about the director’s vision (and budget.). *Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days* may be performed on a shoestring, or a director can go “whole hog” and lavish the production with elaborate costumes and multitudinous props—however he or she wishes. There is only one point upon which the author is unmoving: *everyone, from the stagehands to the director, must have fun at all times!*

Roles may be doubled-up and tripled-up; boys may play girls and girls may play boys; the three chorus parts may be broken into however many the director wants - one chorus person is also quite effective. Directors may mark the passing of one day into the next any way he or she wishes; the “dance number” may be as elaborate or silly as a director wishes. *Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days*, in the tradition of Shakespearean theatre, provides little in the way of stage direction. It’s up to the director to fill in those blanks. Again, there is only one point upon which the author is unmoving: *everyone, from the stagehands to the director, must have fun at all times!*

This play was conceived with the idea of all actors being on stage at all times. (So the stage direction of “enter” wouldn’t necessarily mean the actor is entering from the wings, but is stepping into the scene.) Costume pieces pulled from trunks and boxes on stage would be put on in front of the audience; props would be pulled from prop boxes on stage, too. (The original production was very circus-like, very rag-tag, like a depression-era traveling sideshow.) However, a director has permission to stage the play any way he or she wishes.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days was first performed at North Country Union High School in Newport, VT in the spring of 2005. It was directed by Erin Galligan-Baldwin and taken to the Vermont Regional Drama Festival—where it won. The play was put away in a drawer and forgotten until about a year later, when Lisa Guay-Timpson, the drama teacher from Burlington High School in Burlington, VT, having gotten her hands on the script who-knows-how, telephoned me and asked to perform it at her school. “Sure. Why not?” I thought, and then once again put the play in a drawer and forgot about it. Fast forward another five years, and there was another phone call, this time from Erin, now the drama teacher in Montpelier, VT. She asked if she could stage *Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days* at Montpelier High School. “Sure. Why not?” Once again, I put the play back in a drawer until one day, not long ago, my mother said to me, “You remember that Romeo and Juliet thingy you wrote? It’s my favorite.” She hesitated and then said, “And I think it’s your best one. People just like to laugh.” So, here it is.

*To Erin Galligan-Baldwin, who saw something
in “Trixie” all those years ago.*

SCENE ONE

Enter troupe. They are vibrant and joyful!

CHORUS #1: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for allowing us, the *(Insert name of school.)* Players to camp here, this night, on your stage. Not every stage is so friendly to wanderers like ourselves. Some find our nomadic lifestyle somewhat...suspicious. *(All actors pause and look dangerously at the audience.)* You see, *(Actors resume their antics.)* we're a troupe of performers that thrives on taking chances. We don't follow a script, and we don't rehearse. *(Actor trips or drops something; something mildly disastrous happens. CHORUS #1 continues without seeming to notice.)* I, and I alone, know what tonight's performance will be. *(Removes top hat.)* In this hat are *(Insert number of actors.)* pieces of paper upon which character names have been written. *(Shouts to actors.)* Artists! Assemble! *(Actors drop what they are doing.)* Tonight, my dears, you will be performing...**Romeo and Juliet!** *(Actors applaud.)* And which part will you play? *(Tosses pieces of paper into the air. Actors scramble for the bits of paper. They read what role they have gotten, some are happy, others not so much. Of course, the bits of paper say nothing; the actors have already been assigned roles.)* Now, my pets, tell the audience who you will be playing.

Actors run to the edge of the stage and shout their roles. The last two actors to do so approach the edge slowly and are clearly unhappy. They are TREE #1 and TREE #2.

TREE #1: Tree Number One. *(Other actors giggle.)*

TREE #2: Tree Number Two. *(Other actors crack up.)*

TREE #1: Dude, this has got to be rigged. I'm always a friggin' tree.

TREE #2: Who ya tellin'? I played a lamp post in "A Streetcar Named Desire."

