

STILL STAR-CROSSED

"A Bloody Summer"

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"Still Star-Crossed: "A Bloody Summer"

ACT ONE

EXT. VERONA - NIGHT

Where we find ourselves on a WARM SUMMER NIGHT in the Northern Italian city-state of VERONA. We can HEAR the MUSIC and LAUGHTER of some distant PARTY carrying softly through the air... And as we watch, a TEENAGE GIRL steps out onto a BALCONY and speaks the following INCREDIBLY FAMOUS WORDS:

JULIET

*Oh Romeo, Romeo -- wherefore art  
thou Romeo?*

And just like that, we know WHERE we are, and WHEN we are, and WHO IT IS we're watching -- because this girl? On this night? Standing on this balcony? Is JULIET CAPULET, a vision of youth, and beauty, and innocence -- and the heroine of THE GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER TOLD. And as she continues...

JULIET (CONT'D)

*Deny thy father, and refuse thy  
name...*

...Her words are DROWNED OUT by the PRE-LAPPED SOUND of some extremely non-innocent PANTING and MOANING, which we follow as we DRIFT FROM THE BALCONY down into...

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Where a MAN and a WOMAN are busy making the beast with two backs in some surprisingly comfortable bushes. The man, BENVOLIO MONTAGUE (20s; dark and dangerous) stops sharply when he HEARS a MALE VOICE reply to Juliet:

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

*I take thee at thy word.*

And instantly, Benvolio pulls back from his partner -- a TAVERN WENCH, maybe, or perhaps someone more professional -- and places a hand on her shoulder...

BENVOLIO

Hush.

WENCH

Mmm?

BENVOLIO

*(fierce)*  
I said *silence*.

She smiles, reaching back out for him--

WENCH

My Lord, I don't--

Benvolio reaches for his doublet. And as he presses a few gold FLORINS into the Wench's palm...

BENVOLIO

We're finished. Leave me be.

And as the Wench takes the money, Benvolio looks up to see that a TEENAGE BOY, ROMEO MONTAGUE -- as dark of hair and eye as he, but softer, younger -- has joined Juliet on her balcony. And that, what's more, the two are locked in a passionate embrace, GROPING and SLURPING at each other like, well, a couple of teenagers. And off the distinct look of displeasure creasing Benvolio's handsome face, we SMASH TO...

INT./EXT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

A gilded carriage, as it jostles its way down the streets. On one side of its cabin sit Juliet's parents, LORD SILVESTRO CAPULET (50s, fat and happy) and his wife, LADY GUILIANA (late 30s), both resplendent in the JEWELLED ROBES and BRIGHT SILKS of their station.

Across from them are a pair of SERVANT GIRLS, ROSALINE (mid 20s) and her younger sister LIVIA (barely 21), both stunning, but in PLAIN SERVANTS' DRESSES -- though we can't help but notice that each wears a strikingly beautiful NECKLACE around her neck. And as we watch, Lady Capulet addresses them--

LADY CAPULET

Tell me, sweet Livia. Does it thrill you to return to the Palace, so many years after leaving the Court?

A people pleaser, Livia looks brightly at her employer...

LIVIA

Of course, my Lady Capulet. Who doesn't love a ball?

LADY CAPULET

And Rosaline? What say you?

A beat, and then Rosaline -- darker and deeper than her little sister -- flicks her eyes up from the carriage floor...

ROSALINE

My sister speaks the truth, my Lady.

And then, realizing she has to give a little more than that--

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

Who doesn't love a ball?

And in response, Lady Capulet smiles. It's not a nice smile.

LADY CAPULET

It is a great kindness I bestow upon you tonight, bringing you both along. Just think of all the other servants of House Capulet who would have loved to attend in your place. But I thought to myself, Giuliana, why *not* take your sister-in-law's daughters back to the palace they once played in as children, when their fortunes were better? Why *not* extend them this charity, like all the other charities you've provided them since their dear mother's death?

Livia nods politely.

LIVIA

I'm sure our mother would be glad to hear it, Aunt.

LADY CAPULET

And Rosaline? What say you?

And as we see just how much Rosaline hates this woman, and how much Lady Capulet savors that fact--

ROSALINE

I agree with my sister. My Lady.

A beat, as Lady Capulet toys with her prey. Then--

LADY CAPULET

It's a shame you don't appreciate everything I've done for you.

And now Lord Capulet, as sunny and jovial as his wife is icy and calculating, glances from the window at his better half--

LORD CAPULET

Enough, Guiliana.

LADY CAPULET

Why? I speak nothing but the truth.

Lord Capulet SIGHS in a manner that tells us he's heard all this before, and made his peace with it long ago. But still--

LORD CAPULET

Perhaps.

(MORE)

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)

But the return of Prince Escalus is cause for celebration -- a new young Prince, properly managed, could improve our fortunes and diminish those of the Montagues. And for that? We should all be grateful.

And with that, the carriage stops at its destination. Capulet offers a dutiful hand to his wife--

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)

Are you ready, my love?

And as she takes it, we MOVE TO...

INT./EXT. ROYAL PALACE/BALL - NIGHT

Where we find ourselves in the middle of a SWIRLING KALEIDOSCOPE of MUSIC and LANTERNS and SILK and GOLD, all the GLAMOUR and GLITTER of the HIGH ITALIAN RENAISSANCE on full display as the citizens of Verona, town and gown, DRINK and DANCE and take in a spectacle that represents the VERY PINNACLE OF WORLD CULTURE at this particular moment in time. And we weave through this GLORIOUS BACCHANALIA, MOVING INTO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Where PRINCE ESCALUS (mid-20s and that rare combination of extremely-hot-yet-deeply-decent), and his slightly younger sister, PRINCESS ISABELLA, prepare to greet their subjects. Escalus attempts to adjust the CROWN that sits upon his head--

ISABELLA

It's been a bloody summer.

ESCALUS

So you've said.

She helps him with the crown.

ISABELLA

I mean it, brother -- worse than any I remember.

Escalus frowns slightly. Something about this troubling him--

ESCALUS

And so we're prepared to execute our own subjects without trial?

Isabella eyes him with a mixture of exasperation and something close to envy--

ISABELLA

In June, Capulets' wheat fields were burned. There was no proof, of course, but everyone knew it was Montague's work -- and Capulet peasants will starve this winter as a result. In July, half the ewes in Montague's flock were slaughtered in their pens -- his men will starve as well. And it goes on from there -- a Capulet stabs a Montague in the streets; a Montague bludgeons a Capulet in the fields. Until Father proclaimed--

ESCALUS

That anyone who commits murder will be executed without trial -- I am well aware of what Father proclaimed.

ISABELLA

He was a wise ruler until his last breath. And trusted that you would be, as well.

(then)

Never forget that if either of those families gains the upper hand over the other, their next target will be the Crown.

(and then)

If it takes blood to keep more blood from being shed, so be it.

A beat, and then the Prince nods grudgingly at his sister, respecting her opinion, despite his obvious reservations...

ESCALUS

I've been seven years in the Court of Venice. And though the Doge taught me much, I trust the situation in Verona is best understood by those who've lived it firsthand.

That was an olive branch. And graciously, Isabella takes it--

ISABELLA

The crown suits you.

She nods to a hovering SERVANT.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

We're ready.

And as the servant scuttles away, we HEAR the sound of TRUMPETS and the SHOUT of the HERALD --

HERALD (O.S.)  
THE SOVEREIGN OF OUR FAIR VERONA,  
HIS GRACE, PRINCE ESCALUS, AND HER  
GRACE, PRINCESS ISABELLA!!!

And OFF the royal siblings, making their way out to the  
adoring crowd, we MOVE TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Where we can still hear the HERALDIC TRUMPETS blasting  
somewhere above as MERCUTIO (20s, slender and bright) hammers  
a silver TAP into a fresh barrel of wine. Until he HEARS--

TYBALT (O.S.)  
Mercutio.

And he whirls to find TYBALT CAPULET (30s, braver than he is  
smart) in the doorway to the cellar -- and advancing fast.

TYBALT (CONT'D)  
The kind of man who'd break into the  
royal wine cellar while your Sovereign  
speaks to his subjects.

MERCUTIO  
And Tybalt Capulet -- the kind of  
man who'd follow me.

Tybalt sneers. Spoiling for a fight--

TYBALT  
I'm defending my Prince's property  
from a thief --

MERCUTIO  
But you've found no such thing.

Mercutio motions to the barrel, upon which we see a CREST in  
the shape of a WILD BOAR -- THE MARK OF THE MONTAGUES.

MERCUTIO (CONT'D)  
This? Is Montague wine. Donated  
freely to the guests of this ball.  
And fair game for a friend of the  
family such as myself. But by all  
means, haul me upstairs -- I'm sure  
you won't make the Capulets look  
stupid and petty at all--

TYBALT  
Are you calling me stupid?

BENVOLIO (O.S.)  
If he doesn't, I will.

And suddenly, from behind Tybalt, Benvolio wraps an arm around Tybalt's neck--

TYBALT

You would attack a man's back like a coward, Benvolio? If you kill me--

BENVOLIO

Kill you? And risk the executioner's sword, just for the satisfaction of ending a Capulet's life?

(then, a sneer)

Tybalt, you're not worth it.

And he lets go. Tybalt looks from one man to the other, seeing he's outmatched.

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)

Get out of here.

And so, with a last glance in Mercutio's direction, Tybalt leaves. A beat, and then--

MERCUTIO

That's not over.

BENVOLIO

It is for tonight.

Mercutio shrugs -- true. He twists the tap and fills his TANKARD with wine, then holds it out to Benvolio, who takes a long swig.

MERCUTIO

You left just when the party was starting to get interesting.

BENVOLIO

Don't talk to me about interesting -- you'll never guess what I just saw.

Mercutio gestures to the bit of untucked shirt poking out from Benvolio's doublet.

MERCUTIO

Was it the two girls and the donkey?

BENVOLIO

(tucking in his shirt)

No.

(then; grudging)

But that is a good show.

(and then)

I was in the gardens of House Capulet. Want to know who else was there?

Mercutio grins.

MERCUTIO  
Our dear, sweet Romeo. And Capulet's  
daughter.

BENVOLIO  
How'd you know?

MERCUTIO  
Because they were here before they  
were there. Making eyes on the dance  
floor, drinking too much wine...

BENVOLIO  
And you didn't stop him? Some friend.

MERCUTIO  
A better friend than you are -- I  
broke them apart, told Romeo to  
leave... I assumed he'd gone home.

BENVOLIO  
Well, you assumed wrong.

He shakes his head, drinks some more, rueful--

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)  
No good will come of mixing Montague  
and Capulet blood.

MERCUTIO  
Only a fool wouldn't drink to that.

And off the two of them, sharing the tankard, we MOVE TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/BALL - RECEIVING LINE - NIGHT

Where Rosaline and Livia stand in the long line of well-  
wishers leading to the DAIS where the Royals receive their  
subjects. And as Livia looks out over the swirling ball--

LIVIA  
Aren't you even the least bit excited?  
To be free for this one night? To  
dance, and drink, and do as we please?

ROSALINE  
Not quite "as we please"--

Livia shoots her sister a rueful smile.

LIVIA

Unlike you, sweet sister, the idea of finding a husband doesn't actually displease me.

She scans the crowd. And then, with only the slightest hint of world-weariness--

LIVIA (CONT'D)

Somewhere out there is my one true love.

At which Rosaline rolls her eyes.

ROSALINE

Somewhere out there is a man who wants your beauty and your bloodline more than he needs money.

(then, pointed)

But when you find him, you must tell him he gets the two of us, or neither one at all.

LIVIA

And what if we meet a man who loves you instead? Would you marry, so we could both be free?

ROSALINE

That? Is not a question I'll ever have to answer.

LIVIA

And why not?

Rosaline's gaze falls on Escalus and Isabella, greeting a CONTESSA and her young DAUGHTER on the dais. They're smiling and laughing as the little girl attempts a clumsy curtsy. Rosaline's face clouds, as she looks away.

ROSALINE

Because if the choice were between the two of us, sweet sister, there's not a man on this earth who'd be foolish enough to choose me.

And now it's their turn on the dais. Livia goes first, a bright smile and an expert curtsy--

LIVIA

Thank you, your Grace -- for this beautiful night.

ISABELLA

You're very welcome. Enjoy.

And with that, Livia twirls off into the crowd. Leaving...

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Rosaline.

In sharp contrast to her sister's good nature, Rosaline fixes Isabella with a cold and dispassionate stare.

ROSALINE

Greetings, my Princess.

And Isabella drops her gaze -- seemingly embarrassed by Rosaline's use of her title.

ISABELLA

(quietly)

You know you don't have to be so formal.

ROSALINE

Really? I thought everything in this Court was about following the rules.

There's hurt there -- an old friendship, long dead. Isabella's voice drops to a whisper.

ISABELLA

Stop this. I beg you.

ROSALINE

(bright and brittle)

Thank you, your Grace, for giving your loyal subjects this ball.

And with that, Rosaline executes a grudging curtsy, then moves down the line to Isabella's brother--

ESCALUS

Rosaline--

ROSALINE

It's good to see you back in Verona, your Grace.

And that was also deeply awkward. Which doesn't escape the sharp eyes of Lady Capulet, as she appears beside her niece--

LADY CAPULET

Prince Escalus! How disconcerted you must be -- when last you saw our Rosaline, she was your peer. It must be awful for you to see how far her fortunes have fallen.

ESCALUS

The news reached me in Venice.  
(then, to Rosaline)  
I was so sorry to hear of your  
parents' deaths.

And as a tight-lipped Rosaline silently tolerates her aunt's cruelty, we can't help but clock the look of empathy on Isabella's face... but her old friend's pity only makes Rosaline's cheeks burn brighter.

ROSALINE

Thank you, your Grace.

And as Lady Capulet continues to schmooze, a mortified Rosaline stalks off the dais. We follow her into the crowd...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/BALL - DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Where Livia is already dancing with an EAGER SUITOR -- smiling and laughing without a care in the world. Rosaline marches up to her, grabs her by the arm ---

ROSALINE

(to the Suitor)  
Excuse us.  
(and then, to Livia)  
We're leaving.

LIVIA

We just got here--

ROSALINE

And now we're going home.

And with that, she pulls her sister off the dance floor, and drags her through the crowd--

LIVIA

Stop it -- Rosaline! You'll rip my  
dress!

And we can't help but notice as Rosaline PLOWS HER WAY PAST BENVOLIO MONTAGUE, the two of them passing like ships in the night as Rosaline keeps dragging Livia out into...

EXT. ROYAL PALACE/BALL - CONTINUOUS

The broad marble steps outside the palace, where GUESTS are still trickling in--

LIVIA

All right! We're out! Let go of me --  
what the hell are you doing?

ROSALINE

It was a mistake to come here.

LIVIA

Rosaline. It's *just a party*--

ROSALINE

A party where we're *shamed*, and  
*paraded around* like a cruel joke---

LIVIA

Are you serious?

She is. Livia sighs.

LIVIA (CONT'D)

There's a thousand people in there.  
No one cares about us.

ROSALINE

*I care about us!*

LIVIA

And at any rate, we can't leave  
without Lord and Lady Capulet--

ROSALINE

There are enough royal asses in there  
to kiss that they'll never even notice  
we're gone.

She has a point.

LIVIA

Fine.

(then)

But how exactly do you expect us to  
get home?

ROSALINE

We're commoners, Livia.

And as Livia watches, mouth agape, Rosaline KICKS OFF HER  
HIGH-HEELED CHOPINES and HIKES UP HER DRESS --

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

We'll walk.

And with that, she STRIDES OFF INTO THE NIGHT IN HER BARE  
FEET. A beat, as her sister watches, then reluctantly slips  
off her own shoes and follows her. And we TIME CUT TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/ROSALINE AND LIVIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Where Rosaline and Livia are now safely back home in their small shared room, as Rosaline carefully undoes the clasp on Livia's necklace, and then her own.

ROSALINE

Lady Capulet only brought us to that ball to humiliate us. I should have known, I should have *seen--*

And as we watch, she wraps their most precious possessions in a scrap of linen and tucks them deep within a CREVICE of the simple stone wall, then pushes the room's single BEDFRAME in front of her hiding place...

LIVIA

The only thing you should see is that I'll never meet my husband if you don't let me out of the house.

And as they start undressing for bed--

LIVIA (CONT'D)

And that's what you want, isn't it? More than anything? To marry me off, so you can go be with your beloved nuns?

ROSALINE

I'd hardly call them *beloved--*

LIVIA

And yet, you wish to join them. And never have any fun again.

ROSALINE

You don't see the fun in being your own mistress? Of reading your own books, of sleeping in your own bed, of never being at the whim of whichever man happens to be in charge of you--

And as Livia crawls into her side of the bed--

LIVIA

A man who might love you, who might want you to be happy. And besides--  
(gesturing to the room)

I see no fun in a life of poverty. And that's all the nuns can offer.

Rosaline crawls in beside her sister.

ROSALINE

Yes, that's what they offer. And to me, money is a fair trade for freedom.

And as she blows out the LANTERN that lights the room, it's clear they've had this fight, or a version of it, a thousand times. A beat, in the darkness, and then--

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

Good night, sister.

LIVIA

Good night.

And off these two, bonded tight, no matter what may come...

EXT. GROUNDS OF HOUSE CAPULET - MORNING

As Lord Capulet strolls through his expansive gardens. At his side is COUNT PARIS (20s), tall, dashing -- your basic Prince Charming. His clothes tell us he's not from Verona.

LORD CAPULET

You've seen firsthand the strife that divides our city -- family versus family, Capulet versus Montague.

COUNT PARIS

It's the same all across Europe -- new money rising up against old families.

LORD CAPULET

Capulets have owned this land since before there were records to keep. And Montague's grandfather was nothing but a shepherd on my family's hills.

COUNT PARIS

A smart shepherd, to save up for his own flock.

LORD CAPULET

(a nod; perhaps)

Or was my grandfather a foolish Lord, to allow it? But what's done is done -- and now Montague is a force to be reckoned with. Though in truth, I'm inclined to feel that no more men should die for our petty squabbles. It starts to seem cruel, as the years go by.

COUNT PARIS

And yet, on the subject of cruelty,  
you keep your own nieces as servants.

Capulet shakes his head ruefully--

LORD CAPULET

That's Giuliana's work. She says  
they inherited their mother's  
insolence, and need to be taught a  
lesson -- never mind that she and  
Emilia were bitter rivals back when  
they were girls at Court.

(then)

But she's not entirely wrong. They're  
better off than they would be in the  
streets.

COUNT PARIS

Your wife has a sharp mind, my Lord.

LORD CAPULET

A sharp mind, and expensive tastes.

Paris knows exactly what Capulet is getting at.

COUNT PARIS

I'm happy to pay any price you ask.  
Your daughter is everything I could  
ever want in a wife. She'll be well  
cared for in Mantua, of that I swear.

LORD CAPULET

Then I give my full consent. But  
make sure you woo her, Paris. Send  
her flowers and letters, flirt with  
her from beneath her window. A girl  
Juliet's age wants romance, grand  
gestures -- to be swept off her feet.

Paris smiles.

COUNT PARIS

Well then, I will do the sweeping.

And off these two, we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE MONTAGUE/LORD MONTAGUE'S STUDY - DAY

Newer and flashier than House Capulet. In the sitting area  
of the study are DAMIANO MONTAGUE (50s), a man of business,  
not pleasure, and his friend BAPTISTA MINOLA (also 50s), a  
Paduan noble. Montague's eyes narrow as Benvolio enters,  
looking very much like someone who woke up just a few minutes  
earlier. Benvolio's face falls as he sees Baptista Minola --

BENVOLIO  
Uncle. And Lord Minola. Hello.

BAPTISTA MINOLA  
(coldly)  
Benvolio.

MONTAGUE  
At long last, my prodigal nephew  
returns to face me.  
(then)  
I trust you enjoyed the ball last  
night?

Benvolio bows deep. Which was a mistake, since he's wobbly  
on the rebound. But after a moment to recover--

BENVOLIO  
I beg your forgiveness, Uncle. I  
returned to Verona just in time for  
the ball, and I knew how important  
it would be to you to represent our  
family there in good stead.