CHORUS #2: Now, now, there is no such thing as a small role. *(There is a pause. All actors, including CHORUS #1, erupt into laughter. TREE #1 and TREE #2 look dejected. CHORUS #1 regains composure and shouts.)* Actors! In your places. *(Actors scramble.)* And listen—Romeo and Juliet, the greatest love story of all time, takes place over six days. *(The actors pause to take this in.)* That's right. Romeo and Juliet fall in love, marry, and die all within six days of meeting each other. Are you up for the challenge? *(Actors erupt.)* That's what I want to hear! *(Lights fade on stage. Actors are in their places. CHORUS #1 addresses the audience.)* Ladies and gentlemen, without further ado, I bring you **Romeo and Juliet: Six Very Busy Days!**

SUNDAY

CHORUS #1: Our play begins on a Sunday, in the marketplace in Verona, Italy. Servants from the Capulet family run into servants from the Montague family. The Capulets just can't help but pick a fight.

CAPULET #1: Oh, it's another boring day on the streets of Verona. It's hot, dusty, and I'm just achin' for a fight.

CAPULET #2: Yeah, me too. Hey, look! Over there! A dog of the house Montague moves me!

CAPULET #1: I hate Montagues! My naked weapon is out. Quarrel, I will back thee.

CAPULET #2: *(Uncomfortably.)* Your naked...what is out?

CAPULET #1: My naked weapon—My knife, sword thingy.

CAPULET #2: *(Relieved.)* Oh...your *knife*. Got it.

CAPULET #1: Come on! Quarrel with them! Egg 'em on! Then *they'll* start a fight with *us* and Prince Escalus will blame *them*.

CAPULET #2: What...what do you want me to do?

CAPULET #1: Bite your thumb at them.

CAPULET #2: Bite my thumb?

CAPULET #1: *(Exasperated.)* Trust me.

CAPULET #2: I could moon 'em or flip 'em the bird, you know.

CAPULET #1: Just bite your thumb!

CAPULET #2: Okay! Okay! *(CAPULET #2 clears his throat to get the attention of the MONTAGUES. CAPULET #2 bites his thumb.)*

MONTAGUE #2: Hey! Check it out!

MONTAGUE #1: (*Outraged.*) Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

CAPULET #1: (*To CAPULET #2.*) What did I tell ya?

MONTAGUE #2: Hey! He asked you a question. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

CAPULET #1: (*Answering for CAPULET #2.*) He does bite his thumb, sir.

MONTAGUE #1: But does he bite his thumb at *me*, sir?

CAPULET #2: No, sir, I do not. However, I do this! (*Executes a series of ridiculous, over-the-top kung-fu moves. Both of the MONTAGUES crack up.*)

CAPULET #1: You are too embarrassing for words.

MONTAGUE #1: (*While laughing.*) Do you...do you...make...spastic ninja kicks at me, sir? (*Both MONTAGUES again crack up.*)

CAPULET #1: Get 'em!

A street brawl erupts. All actors jump on stage and begin fighting. While the actors fight, CHORUS #2 provides background information.

CHORUS #2: This grudge between the Capulets and Montagues goes back a long, long time. See, years and years ago, the Capulets...no, the Montagues...one of them...I think it was the Capulets—no, the Montagues....come to think of it, I'm really not sure which one started this whole thing. Hey, you guys! (*Addressing the actors.*) Who started this ancient grudge thing anyway?

THE FIGHTING MOB: We don't know!

CHORUS #3: Oh, in that case, let's just continue with the story. Enter Benvolio and Tybalt. Benvolio is a friend of the House of Montague—Romeo's family—and Tybalt is a Capulet—Juliet's family. Benvolio is a pretty mellow guy, overall. In fact, he tries to break up the brawl.

BENVOLIO: C'mon, everybody. Break it up, break it up. You two, stop strangling each other. And you—no one likes having his hair pulled! It's all fun and games until someone loses an eye.

CHORUS #1: Tybalt, on the other hand, likes to stir things up.

TYBALT: (*Screams.*) Kill the Montagues!

Brawling starts again. Enter PRINCE ESCALUS.

ESCALUS: Stop!

All actors freeze.

CHORUS #1: Verona is the Prince's town. He rules. And he is sick and tired of the Capulets and Montagues starting brawls on his streets.

ESCALUS: That's it. I've had it. Thrice you have disturbed the quiet of our streets. You—Capulet. And you—Montague. Listen up. If I have to break any more fights up, your blood shall pay the forfeit of the peace. Get it? I will kill anyone who starts another brawl on my streets! Now get outta here!

Everyone leaves except for BENVOLIO.

CHORUS #2: Benvolio is one of Romeo's friends, and he is worried.

BENVOLIO: Romeo—there you are. Where have you been? And what's with the mopey-dopey expression?