MONTAGUE  
And how did you represent the  
Montagues? By drinking my wine, and  
threatening the life of that idiot  
Tybalt Capulet? Or by screwing that  
whore in his Master's garden?  
(off Benvolio)  
You forget how far I see.  
(and then, to Minola)  
How long have we known each other,  
Baptista?

BAPTISTA MINOLA  
Many years, Damiano. Many years,  
indeed.

Benvolio turns to Minola, a note of desperation in his voice --  
as though, somehow, he's displeased this man greatly...

BENVOLIO  
Lord Minola, I know you are a loyal  
friend to our family, but--

MONTAGUE  
But what? A friend not worth keeping?  
Did you think he'd allow his precious  
daughter to wed a drunk who'd worked  
his way through half the brothels in  
Padua before the eve of his wedding?

BENVOLIO

No, I--

MONTAGUE

You will apologize.

BENVOLIO

I am sorry, Lord Minola, I never  
meant to--

And as we watch, in one swift and sudden move, Montague LASHES  
OUT at his nephew, KICKING him in the hamstrings and DROPPING  
him instantly to his knees--

MONTAGUE

*And you will kneel.*

Even Minola looks startled by Montague's savagery--

BAPTISTA MINOLA

Damiano--

Montague has his hand in Benvolio's hair now, TWISTING it as  
he PULLS his nephew's head up to face Baptista Minola's gaze--

MONTAGUE

No, my friend. The boy must learn.

BENVOLIO

I am sorry... so sorry... I apologize  
to you, and to your daughter, and to  
all of Padua...

And seeing the young man is clearly in pain, Minola places a  
merciful hand on Benvolio's shoulder--

BAPTISTA MINOLA

Enough, boy. I accept your apology.

And with that, Montague releases him. Benvolio cowers on  
the floor as Minola gathers himself to leave--

BAPTISTA MINOLA (CONT'D)

(to Montague)

And yours as well.

And with that, Baptista Minola is gone. Benvolio remains on  
the floor, still groveling--

BENVOLIO

I'm sorry... so sorry...

MONTAGUE

As well you should be.  
(MORE)

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)

You have shamed the Montague name --  
not just for yourself, but for me,  
and the memory of your father, my  
brother. With your drinking, and  
your whoring...

BENVOLIO

(desperate now)

If you paid anything for the wedding,  
I'll find a way to repay you--

MONTAGUE

Money? There was no amount of money  
Minola would take. I cut my losses,  
and spent my money on something else.

And now, it seems, the storm has passed. Montague walks to  
his desk, takes a seat. Watching, as a still-nervous Benvolio  
clammers back onto his feet--

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)

Your cousin Giovanni. Only seven,  
and he wants to take the vows.

(then)

And so this morning, I paid for his  
escort to Rome, with enough gold to  
secure him a place among the monks  
at the *Abazzia di Fossanova*.

BENVOLIO

You're a generous man, Uncle.

MONTAGUE

No. But I am a patient one.

(then)

If you were the kind to ask questions,  
you might ask me, why *Fossanova*?

BENVOLIO

(wary)

All right. Why *Fossanova*?

MONTAGUE

Because the boy is seven. And he  
wants to know about God. But in  
twenty, thirty years... he'll be a  
man who understands the hearts of  
men. He'll be indebted to his family,  
who supported him in his education,  
allowed him to become not just holy,  
but powerful. And because he's at  
*Fossanova*, so close to Rome... who  
knows? Perhaps Giovanni Montague  
becomes the Pope someday.

Montague shrugs.

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)  
Or not. I won't know -- I'll be  
dead by then. But I'll die knowing  
I made an investment in my family.  
(then)  
As will you.

And then, staring Benvolio down with his piercing black eyes--

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)  
In exchange for your freedom from  
marriage to Bianca Minola, you will  
look after Romeo. Protect him, keep  
him out of trouble. He will become  
closer to you than Mercutio, or any  
of his other friends. Am I understood?

BENVOLIO  
Yes, Uncle.

And as Montague turns to the work on his desk--

MONTAGUE  
Good. Now go home, and wash the  
stink of the night off you.

And as a shaken Benvolio exits, we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/JULIET'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Where Rosaline brushes her mistress's hair.

JULIET  
I have a secret.  
(then)  
In truth, I think it would make you  
proud to hear it.

Juliet eyes her in the mirror--

ROSALINE  
Proud, my Lady?

JULIET  
You're always going on about being  
independent--

ROSALINE  
I don't think I--

JULIET  
Rosaline. You are.  
(MORE)

JULIET (CONT'D)

(then)

So I followed your lead. And made a decision.

(and then, proudly)

I'm marrying Romeo Montague. Tonight.

Rosaline puts down the brush. Stunned speechless, because a bomb of epic proportions has just been dropped in this bedroom--

ROSALINE

Romeo Montague? Juliet, you *can't*--

JULIET

Tell me he's not handsome.

ROSALINE

Of course he's handsome, he's a Montague. But--

And Juliet takes the brush from her cousin's hand. Turns to face her, a vibrating mass of teenage angst and anguish--

JULIET

And tell me that of all of the Montagues, he doesn't seem *sweet*, and *kind*, and *true*...

ROSALINE

That's not independence, that's -- how can you even *think* about marrying a Montague?!?

JULIET

Because I love him. And he loves me.

(then)

You can't say anything. No one else can know -- not until after the wedding.

A KNOCK at Juliet's door, and her NURSE enters. She beams at her charge, holding out a large and creamy white GARDENIA--

NURSE

My Juliet.

And tenderly, she tucks the flower behind Juliet's ear. Smooths her hair and takes a long look at her--

NURSE (CONT'D)

The prettiest flower in the garden. For you, on your wedding night.

Rosaline raises an eyebrow at her cousin--

ROSALINE  
(re: the Nurse)  
No one else can know?

JULIET  
Who could keep a secret from their  
Nurse?

And off that simple truth, we TIME CUT TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/HALLWAY OUTSIDE JULIET'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

As Rosaline and the Nurse make their way down the hall.  
Rosaline, furious, hisses at her fellow servant--

ROSALINE  
This is stupid, and reckless, and  
you have to stop her--

NURSE  
How? By saying "no"? Love doesn't  
listen to "no," Rosaline. And young  
love? Can't be stopped. It can  
only be managed. You should know  
that by now, I hope.

With that, she shoots Rosaline a meaningful look. And as  
Rosaline drops her gaze, we CUT TO...

EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

As Benvolio and Romeo make their way across the square--

ROMEO  
Don't be dramatic -- he won't kill  
you. You're family.

BENVOLIO  
If Baptista Minola were a vengeful  
man, I think I'd be dead already.  
(then)  
I can't convince you not to do this?

ROMEO  
Not without raising a sword to me  
yourself. And that, my father *would*  
kill you for.  
(then, a smile)  
So you have no choice...

They've reached the door of a small CHAPEL at the end of the  
square. And as Romeo pushes it open, we MOVE INTO...

INT. CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

A lovely little chapel, FLICKERING with what seem like a thousand CANDLES. Is it romantic in here? *Oh hell yes, it is.* And at the first glimpse of his bride-to-be, Romeo rushes to Juliet, awash in the depths of puppy love as they embrace, staring into each other's eyes, unable to believe that--

JULIET

You came.

ROMEO

I'm here.

JULIET

I love you...

ROMEO

I love you, too...

And as they start KISSING with heedless abandon, Benvolio glances over at Rosaline, taking in her SERVANT'S DRESS--

BENVOLIO

I'm sure as a serving girl, it must thrill you to no end to see the rules of Veronan society flouted before your very eyes.

Wow. That was... rude. Rosaline blinks at him. Then, icily--

ROSALINE

As it happens, my Lord, I am both a servant, and a Capulet.

He raises an eyebrow at her.

BENVOLIO

So you don't approve of this union?

ROSALINE

I do not.

BENVOLIO

Great. Nor do I.  
(then; a hand)  
Benvolio Montague.

She doesn't take it.

ROSALINE

Rosaline Capulet.

And now Benvolio is fascinated, because--

BENVOLIO

The girl Romeo was swooning over all summer? Who turned him down without so much as a second glance?

We can't help but notice that just a few feet away from them, Romeo and Juliet are still sucking face.

ROSALINE

(re: the face-sucking)

I don't see how that matters now.

BENVOLIO

Oh, it doesn't.

(then re: her dress)

Just nice to see he traded up.

And off her glare, he shrugs: Just stating a fact. Rosaline simmers...

ROSALINE

At least your cousin seems like a decent human being.

BENVOLIO

You know what they say--

He holds up a FLASK, takes a stiff swig--

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)

Decency's in the eye of the beholder.

And before Rosaline can come up with a snappy comeback, they HEAR the sound of a THROAT CLEARING, and turn to find FRIAR LAWRENCE (40s), a neat little man with a spark of intelligence in his eyes, standing at the front of the altar--

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Shall we begin?

ROSALINE

This is madness, Friar -- I know not why you'd perform a wedding between Capulet and Montague.

JULIET

(glaring)

*Rosaline!*

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Because I've performed too many funerals for both your families this summer. And who's to say love won't succeed where violence has failed?

(MORE)

FRIAR LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

(then)

Come, Romeo. Juliet. Join hands in front of God and your witnesses.

And as the young lovers do just that, we TIME CUT TO...

EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

As Romeo and Benvolio make their way back across the square...

BENVOLIO

So, you ruined your life.

ROMEO

I hardly think marrying the woman I love will ruin anything. Which is what I'll say to my father tomorrow. And her father as well.

(then, a thought)

Tell me, cousin -- why didn't you wed Bianca Minola? She's said to be both beautiful, and mild--

BENVOLIO

"Mild" is one word for it.

(then)

I did not marry Bianca Minola because I *could* not marry Bianca Minola. She was pretty to look at, aye, but she had no mind of her own -- just a head full of things other people told her she should think.

(and then)

That was no betrothal, cousin. It was a death sentence.

And just then, A MAN steps out of the alley beside them. It's Tybalt Capulet.

TYBALT

Look what I found. A pair of Montagues.

Acutely aware of his promise to his Uncle, Benvolio steps protectively in front of his young charge.

BENVOLIO

Tybalt, we want no trouble with you tonight.

But just then, another man steps out of the alley -- NICCOLO, who bears the Capulet family resemblance, but is at least twice Tybalt's size. Tybalt grins, and draws his sword...

TYBALT

But trouble is all Verona has, when  
the Montagues burn our fields to try  
and turn themselves into a respectable  
family. Do you think no one remembers  
that your people came from nothing?

BENVOLIO

This is a fight for a hundred years  
ago. Not tonight.

TYBALT

A hundred years ago. Yet I may starve  
this very winter.

As Tybalt speaks, Niccolo advances on Benvolio, JABBING at  
him with his LONGSWORD. Benvolio PARRIES, and the two BATTLE,  
their STEEL SINGING, as Tybalt and Romeo circle one another.  
But we notice that Romeo's sword remains undrawn...

TYBALT (CONT'D)

Come, Romeo Montague, and raise your  
sword against me.

ROMEO

I won't fight you, Tybalt.

Tybalt waves his sword just short of Romeo's face--

TYBALT

The Montagues are many things, but  
I've never thought of them as cowards.

ROMEO

I'm no coward -- I'm family. We're  
family. As of tonight. And I'm not  
going to fight my own blood.

TYBALT

Your blood is no family of mine.

And with that, Tybalt SLASHES at the air beside Romeo's head.  
Romeo DUCKS the blade as Benvolio glances over, nearly getting  
his own neck sliced for this momentary lapse in attention.  
But now something has caught Benvolio's eye: A MAN weaving  
out of a nearby tavern. And we see it's none other than--

BENVOLIO

Mercutio!

Who sees the fight, and immediately bounds over, sword drawn.  
And he begins to PARRY with Tybalt, their swords FLASHING  
and CLANGING as Benvolio and Niccolo continue their own battle  
just a few feet away.

And as we watch, Tybalt gets a lucky break, JAMMING HIS BLADE through Mercutio's torso, as Mercutio falls to the ground...

ROMEO

*MERCUTIO!*

And he races to his friend, as Tybalt stands over them--

ROMEO (CONT'D)

You'll die for this.

TYBALT

I thought you said you couldn't fight me.

In one swift motion, Romeo pulls a DAGGER from the waistband of his doublet and PLUNGES it deep into Tybalt's NECK--

ROMEO

I changed my mind.

Tybalt begins to SPUTTER, a TORRENT of BLOOD running down his body. And as he drops, Niccolo throws one last BLOCK against Benvolio's sword before dashing off into the night... And we stay with Romeo and Benvolio, as they kneel beside Mercutio, terrified and desperate--

ROMEO (CONT'D)

No. No -- stay with us... Don't die... Mercutio... Mercutio...

MERCUTIO

*A plague on both your houses...*

BENVOLIO

No, no, no -- you can make it, just stay with us... stay with us...

But Mercutio looks up at his friend and shakes his head...

MERCUTIO

*Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.*

And with that, Mercutio slumps. Benvolio stares down at his friend's dead body. Then over at Tybalt's... and finally, up at the now-terrified Romeo. The price they'll have to pay for this night becoming all too real for both of them...

BENVOLIO

What have you done?

And we...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ROYAL PALACE/ISABELLA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Where Isabella and Escalus sit and chat beside the fire.

ESCALUS

I'm sorry I didn't make it back home  
before Father died.

Isabella nods -- she's sorry, too. But--

ISABELLA

He knew you were on your way.  
(then; wistfully)  
He always had great faith in you,  
Escalus. To be exactly the kind of  
ruler our city needs.

ESCALUS

You sell yourself short. He had  
faith in you, as well.

Isabella nods, rueful--

ISABELLA

Faith I'd pick a good husband,  
perhaps.

Escalus's SQUIRE, MATTEO (20s), far sharper than he has any  
right to be, appears in the doorway--

SQUIRE MATTEO

I'm sorry to disturb you, your Grace,  
but there's been some bad news --  
two noblemen are dead in the city's  
streets.

(then)

One at the hand of Romeo Montague.

ISABELLA

Romeo Montague? He's just a boy --  
and no natural swordsman.

SQUIRE MATTEO

It seems he was incited, my Lady.  
Tybalt Capulet killed his friend  
Mercutio, and Romeo avenged him.

ESCALUS

It shouldn't be a crime to avenge  
such a close friend's death.

ISABELLA

And yet, it *is* a crime, because you made it one.

She stands. Suddenly strategizing--

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

We've had peace in our streets since your proclamation. If Romeo Montague has committed a murder, he should die at the Crown's hand.

ESCALUS

We can't just execute Lord Montague's only son--

ISABELLA

Then what do any of our laws mean, if we won't enforce them? Capulet will demand retribution for Tybalt, and Romeo must be punished -- or else another Montague will die for his crime, and then another Capulet, and before long our own heads will sit on spikes outside the Palace walls. Laws must be enforced for rulers to rule -- did the Doge not teach you that in all your years in Venice?

ESCALUS

Yes. But I also learned there's often a middle path between extremes -- and it's almost always the one a just ruler should take.

And we realize that Escalus has had an idea. Off the young ruler, preparing to walk his middle path, we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/DINING ROOM - MORNING

As Rosaline and Livia move around the dining table, pouring milk and wine from earthenware pitchers as Lord and Lady Capulet eat their morning meal. Juliet enters, all smiles--

JULIET

Good morning, Mother. Father.

LORD CAPULET

You're in a good mood.

And as Rosaline silently fills Juliet's goblet--

JULIET

It's a beautiful morning.

LADY CAPULET

And a happy one for you, my daughter --  
you're betrothed to be wed.

And now Rosaline and Juliet lock eyes -- because *whaaaaat?*

JULIET

Betrothed?

LADY CAPULET

(proudly)  
To Count Paris of Mantua. Your  
father's just arranged it.

And we hear the sudden CLANK of falling crockery as a serving  
platter slips in Rosaline's grasp. As the Capulets look up--

ROSALINE

Sorry.

JULIET

(defiant)  
I can't marry a man I've never met.

LADY CAPULET

You can, and you will.

JULIET

But Mother--

As Rosaline watches, Lady Capulet regards her daughter with  
a surprising amount of tenderness--

LADY CAPULET

Sweet girl. I know of youth, and  
inexperience. It can be frightening,  
to think of having a husband.

JULIET

That's not--

LADY CAPULET

(firmly)  
But the wedding won't be until the  
spring -- plenty of time to learn  
how it all works.  
(then, to Lord Capulet)  
I saw a messenger leaving the house.  
What news?

Capulet's face darkens.

LORD CAPULET

I didn't want to spoil the morning.  
(MORE)

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)

(then)

But Montague's son Romeo stabbed  
Tybalt in the streets last night.

And at this, Juliet can't keep a GASP from escaping her lips--

JULIET

*What?*

LORD CAPULET

Justice will be served -- the  
punishment for young Montague will  
be death. Once they catch him.

JULIET

So Romeo is still free?

LORD CAPULET

The knights are hunting him down.

(then; pensive)

Though in truth, it seems a shame to  
execute a man's only son.

Lady Capulet shoots her husband a look of pure scorn.

LADY CAPULET

You grow soft in your old age,  
Silvestro. 'Tis a shame for Montague,  
perhaps, but 'tis a blessing for us --  
without an heir, I'm sure the fortunes  
of that family aren't quite as rosy  
as Damiano hoped.

Capulet shakes his head wearily at his wife--

LORD CAPULET

And what then? There's only so much  
wealth in the world -- if it weren't  
the Montagues scheming against us,  
it would be some other family. But  
to lose one's only child? I may  
grow soft, Guiliana, but surely even  
you can see the cruelty in that.

LADY CAPULET

I see nothing but the burning of our  
fields. And that the law is the law.

And as Lady Capulet picks up her bread, uncowed, a frost  
falls over the dining table. Until--

ROSALINE  
(deferentially)  
Did you hear where they'll keep the  
Montague, my Lord? Once they catch  
him? A brawl could break out -- you  
should let the servants know it's  
not safe.

Capulet nods -- good point.

LORD CAPULET  
I will -- he'll be in the Tower Jail.

He takes a bite of his breakfast.

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)  
Not the place I'd like to spend the  
last days of my life...

And as Rosaline and Juliet's eyes meet, we CUT TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/JULIET'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Where Rosaline watches Juliet pace...

JULIET  
We have to *do* something--

ROSALINE  
And what would you have us do?

JULIET  
I don't know -- but surely you can  
see that we can't just let him die!  
(off Rosaline's silence)  
I know you've been against this from  
the start, but are you really so  
caught up in your own desires that  
you care so little for my happiness?

ROSALINE  
*My own desires?*

JULIET  
To marry off Livia! To turn your  
back on our House!

Rosaline pauses. Because perhaps that might be true.

ROSALINE  
Juliet, I care for your happiness--

JULIET  
Then we have to rescue Romeo.

ROSALINE

But I just don't see--

Juliet glares at her--

JULIET

*He is my husband!*

ROSALINE

A fact known only by people who aren't likely to reveal it.

Ever the teenager, Juliet sulks.

JULIET

It matters not. To be married to two men would be a sin.

ROSALINE

Not if you're a widow. And a virgin widow at that.

JULIET

I'm not.  
(off Rosaline)  
A virgin.

And now it's Rosaline's turn to stare. Because in a world where virtue is everything, if what Juliet says is true...

ROSALINE

Did he slip into your bed after killing your cousin in the streets?

JULIET

No. It wasn't -- not last night. The night before. When he proposed. And I said yes... and we were to be married anyway...

(then)

I don't think Count Paris will look kindly on a pregnant bride.

ROSALINE

You cannot know--

JULIET

Not yet. But what if? I took no precautions.

Rosaline thinks.

ROSALINE

Then you'll just have to marry Paris sooner. This month, or next at the latest.

And then, with the utmost urgency--

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

Juliet, I fear you have no choice.

And given the circumstances, Juliet knows Rosaline is right. And off her utter hopelessness, we TIME CUT TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Where Isabella sits in a chair beside the empty throne. As we watch, Rosaline trails Lady Capulet and a sullen Juliet into the room as an ND SQUIRE announces:

ND SQUIRE

The Lady Capulet and her daughter, Juliet, your Grace.

And as Isabella nods graciously at her visitors, Rosaline included--

ISABELLA

Greetings, my Ladies. What business brings you to the Palace?

LADY CAPULET

My daughter's betrothal -- with the Crown's blessing, Juliet will be wed to Count Paris of Mantua.