ROMEO: I'm madly in love with a girl...named Rosaline!

BENVOLIO: You're the man!

ROMEO: But there's a bit of a problem—she hath sworn she will live chaste.

BENVOLIO: What? She's going to live her life without any...you-know-what? Come on, Romeo, turn on that Montague charm! No girl can resist it.

ROMEO: I have tried. I've given her my patented look, (*Demonstrates "sexy" look.*) and I've spoken sweet nothings in her ear. I've even tried to impress her with money. (*Leans in.*) But she will not ope her lap to saint seducing gold!

BENVOLIO: I've got one word for you pal—NEXT! Move on! Forget about her.

ROMEO: Oh, teach me how I should forget!

BENVOLIO: By giving liberty unto thine eyes. (*ROMEO looks confused.*) You know, check out other girls. Listen, I'll tell you what. The Capulets are throwing a huge party tonight—let's you and me crash that party, and there you'll see Rosaline surrounded by all the beauties of Verona. Then you'll see that she's not all that.

ROMEO: I'll go—but only to prove that there is no one more beautiful than my Rosaline, and I will never, ever, ever love anyone but her. Oh, by the way, can my emotionally unstable best friend Mercutio come with us?

MERCUTIO springs to the forefront. He is crouched and panting.

BENVOLIO: Sure...I guess so...

ROMEO: What? Don't you like Mercutio?

BENVOLIO: Oh, he's cool. I mean, he's a great guy, but...

ROMEO: But what?

BENVOLIO: I think he's a little too into you...if you know what I mean.

MERCUTIO: I love you man!

ROMEO: You too, dude!

MERCUTIO: I'd kill for you, Romeo!

ROMEO: You...you really don't have to do that.

Enter all actors. Music starts. Actors perform choreographed dance number. It should be silly and in the spirit of the play. Something irreverent and unexpected, like a few chords of "Green Sleeves" spliced with whatever song is the flavor of the moment with the students—something joyous and fun and silly. The number ends with ROMEO and JULIET dancing and the actors frozen except TYBALT. He sees ROMEO and JULIET dancing and is clearly outraged. TYBALT makes a fist and begins making threatening gestures

CHORUS #3: Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, sees Romeo, an enemy Montague, crashing his family's party. Romeo, however, only has eyes for Juliet. Romeo speaks.

ROMEO: If I profane with my unworhiest hand this holy shrine, the gentle sin is this: my lips two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. (*ROMEO leans in, eyes closed, lips puckered. JULIET playfully moves just out of his reach.*)

JULIET: (*Coquettishly.*) Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hands too much. (*ROMEO still leaning in, eyes still closed. JULIET offers her hand. She clears her throat. ROMEO opens his eyes and takes her hand gently.*)

ROMEO: O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do. (*He draws her gently to him. They kiss.*)

JULIET: Hi.

ROMEO: Hi.

MERCUTIO and NURSE reanimate.

MERCUTIO: (*Whispers to ROMEO.*) She is a Capulet!

NURSE: (*Whispers to JULIET.*) He is a Montague!

Darkness. JULIET scrambles to the “balcony” and ROMEO hides behind TREE #1 and TREE #2.

CHORUS #1: After the party, Romeo sneaks into Juliet’s garden. He sees her, but she doesn’t see him.

JULIET: Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if you don’t want to, just say the word, and I’ll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO: Shall I hear more? Or shall I speak at this?

TREE #1: Dude. You’re totally eavesdropping right now.

TREE #2: It’s kinda creepy.

ROMEO: Mind your own business.

TREE #2: I’m just saying...

ROMEO: Shh!

JULIET: Tis but thy name that is my enemy. You’re *you*—not a Montague. What’s Montague? It is not hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, (*Suggestively.*) nor any other part belonging to a man.

TREE #1: Dude. You are so gonna score!

TREE #2: It’s a done deal, dude.

JULIET: O! Be some other name! What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet...

ROMEO: Oh, I smell, sweet baby—sniff me! Sniff me!

TREE #2: Dude—creepy!

ROMEO: Well, at least I’m not playing a tree.

TREE #1: Hey! There are no small roles.

ROMEO: Yeah—you keep telling yourself that.

JULIET: Romeo, doff thy name, and for thy name, which is no part of thee, tale all myself.