Isabella smiles at Juliet, who barely makes the effort to smile back.

ISABELLA

Congratulations, Juliet.

JULIET

Thank you, your Grace.

The women look up, as Escalus enters--

ESCALUS

I'm sorry -- I didn't realize we had visitors.

LADY CAPULET

We were just leaving, my Prince.  
(then)  
Juliet?

JULIET

Yes, Mother.

And with that, Lady Capulet and Juliet turn to leave. And as Rosaline trails them out, she passes Escalus--

ESCALUS

Rosaline--

And her eyes flick up at the mention of her name -- the first direct acknowledgement anyone has given her since she walked into this room. And for just the briefest of moments, we can't help but think that Escalus has something else he wants to say, but Rosaline is already out the door, as we CUT TO...

EXT. STREETS OF VERONA - DAY

As the KNIGHTS of Verona fan out on their BLACK HORSES, spreading through the narrow stone streets on the hunt. And as we watch, a crowd of PEASANTS scatter -- leaving a terrified Romeo COWERING IN THE STREET. A towering KNIGHT on a midnight-black STALLION looms over him--

KNIGHT

Romeo Montague, you have broken the Prince's law by committing murder in the city of Verona, and are hereby sentenced to death without trial...

And we SMASH TO...

INT. PRISON TOWER - NIGHT

Where Romeo sits in SHACKLES, on the floor of a tiny, fetid cell. He leaps up as he hears FOOTSTEPS approaching, then looks deeply shocked when he sees--

ROMEO

(bowing)  
Your Grace. What brings you here?

ESCALUS

The truth -- that I have no wish to execute you for avenging Mercutio's death.

(then)  
And yet, the law is the law. And by that law, you should hang in the morning. And so tonight--

He takes a KEY from his pocket and slips it into the LOCK on Romeo's cell.

ESCALUS (CONT'D)

You will have escaped from this  
prison, and evaded my guards. Your  
cousin Benvolio waits for you outside.

Escalus pushes the cell door open as Romeo nods, understanding--

ROMEO

You are merciful, My Grace.

ESCALUS

That may be. But there is a price  
for my mercy: You must leave Verona,  
and never return.

ROMEO

I understand. And I thank you.

And off a grateful Romeo, we TIME CUT TO...

EXT. PRISON TOWER - NIGHT

As Benvolio and Romeo, both disguised in heavy cloaks, make  
their way from the tower into the city streets. And as Romeo  
suddenly takes a turn down a narrow sidestreet--

BENVOLIO

Where are you going? The gates of  
the city are just ahead--

ROMEO

I'm not leaving Verona, cousin. I'm  
going to find Juliet.

BENVOLIO

I'll tell her that you said goodbye.

ROMEO

Goodbye? Juliet is my wife. Where  
I go, she comes with me.

Benvolio reaches out, grabs Romeo by the arm--

BENVOLIO

Are you insane? The Prince just  
gave you mercy -- mercy that depends  
entirely on your ability to leave  
here as soon as you possibly can--

And Romeo nods, but--

ROMEO

You're a loyal friend, Benvolio, but  
I'm not leaving this city without  
Juliet at my side.

And just then, a pair of DRUNKS tumble out of a nearby tavern onto the street. They catch sight of Romeo and Benvolio--

DRUNK

Have you heard the terrible news?

And we SMASH TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/JULIET'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

WHERE JULIET CAPULET LIES DEAD. Her BODY limp and cold on her bed, as her mother Lady Capulet cradling her in her arms, SCREAMING and WAILING--

LADY CAPULET

NOOOOOOOO! No, no, no... My child,  
my child, my only child...

And she buries her face in Juliet's hair as Rosaline puts a tentative hand on her shoulder--

ROSALINE

My Lady--

Lady Capulet pulls back as if her flesh has just been burned.

LADY CAPULET

Don't. You. Touch. Me. *This is  
your fault somehow, I know it.*

She whips her head around to take in the Nurse and Livia, both sobbing softly in a corner of the room.

LADY CAPULET (CONT'D)

What is the point of having servants  
if they can't even keep you safe --  
you should be thrown into the streets,  
all of you. ALL OF YOU!

Lord Capulet enters, his own pain etched upon his face as he places a tender hand on his wife's shoulder--

LORD CAPULET

My love. She cannot stay here. We  
must take our Juliet to the tomb.

And off the savage anguish of a grieving mother, we CUT TO...

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Benvolio, at a corner table, nursing a TANKARD of ale and chatting amiably with a redheaded SLATTERN in a low-cut gown. And as we watch, the Friar enters the tavern, and approaches--

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I wasted my time searching elsewhere  
in the city -- I should have known  
to try the taverns first.

Benvolio digs into his doublet, comes up with a couple of  
florins. And as he hands them to his companion--

BENVOLIO

(regretfully)

Leave us.

She does, and the Friar takes a seat beside him.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Do you never stop to ask yourself  
why a man with such an enviable life  
spends most of his time in the back  
of taverns?

BENVOLIO

I spend my time in taverns because  
the people in taverns have no  
expectations of me.

Benvolio takes a deep drink of his ale.

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)

Except, apparently, for you.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I went to find Romeo at the prison,  
but I was told he escaped.

Which sounds highly unlikely. Benvolio nods.

BENVOLIO

Escalus showed us mercy. I tried to  
smuggle my cousin out of the city  
ahead of the hangman's noose, but  
when he learned *his wife* was dead,  
he ran off into the streets--

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I wouldn't call her that in public.

Benvolio shrugs. Drunk.

BENVOLIO

I'm not the one who married them.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

(urgently)

Benvolio, do you not believe I'm a  
loyal friend to the Montague family?

BENVOLIO

You mean to my Uncle? Of course I  
do -- aren't we all, on pain of death?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Then tell me, where has Romeo gone?

Benvolio pushes the now-empty tankard away. Shakes his head  
at the Friar--

BENVOLIO

In truth, I do not know. And I'll  
be punished for not knowing come  
tomorrow, no doubt -- but that's  
tomorrow. And tonight is tonight.

Across the room we see the redheaded slattern has been joined  
by a brunette FRIEND. And as they wave to a wobbly Benvolio--

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll excuse me...

And off a very worried Friar Lawrence, we CUT TO...

INT. CAPULET FAMILY TOMB - NIGHT

Where we take in the deep silence, and the pale, cool surfaces  
of the statues of the dead. Juliet's BODY has been laid out  
on a carved marble PLATFORM, looking nothing short of angelic  
in her virginal white dress. And as CANDLES FLICKER around  
her, we HEAR FOOTSTEPS -- someone is entering the tomb. And  
we turn to find COUNT PARIS, as he solemnly KNEELS and CROSSES  
HIMSELF, then picks up the FLOWERS he's brought with him,  
and begins to scatter them around his fiancée--

COUNT PARIS

Juliet. Sweet flower.

But his reverence doesn't last long, as soon, MORE FOOTSTEPS  
approach. Instinctively, Paris pulls his sword, calling out--

COUNT PARIS (CONT'D)

Who are you, and why are you here?

And we REVEAL Romeo, momentarily silenced at the sight of  
his dead love. But only for a moment, before unsheathing  
his own blade--

ROMEO

I'd ask you the same question.  
(then)  
I'm here to mourn my wife.

COUNT PARIS

Your wife? She's my fiancée--

ROMEO

I assure you, stranger, Juliet  
belonged to no man but me.

And at that, Paris starts advancing.

ROMEO (CONT'D)

Please.

(then)

I want no more death on my hands.

But that doesn't stop his adversary. And with a sharp CLANG  
of steel to punctuate his every word--

COUNT PARIS

Then why do you lie about the virtue  
of the dead?

ROMEO

It is not a lie!

And Romeo JABS HARD, STABBING DEEP into Paris's CHEST--

ROMEO (CONT'D)

Juliet is my WIFE!

As the larger man CRUMPLES onto the stone floor of the tomb.  
That was a DEATH BLOW, and both men know it. They're silent  
a beat, as Paris bleeds. Until finally--

COUNT PARIS

If you have any mercy, you'll lay me  
beside her.

And with that, Paris's eyes drift shut. Romeo turns back to  
Juliet, his sword tumbling from his hand--

ROMEO

*Oh, my love, my wife...*

And now we ANGLE ON JULIET'S NECK, where a VEIN has all but  
imperceptibly begun to PULSE. But in his grief, Romeo doesn't  
notice, slipping a VIAL from his cloak and opening it...

ROMEO (CONT'D)

*Here's to my love.*

And he downs the POISON in the vial in a single gulp, pulling  
Juliet in for a final kiss before he begins to CONVULSE--

ROMEO (CONT'D)

*And thus, with a kiss, I die.*

AND DIE ROMEO DOES -- the poison BURNING through his body  
until, suddenly, he is still.

And it's silent in the tomb, where there are now THREE CORPSES -- or so it would seem, as we start to DRIFT CLOSER to Paris's body, moving CLOSER, and CLOSER STILL, until, with a RAGGED GASP, PARIS'S EYES FLUTTER OPEN, and we REVERSE INTO HIS POV as he BEGINS TO REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS on the floor of the tomb...

And THROUGH PARIS'S EYES, we see MOVEMENT on the pedestal where Romeo and Juliet lie. And as he struggles to focus, we see what he sees: JULIET STIRS. And SITS UP, and stares numbly at her lover's body beside her. And we ANGLE BACK ON PARIS, as he works mightily to raise himself from the floor. And as he locks eyes with the still very-much-alive Juliet--

COUNT PARIS

Dear God. She lives.

The shock of it makes him fall back. And as Paris's head CRACKS sharply against the stone floor of the tomb, and the WORLD GOES DARK AROUND US, WE...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/ROSALINE AND LIVIA'S ROOM - MORNING

Where the sisters aren't in servants' clothes today, but in FORMAL MOURNING GARB. And it's clear as we join them that they've been arguing for quite some time--

ROSALINE

It was sudden, and the Nurse said I shouldn't try to stop her, and--

LIVIA

And the world believes that Romeo and Juliet were just a pair of youths, caught up in forbidden passion. But now you say they were man and wife? Bound by God, with you as their witness?

(then)

Would you ever have told me your secret, *sister*?

ROSALINE

Had they lived, you would have found out--

LIVIA

*That is not the point!*

ROSALINE

We should pray this marriage stays a secret -- if Lady Capulet ever learns I let her daughter marry a Montague...

(then)

I was only trying to protect you.

But it doesn't matter -- the trust that bound them so closely together has been broken. Livia moves to the door--

LIVIA

I'll take down the breakfast dishes.  
You can handle Lady Capulet.

And as she leaves, we're off Rosaline, realizing just how deeply hurt her sister must be...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/HALLWAY - DAY

As Livia makes her way down the hall, a tray of dirty BREAKFAST DISHES in her hands. At the end of hall is a heavy set of CARVED DOUBLE DOORS, which look quite a bit OLDER than the rest of the house. They're closed, giving the impression that they're rarely, if ever, used.

But as Livia turns to head down the SERVICE STAIRS, she hears a NOISE... and stops. And then there it is again: A soft, muffled MOAN.

Livia sets her tray down on a TABLE in the hall, approaches the doors, and HEARS another MOAN from within. Her curiosity piqued, she returns to the table and slides open its small DRAWER, removing a KEY, which she takes back to the doors, intending to unlock them... but she PUSHES GENTLY on them instead -- and indeed, there's no resistance. And as the unlocked doors swing open, we REVEAL...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/DESERTED WING - CONTINUOUS

A LARGE HALL: Dark, dusty, and clearly UNUSED. And as we watch, a curious Livia makes her way deeper inside, pausing to listen after each silent, tentative step. Suddenly, the door at the far end of the room SWINGS OPEN, and LADY CAPULET emerges, GASPING in shock at the sight of her niece--

LADY CAPULET

Oh!

LIVIA

My Lady!

LADY CAPULET

Dear God, what a fright -- what are you doing here, child?

LIVIA

I -- I heard a noise... and the door was open, so I... Forgive me, my Lady, I thought you were in your rooms.

(then)

What are you -- what is this place?

LADY CAPULET

This wing of the house is old, and unsafe -- but I come here when I need solitude. I apologize, if you heard me in my grief.

LIVIA

And I'm sorry if I disturbed you.

LADY CAPULET

It's all right. I was going back to my chambers. Come along.

And with that, Lady Capulet sweeps out of the room, Livia behind her -- but as she walks, we see her notice a BROAD TRAIL OF DISTURBED DUST that goes all the way across the room -- something was dragged deep into the unused wing of

House Capulet. Something big. And as Livia follows her mistress back into...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/HALLWAY - DAY

Lady Capulet LOCKS the heavy doors behind her and heads for the large MAIN STAIRWAY at the center of the hall, while Livia moves back to her breakfast tray and her service stairs. And as she picks up the tray, we can't help but notice the KEY still tucked into the palm of her hand as we CUT TO...

INT. HOUSE MONTAGUE/LORD MONTAGUE'S STUDY - DAY

Where Montague works, as a CLOAKED MAN slips into the study, unannounced. He pulls back the hood: It's the Friar.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

You summoned me, my Lord?

MONTAGUE

I did.

(then)

Sit, Friar Lawrence. Please.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I was on my way out of the city.

MONTAGUE

As well you should be.

(then)

But before you go, there's the matter of my money.

The Friar blinks -- this is a surprise.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Your... money, my Lord?

MONTAGUE

The money I paid you. To suggest marriage to my son. And to perform that marriage, when he requested it.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I did what you asked--

MONTAGUE

Did you?

Montague stands. And it's only now that we see how angry he is, and how terrifying anger in Lord Montague's eyes can be--

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)

I donated half my wine stores so our young Prince would throw a ball in his own honor. I sent my only son there early, because I knew that's when Capulet would send his only daughter. And when the seed of their passion was planted, I made sure my nephew would be my son's confidante -- a man who owes me, and could be controlled. And finally, I paid you to marry them.

(then)

And now, after all my hard work, has my House been strengthened by Capulet blood? Does my son have an heir representing the union of two great families? An heir who could someday take the throne?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

No. My Lord.

MONTAGUE

And why is that, Friar?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Because your son -- your son is dead, my Lord.

MONTAGUE

Yes. My son -- my only heir -- is dead. Because of a potion you gave that little Capulet whore.

(then)

Now, I don't claim to know your life before you came into the house of God, but let me tell you: Young lovers make terrible plans. Which is why their elders must plan for them -- and in that, I'm afraid, you failed most miserably. And so I must ask you to give me back what I gave you.

As we watch, Montague removes a DAGGER from his doublet and holds it up to the light streaming through his study's window. And as it glints in the sun--

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)

Unless, of course, you'd like me to take something else.

Which is all the threat the Friar needs to hear. He reaches into his cloak, pulls out a purseful of coins and tosses them onto Montague's desk.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

All I have in the world, my Lord.

Montague takes the purse without a moment's hesitation.

MONTAGUE

Thank you, Friar.

And then, settling back into his seat...

MONTAGUE (CONT'D)

If I were you, I'd wait until dark to leave the city. But once night falls, I wouldn't linger.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Yes, my Lord. Thank you, my Lord.

And with that, the Friar scuttles off. A beat, and then Montague tucks the purse into his doublet. As we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/LADY CAPULET'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Where Rosaline lays out a MOURNING DRESS AND VEIL, as Lady Capulet enters. She glares sternly at her niece--

LADY CAPULET

What are you doing in my chambers?

ROSALINE

I've come to prepare you for the funeral, my Lady.

(then)

The Housekeeper assigned it.

A beat, as Lady Capulet takes in Rosaline's dress.

LADY CAPULET

You must be happy, to be out of servant's clothes.

ROSALINE

I'm not happy for anything today.

And Rosaline begins to help her mistress into her clothes, Lady Capulet staring numbly at their images in the mirror...

LADY CAPULET

How can it be that my own daughter is dead, while you and your sister continue to live?

ROSALINE

I do not know, my Lady.

LADY CAPULET

It is generous of me, to allow you  
to attend my daughter's funeral.

Rosaline stops what she's doing. Meets her aunt's eyes in  
the glass--

ROSALINE

It's no more than Juliet would have  
wanted.

(catching herself)

My Lady.

Lady Capulet looks back at her. Eyes cold. Something broken  
inside her. And then, quietly--

LADY CAPULET

Your sister is so gracious. But  
you? You'll never appreciate  
everything I've done for you.

And as we watch, something breaks within Rosaline, too --  
the thin veil of propriety keeping her emotions in check  
falling away as she smoothes the black lace of the dress  
over her aunt's sharp shoulders...

ROSALINE

(just as quietly)

And what, exactly, have you done for  
us? If fate made us servants, there  
are far kinder mistresses than you.  
You keep us in this House not out of  
*kindness*, but out of jealousy -- of  
a woman who died years ago, and was  
happier than you'll ever be.

LADY CAPULET

Your mother was a worthless jade.

ROSALINE

Because she married the Capulet  
brother you were in love with? But  
wouldn't marry, because you wanted  
Lord Capulet's title, if not the man  
who came with it?

And there it is: The truth. Lady Capulet's face twists  
into an ugly sneer as she speaks, slowly and clearly...

LADY CAPULET

If you think I can't make your lives  
a thousand times worse than anything  
you've suffered so far, you have  
less imagination than I thought.

(then)

Mark my words, sweet Rosaline. The  
worst is yet to come.

(and finally)

Go now. I'll finish dressing myself.

And off Rosaline, realizing what a grave mistake she's just  
committed, we TIME CUT TO:

EXT. VERONA CEMETERY - DAY

As a LARGE PROCESSION of CAPULET FAMILY MEMBERS makes its  
way through the CRYPTS and STATUES of this hauntingly  
beautiful Renaissance cemetery. Led by a FLAGBEARER carrying  
the CAPULET COAT OF ARMS are the Archbishop and a phalanx of  
Capulet COUSINS, who shoulder a BIER containing Juliet's  
silk-shrouded BODY. Behind the bier walk Lord and Lady  
Capulet, Rosaline and Livia, and perhaps 15-20 other ND FAMILY  
MEMBERS, all dressed in black as they snake their way to the  
entrance of the CAPULET FAMILY TOMB, where the rest of VERONAN  
SOCIETY -- Escalus, Isabella, Lord Montague and his EQUALLY  
LARGE FAMILY (but not, notably, Benvolio) among them -- await.

And as we watch, a FIGURE weaves its way though the cemetery  
from the opposite side of the procession, joining the Montague  
ranks. Here, finally, is Benvolio -- and the DEATH GLARE  
Lord Montague shoots him tells us they haven't seen each  
other since Romeo's suicide. And as Benvolio breaks his  
uncle's gaze, and the funeral procession comes to a solemn  
stop before them, we TIME CUT TO...

EXT. VERONA CEMETERY - DAY

Where Escalus now stands before a sheet-draped STATUE at the  
mouth of the Capulet Family Tomb. The Capulet and Montague  
FAMILIES stand front and center among the assembled, the  
tension between the two camps barely kept in check as Escalus  
addresses the crowd--

ESCALUS

To mark the grave of Juliet, fairest  
flower of our city's youth, Lord  
Montague has generously commissioned  
a statue as a gift from his family  
to the Capulets--

LORD CAPULET

(under his breath)

Aye, to make his own family seem  
important.

And as the few Capulets who caught this MURMUR appreciatively, Escalus continues--

ESCALUS

In his sincere hope that the love  
between his son and their daughter  
will usher in a new era of peace.

And we're CLOSE ON BENVOLIO, as he notices Rosaline sitting with the Capulets, clearly a member of this noble family --- for today, at least. And as we watch, she notices him looking, and gestures to the sleeve of her formal dress as if to say, "see?" as Escalus continues...

ESCALUS (CONT'D)

I am aware that all of you gathered  
here -- and elsewhere in our fair  
city -- owe allegiance to one family  
or another. I am aware that it is  
Montague or Capulet who provides a  
job, who protects a business, who  
offers a favor. But I wish today  
that we as Veronans might put down  
our arms in hope, as well as grief,  
and I know that it is with that  
sentiment that fair Juliet will stand  
watch over us all, for evermore.