ROMEO: (*Crashing through the TREES.*) Done and done!

JULIET: Is that Romeo?

TREES #1 AND #2: Duh!

ROMEO: (*Sarcastically.*) Hark! What's that I hear? A chainsaw?
(*TREES scramble.*) I thought so. It's me, Juliet—and I'll be anyone
you want—just tell me that you love me.

JULIET: You know that I love you—you overheard. Now tell me that
you love me.

ROMEO: Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow—

JULIET: Oh, swear not by the moon, that inconstant moon that monthly
changes her inconstant orb.

ROMEO: What do you call me to swear by?

JULIET: Don't swear at all. But if you do, swear by your gracious
self—which is the god of my idolatry—and I'll believe thee.

ROMEO: Baby, are you thinking what I'm thinking?

JULIET: Oh yeah...

ROMEO: Are you thinking about...you know...you and me...you know...

JULIET: Oh yeah...it's all I can think about...marriage!

ROMEO: Oh...yeah. That's what I was thinking.

JULIET: So, how about tomorrow?

ROMEO: (*Snaps out of it.*) Sure!

JULIET: Now remember, we can't tell anyone. Our families hate each
other. They'd never approve.

ROMEO: Yeah, that whole "ancient grudge" thing. So it's tomorrow
then?

JULIET: Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow that I
shall say goodnight till it be tomorrow.

MONDAY

CHORUS #2: Romeo and Juliet enlist the help of Juliet's nurse and Friar Lawrence to help pull off their secret wedding. Now, the nurse isn't really a nurse in the sense that we think of nurses today, she's what we'd call a nanny. And the "friar" is a priest, not a chicken. So, the nurse is a nanny and the friar is a priest, not poultry. Got it? Good. Remember, the only other person at their wedding is Romeo's manservant, Balthazar. (*Notices there is no BALTHAZAR.*) Where's Balthazar? Well, it appears that we don't have a Balthazar. (*TREE #1 pushes to the forefront.*)

TREE #1: I'll be Balthazar! This is it! The break I've been waiting for!

CHORUS #2: Okay...you're Balthazar. Our story picks up with the wedding of Romeo and Juliet.

FRIAR LAWRENCE: Romeo, do you take Juliet to be your wedded wife?

ROMEO: Yes, I do. I love dear Rosaline with all my heart.

JULIET: Who's Rosaline?

TREE #1: She's this chick that Romeo was totally hung up on until about three minutes ago.

ROMEO: Thank you, Tree-

TREE #1: (*Interrupting happily.*) Balthazar! I'm Balthazar now. Your faithful manservant! Wait a minute...I don't like the sound of that job description.

ROMEO: Can we just get on with it?

FRIAR LAWRENCE: And do you, Juliet, take Romeo to be your husband?

JULIET: Yes, I do! I do! I love everything about him. His broad shoulders, his beautiful smile, and his gorgeous blue eyes!

ROMEO: I have brown eyes, Rosaline.

JULIET: Juliet!

ROMEO: Juliet! Sorry.

TREE #1: You guys have issues.

ROMEO AND JULIET: Shut up!

TREE #1: I'm just saying...

FRIAR LAWRENCE: (*Interrupting.*) I now pronounce you man and wife.

ROMEO and JULIET kiss. FRIAR LAWRENCE and NURSE leave the stage.

JULIET: Now, remember, my love. We can't tell anyone we're married.

ROMEO: Not even my friends Mercutio and Benvolio?

JULIET: Not even your friends, my sweet husband.

TREE #1: But I know, because I'm Balthazar. I know the secret! And I'll keep it. Don't worry about me. My lips are sealed! (*Locks lips with imaginary key and mumbles.*)

ROMEO: (*Annoyed by TREE #1. Turns attention to JULIET.*) So, when are we going to have our honeymoon?

JULIET: Tonight, you frisky devil. Nurse has put a ladder outside my bedroom window.

ROMEO: Score! Till tonight, my beloved!

JULIET: Till tonight.

Exit ROMEO and JULIET.

CHORUS #3: With time to kill before his rendezvous with his new bride, Romeo decides to meet up with his friends Benvolio and Mercutio. Little does Romeo know that Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, is looking for him. He's still ticked that Romeo crashed the Capulet's party.

MERCUTIO, TYBALT, BENVOLIO, and CROWDMEMBERS enter.

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