And with that, he nods to his Squire, who YANKS at the cloth that shrouds the statue. And as it DROPS, the crowd GASPS at what it sees beneath: A STATUE OF JULIET, in all her beauty... BUT SOMEONE HAS SCRAWLED THE WORD "HARLOT" IN BRIGHT RED PAINT ACROSS JULIET CAPULET'S SILENT MARBLE FACE.

LADY CAPULET

(a shriek)

*What is the meaning of this?!*

And she LUNGES at Montague, Escalus's pleas for peace dissolving into the ether as the fragile is truce SHATTERED and the FUNERAL ERUPTS INTO A BRAWL, Montagues and Capulets TURNING ON ONE ANOTHER in a brutal flurry of SWORDS and STEEL. The NOBLEWOMEN SCATTER, whisked away by their GUARDS as the fight grows BIGGER and BLOODIER, ripples of violence spreading out from the epicenter of the tomb...

And we're CLOSE ON ROSALINE, as she searches frantically for Livia in the melee--

ROSALINE

LIVIA? LIVIA!

But her sister is nowhere to be seen -- and now, the only people around Rosaline are ROUGH-HEWN PEASANTS, beating the ever-loving shit out of each other in what has blossomed

into a FULL-BLOWN RIOT. It's not safe, and Rosaline takes off, RACING along the narrow passageways between the CRYPTS as we catch HORRIFYING GLIMPSES of the BANDS OF MONTAGUES AND CAPULETS SLAUGHTERING EACH OTHER ALL AROUND HER...

And suddenly, she feels a HAND wrap around her WRIST, and she's PULLED TO THE SIDE OF ONE OF THE CRYPTS, looking up to see A HOODED MAN. And as she SCREAMS, he pulls he into...

INT. VERONA CEMETERY/CRYPT - CONTINUOUS

Where the man slips off his hood -- and we see that he is ESCALUS. And he and Rosaline stand there a beat, just BREATHING, until...

ESCALUS

Stay with me. My men will find us.

ROSALINE

I can't -- my sister--

And she moves to leave. He reaches out, holds her back--

ESCALUS

Is on her own, wherever she may be.  
But you? Right now? Are safe.

ROSALINE

I *can't*--

ESCALUS

Stay here, Rosaline.  
(then, softly)  
If not for yourself, then because I  
can't bear to think what might happen  
to you in these streets.

Their faces just inches apart now. And then we HEAR the sounds of GUARDS approaching and the VOICE of...

SQUIRE MATTEO (O.S.)

Your Grace!

And we know the Prince's men are upon them. And as Rosaline takes a last glance at Escalus, and then RUNS, we...

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/SERVANTS' QUARTERS - DAY

As Rosaline bursts into the house, out of breath, still fresh from the streets. She calls out--

ROSALINE  
Livia? *Livia*--

And mercifully, Livia appears.

LIVIA  
I'm here. I'm fine.

ROSALINE  
Oh, thank God...

And as Rosaline and Livia embrace, she takes her sister by the hand and drags her into...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/ROSALINE AND LIVIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where Rosaline starts opening drawers and piling their meager belongings on the bed. Livia looks on, alarmed--

ROSALINE  
I couldn't tell you at the funeral.  
But we need to leave Verona. Now.

LIVIA  
What? Why?

ROSALINE  
Lady Capulet has lost her mind --  
she blames me for Juliet's death,  
and plans to take out her anger by  
making our lives here even more  
miserable than they already are.

She takes the NECKLACES from their hiding place in the wall.

ROSALINE (CONT'D)  
Pack your things -- I'll go to the  
merchant's and see what we can get  
for the these. We'll need all the  
money we can get our hands on.

LIVIA  
And where, exactly, are we going?

ROSALINE  
(details)  
Padua? Mantua? I don't know --  
it's not important.

Livia blinks at her.

LIVIA

Not important? Sister, what of all  
your plans? My husband, your nuns...

ROSALINE

Forget your marriage and my abbey;  
we have to leave now, while the city  
is still in chaos--  
(then, thinking)  
If we're lucky, they'll think we've  
been killed in the riots.

LIVIA

And when Verona thinks we're dead,  
then... what? We beg in the streets?  
Apply to be servants in some  
foreigner's home?

ROSALINE

I don't know, but we can't stay here!

Livia takes her necklace off the bed. Looks hard at Rosaline.

LIVIA

I can. Stay here.  
(then)  
I don't want to start over in Padua,  
or Mantua, or even Venice. What I  
want is what you always claimed to  
want for me: a good marriage, to a  
good man, who'll take care of us  
both. I want to be a wife, Rosaline --  
a wife, and a mother, and a Capulet.  
Here. In Verona. My home.

And as she wraps her necklace back up, and tucks it back  
into the wall--

LIVIA (CONT'D)

If you want to run away, I'll tell  
them any lie you want me to. But  
you're going to be running alone.

And as that lands on Rosaline, we CUT TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/THRONE ROOM - DAY

Escalus sits on the throne, as Isabella paces before him...

ISABELLA

Now that Montague has lost his sole  
heir?

(MORE)

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

And Capulet his chance at Paris's fortune? I know you worry about threats from outside the city walls, but I beg you, brother, to keep your focus close to home.

ESCALUS

I worry about threats from outside the city because I've *been* outside the city -- And trust me, if we're attacked by the Medicis, or the Papal States, the petty squabbles of local families will mean nothing.

ISABELLA

I saw no petty squabble in the streets today -- Escalus, *Verona is burning!*

He glares at her -- that was far too close to overstepping her bounds.

ESCALUS

And what exactly would you have me do?

And off the Prince and his sister, ready to hatch a plan, we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/ROSALINE AND LIVIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Where Rosaline and Livia read in silence, the chasm between them far wider than the physical space between their bodies in their narrow shared bed. There's a KNOCK at the door--

LIVIA

Come in.

A HOUSEKEEPER enters with a parchment SCROLL.

HOUSEKEEPER

From the Palace. For Rosaline.

Off Rosaline's puzzled expression, we do a tiny TIME CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/ROSALINE AND LIVIA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Where the sisters are now alone, as Rosaline reads the scroll--

ROSALINE

Rosaline Capulet is requested by His Grace Prince Escalus for an audience in the throne room of the Royal Palace. At once.

LIVIA  
You can't go to the Palace now --  
the streets aren't safe!

ROSALINE  
(pointing)  
It says "at once."  
(then)  
I'll be fine.

Which is a lie, and they both know it.

LIVIA  
At least let me come with you--

ROSALINE  
You just said yourself, the streets  
aren't safe.  
(then)  
I'll be fine.

And off a frightened-but-determined Rosaline, we CUT TO...

EXT. SQUARE OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL - NIGHT

There's a PILE OF DEBRIS burning in the center of the square tonight, pieces of TRASH and remnants of LOOTING scattered all around. As we watch, Friar Lawrence emerges from the chapel in his HOODED ROBE and, after ascertaining he's alone, begins to cross the square. Something catches his eye -- something illuminated by the burning debris. The Friar moves towards one of the WALLS that face the square, and now we see what he sees, painted hastily across the smooth stones:

KILL THE MONTAGUES

KILL THE CAPULETS

RISE UP

It's the SAME PAINT THAT DEFACED JULIET'S STATUE. And as we watch, the Friar reaches out with his finger to test it: STILL WET. And OFF the Friar, disturbed, we MOVE TO...

EXT. STREETS OF VERONA - NIGHT

As Rosaline makes her way through the darkened streets alone. The marks of the day's riots are all around us -- we can still make out the distant sounds of FIGHTING in the streets, the flickers of TRASH FIRES reflected here and there in the windows. But the street Rosaline is on seems deserted, and she walks briskly, head down, seemingly alone... until we see a SHADOW emerge from a doorway across from her as she passes.

Rosaline doesn't see him at first, but we do -- A GREAT HULK OF A MAN, in torn breeches and a filthy leather vest. He's sweaty, and bloody, like he's been brawling all day. We'll call him TRUCCIO. And now Rosaline HEARS him, his footsteps drawing CLOSER and CLOSER behind her as she hurries down the street, her steady gait giving way to a nervous shuffle as he draws ever nearer, until the moment she begins to RUN and he reaches out a soot-smearred arm, catching a handful of her clothing and YANKING it until she FALLS onto the cobblestones.

Rosaline SHRIEKS.

TRUCCIO  
Quiet, now. *Quiet--*

And she's struggling against him, trying to push him off of her, but it's hopeless. Trucchio flips her over like she's nothing more than a child's rag doll--

ROSALINE  
Please, no. NO!

He holds her down in the muck of the street with a single hand as he peers down at her.

ROSALINE (CONT'D)  
Let me go. Please. PLEASE.

TRUCCIO  
I know you. You're a Capulet.

And he grabs a fistful of her hair, pulls her face close to his--

TRUCCIO (CONT'D)  
Only question is, are you a harlot,  
like your fancy dead cousin?

ROSALINE  
Don't do this -- I beg you, and the  
Prince commanded...

He pushes her back into the muck.

TRUCCIO  
Screw the Prince -- if I'm going to  
starve this winter, I'll have some  
fun before I go.

And with that, he starts unbuckling his BELT. Rosaline SCREAMS again, trying to hit him hard enough to make him stop as his hand slides up around her THROAT--

TRUCCIO (CONT'D)

Make any noise, and it'll be the  
last noise you make.

And in response, Rosaline just WHIMPERS -- seemingly resigned to her fate. Because in truth? There's not much she can do. And as Truccio pushes up her skirt, Rosaline goes limp, her eyes shut tight, just hoping to make it through this with her life...

But then we HEAR the UNSHEATHING OF A SWORD --

TRUCCIO (CONT'D)

Piss off, I'm busy--

And a MAN'S VOICE--

MAN'S VOICE

Get the hell off her, or I'll kill  
you myself!

And Rosaline is TOSSED ASIDE into the gutter. And we see what she sees -- that ANOTHER MAN has joined Truccio in the dark street. And this new figure WHACKS at her assailant with the broadside of his sword, FORCING him to the ground, then KICKS him hard in the gut, ONCE and then TWICE, and then a THIRD TIME, until Truccio starts to VOMIT in the street. The figure strides towards Rosaline, offering her a hand. And as she looks up, to find the face of her savior--

ROSALINE

You.

We REVERSE to REVEAL BENVOLIO MONTAGUE. And with that, we...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. STREETS OF VERONA - NIGHT

As Benvolio pulls Rosaline to her feet. And as soon as our distressed damsel and her savior get a good look at each other, the goodwill between them evaporates into the night air--

ROSALINE

(ugh)  
You.

And as she attempts to straighten out her clothes--

BENVOLIO

Aren't you the least bit grateful,  
Capulet? After all, I did just save  
you--

He glances over at Truccio, stumbling off into the streets.

BENVOLIO (CONT'D)

From *that*.

And we can see her tiny shudder, as she thinks of what almost just happened, but still, she's unwilling to let Benvolio see anything that might smack of weakness--

ROSALINE

I can only imagine how you expect me  
to express my gratitude.

Benvolio shrugs.

BENVOLIO

A woman who'd walk the streets of  
Verona alone after dark? Forgive me  
if I thought you might be... open-  
minded.

ROSALINE

That I might throw my arms around  
you? Let you take me, right here in  
the street? I know you're used to  
your tavern girls--

That touches a nerve. He glares at her--

BENVOLIO

Those girls work damn hard for their  
money. And most of them are better  
people than you'll ever be.

ROSALINE

Says the man who got my cousin killed.  
(re: the wreckage  
around them)  
All of this is your fault; don't  
think I don't know it.

BENVOLIO

How on earth do you blame me?

ROSALINE

If you'd calmed everyone down instead  
of fanning the flames -- or even if  
you'd killed Tybalt yourself, instead  
of letting Romeo do it -- none of  
this would've happened. Our city  
wouldn't be in flames. Neither of  
our families would have lost their  
heirs.

BENVOLIO

Of course, it's my fault Montague  
and Capulet only managed to squeeze  
out one child apiece. And if I had  
only thought to sacrifice my own  
life--

(then)

Did you never think you could've  
kept them from being wed in the first  
place? Maybe all this is on you.

And as that lands on Rosaline, Benvolio slips his FLASK from  
his doublet and takes a swig. Rosaline sneers, clearly  
relieved not to have to think about his accusation--

ROSALINE

Drunk as usual, I see.

BENVOLIO

What does a girl like you understand  
of why a man might drink?

ROSALINE

Apparently, I'm too stupid and boring  
to understand much of anything, my  
Lord.

She attempts to brush some of the mud off the dress,  
straightens her hair--

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

So I'll not burden you with my  
presence. Thank you for saving me.  
And good night.

And with that, she sweeps off, alone. Benvolio watches her go, calling out after a beat--

BENVOLIO  
You're welcome--

And off Benvolio, we MOVE TO...

INT. HOUSE CAPULET/DESERTED WING - DAY

As the HEAVY DOUBLE DOORS swing shut behind the Nurse, and she silently makes her way across the darkened room, carrying a LANTERN, a roll of MUSLIN, and a large PLATTER of FOOD. And just as we wonder what, exactly, might be going on here, we're back at...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

As Rosaline, muddy and bedraggled, enters to find Lord Capulet waiting for her. And as soon as he sees her clothes and hair--

LORD CAPULET  
Rosaline, what's happened to you?

ROSALINE  
Nothing, Uncle. I'm fine.  
(then, realizing)  
What are you doing here?

LORD CAPULET  
Waiting to see the Prince. Same as you.

She tilts her head. Wary, because--

ROSALINE  
Except you know why he summoned me.  
Us.

LORD CAPULET  
Aye. I do.

ROSALINE  
And why did he?

Capulet looks at his niece. Whatever it is he has to say, it isn't going to be easy.

LORD CAPULET  
Let me ask you, niece -- are you  
loyal to our House?  
(MORE)

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)

I know your Aunt hasn't always treated you well, and I never stepped in, though I probably should have. But be honest with me now: Are you still loyal to the name of Capulet?

ROSALINE

I am, Uncle.

LORD CAPULET

And are you loyal to Verona?

ROSALINE

Of course, my Lord -- what is this about?

LORD CAPULET

I've always known you were as intelligent as you are headstrong -- perhaps one trait begets the other. So I hope you'll understand the truth of what I tell you: Our city's enemies are looming at our gates, and it's time to put aside local rivalries for the greater good.

He looks at her, as if to judge her response. And as Rosaline holds his gaze, we see a coldness in Capulet we may not have noticed before--

LORD CAPULET (CONT'D)

Remember that, as we go inside.

And with that, he turns to leave. And as a puzzled Rosaline follows, we MOVE TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Where Escalus waits on the throne. Isabella seated off to the side, and Matteo the Squire standing at attention. And as Lord Capulet and Rosaline enter, we make out who else stands in the Throne Room: Lord Montague and Benvolio. Shocked, Rosaline and Benvolio eye one another -- suddenly nervous, like calves culled from the herd. Rosaline looks over at her uncle--

ROSALINE

What is the meaning of this?

And there's that coldness again. Because this Lord Capulet? Is not someone you want to mess with. He looks sharply at his niece--

LORD CAPULET

Hush, girl.

And with that, the four of them -- Capulets and Montagues -- turn to face their ruler.

ESCALUS

By Royal Decree, I, Escalus, Royal Prince and sole Sovereign of the city of Verona, do herefore order the marriage of Rosaline Capulet and Benvolio Montague, to cement their two families as allies, not rivals. If Montague and Capulet cannot coexist as two, they must become one -- our city's survival depends upon it.

And we look to Rosaline, who stands there, stunned. As though the fabric of her very life had just been torn away somehow. She doesn't speak -- just stares silently at the Prince, who avoids her gaze...

And now we move to Benvolio, his face set in a scowl as he opens his mouth to protest, then shuts it again. He turns his eyes to Montague--

BENVOLIO

Uncle. *Her?*

Montague responds through gritted teeth--

MONTAGUE

You consented to marrying a Capulet maid.

BENVOLIO

A maid, yes. But not this... *harpy*...

ROSALINE

(softly)

And I never consented at all.

LORD CAPULET

You'll do as you're told.

A beat, as his words slam into her. And then--

ROSALINE

No, my Lord. I will not.

And with that, Rosaline is up, and out, striding from the Throne Room as Lord Capulet calls after her--

LORD CAPULET

Rosaline! Come back here!

But she ignores him. Bursting out into...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Where the walls are thick with PORTRAITS and TAPESTRIES of the Royal Family over the centuries -- PATRIARCH after PATRIARCH; dutiful WIFE after dutiful WIFE. And as Rosaline stalks down the hall, bending to no man's will, we CUT BACK TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

As Escalus stands up from his throne and RUSHES AFTER HER.

ISABELLA

Escalus--

But her brother pays her no mind, following Rosaline out into...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

And as the Prince gives chase, we start getting COOL, STYLISTIC FLASHES of what we quickly realize is the PAST...

EXT. ROYAL PALACE/COURTYARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

Where a YOUNG ESCALUS, 13 or 14, chases a YOUNG ROSALINE through the courtyard. She's laughing, he's laughing -- and as he catches her, he holds her in his arms like a precious thing he never wants to break, and they're still for a beat until he pulls her towards him for a fumbling, awkward KISS...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

As Rosaline keeps moving, and we SMASH TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/WINE CELLAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Where a slightly-older-but-STILL-TEENAGED Rosaline and Escalus are KISSING HUNGRILY against the racks of barrels, their hands roaming each other's bodies, their empty cups of wine scattered on the floor behind them. And he lifts her, and places her atop one of the wine barrels, her legs wrapping around him, their kisses growing deeper still...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

As Escalus follows, and we SMASH TO...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/STABLES - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Rosaline and Escalus, 17 and NAKED in a bed of straw. And as they lie entwined, he strokes her hair, and whispers...

ESCALUS  
I love you, Rosaline Capulet.

ROSALINE  
And I love you, my Prince.

ESCALUS  
More than anything.

ROSALINE  
More than anything.

And they start to kiss, A PAIR OF TEENAGERS JUST AS IN LOVE  
AS ROMEO AND JULIET EVER WERE...

INT. ROYAL PALACE/CHAPEL - NIGHT

As Rosaline BURSTS IN and collapses, SOBBING, on one of the  
pews. A beat, and Escalus arrives, runs to her--

ESCALUS  
My Lady... my Rosaline...

But at his touch, she leaps up and away. And as they circle  
each other, eyes locked, nothing else existing in this  
world...

ROSALINE  
Don't call me that. Don't talk to  
me like you care--

ESCALUS  
Of course I *care*--

ROSALINE  
Then how can you do this?

ESCALUS  
Because the Medicis are expanding  
their army in Florence. Because the  
Papal States grow more powerful by  
the day. Because even Venice would  
conquer us, given half a chance--

ROSALINE  
And Montague would have your head on  
a spike given less of a chance than  
that. And don't think my Uncle is  
better--

ESCALUS  
I'm no fool. But we *cannot be a  
city divided*. Whatever the price.

She shakes her head, unable to believe--

ROSALINE

So you'd sell me off to a man I hate.

ESCALUS

*Sell you off?* Are you too blind to see that I'm trying to *help* you? Give you back what you've lost, restore your nobility, let you live your life in some kind of comfort?

And now Rosaline LAUGHS--

ROSALINE

You think that's what I want? *What I lost?* When I was just a girl too young and stupid to see the bars of the cage I'd been raised in? I don't want what I lost. I don't want comfort -- I don't even know what comfort is anymore.

ESCALUS

What do you want?

ROSALINE

*You never even said goodbye.*

ESCALUS

I begged to. My father didn't give me a chance--

(then)

Rosaline. I would give you anything, anything in this world to make you happy. Just tell me -- *what do you want?*

And with that, Rosaline Capulet loses all sense of reason, and propriety, and reserve, and she moves towards Escalus and KISSES HIM. Long. Deep. Like every emotion she's kept tamped down within herself is coming to the surface, all at once. And he's KISSING HER BACK with just as much abandon, pulling her to him and running his hands up and down her body... They don't speak. They don't come up for air. Everything is this, in this moment -- until finally, violently, Rosaline PUSHES HIM AWAY, barely able to catch their breaths... and that's when they notice...

BENVOLIO. WHO'S BEEN STANDING THERE FOR GOD ONLY KNOWS HOW LONG. SEEING GOD ONLY KNOWS HOW MUCH.

And off this triangle, and all the tension, and excitement, and sheer high drama that awaits them in the land of Fair Verona, we...

END OUR SHOW