

Romeo and Juliet



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Romeo and Juliet

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— About — *Shakespeare*

William Shakespeare, regarded as the greatest writer in the English language, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England (around 23 April 1564). He was the third of eight children born to John and Mary Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was a poet, playwright and dramatist. He is often known as England's national poet and the 'Bard of Avon'. Thirty-eight plays, one hundred and fifty-four sonnets, two long narrative poems and several other poems are attributed to him. Shakespeare's plays have been translated into every major existent language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.



Romeo: He is born into the house of Montague. He falls in love with Juliet, a Capulet, and secretly marries her. He is intelligent, impulsive, immature and a devoted friend. He is caught up in a violent feud between his family and the Capulets.



Juliet: She is the only child of the Capulets. She is beautiful and obedient. She appears immature, but gradually becomes more mature and shows tremendous courage as the play progresses.

Friar Lawrence: He is kind and always ready with a plan. He is friend to both Romeo and Juliet,



and he marries them in secret. He helps Romeo flee, and also has knowledge about various mystical potions and herbs.

Paris: He is a suitor to Juliet and is preferred by the Capulets. He is wealthy and handsome, but self-absorbed.



Romeo and Juliet

Many years ago in Verona, Italy, there lived two noble families who were engaged in a bitter feud: the Montagues and the Capulets. From the masters of the house to the servants, they



would all get into terrible fights with each other.

Montague had only one son, Romeo, and Capulet was similarly blessed with one daughter, Juliet.

One day, the servants from the Capulet family were walking by when they saw that two servants from the Montague household were coming their way. So, one of the Capulet servants told his friend that he would show his thumb to the Montague servants, which would







infuriate them. Needless to say, the Montague servants did not take the showing of the thumb lightly and soon they were all engaged in a fight in the middle of the street.

Benvolio, Romeo's cousin, on seeing the servants fighting, went



over and tried to stop them. But Tybalt, a member of the Capulet household, who was passing, tried to pick a fight with him. Benvolio explained, “I just want to make peace.” To which Tybalt replied curtly, “Talk of peace! I hate the word as I hate all Montagues! Here, take this . . . coward!”



But before Tybalt could attack Benvolio, officers of Prince Escalus, the ruler of Verona, intervened and stopped the two families fighting. Prince Escalus was getting rather tired of these frequent bloodbaths on his streets and he immediately issued a declaration that if he ever caught either family involved in a fight again, he would make sure they paid with their lives. So for a while, both families managed to live with each other in peace.





One day, Benvolio found Romeo looking rather pale and sad. He knew that his cousin was troubled by the woman of his dreams, Rosaline, who was not interested in him at all. Benvolio tried his best to get Romeo to forget about her, but he refused to listen.



Meanwhile, in another part of the town, Lord Capulet was making arrangements for a party at his house. He had invited, among other guests, a young man by the name of Paris, who was in love with his daughter, Juliet. He handed





the list to one of his servants and asked him to invite all the people mentioned on that piece of paper. However, Capulet did not realise that his servant was illiterate.

Not knowing what to do, the servant walked aimlessly down the road, when suddenly, he saw two men approaching. He asked



them if they could tell him what was written on the piece of paper so that he could complete his task as soon as possible. Romeo and Benvolio saw that it was a list of all the invitees to Capulet's party, and Benvolio had an idea. After they explained the task to the servant and he was gone, Benvolio



turned to Romeo and said that they should go to the party and meet some ladies. Benvolio was confident that once Romeo had met someone else, he would soon forget about Rosaline.

At first, Romeo was not sure whether they should go, considering the bitter animosity between the two families. But





Benvolio, along with their friend, Mercutio, was able to convince Romeo, telling him that since it was a masquerade party, no one would know their true identities.

At the party, Romeo saw Juliet for the first time. Her father had brought her along



so that she could spend some time with Paris and get to know him. Romeo soon forgot about Rosaline and fell in love with Juliet.

Tybalt, who was also at the party, recognised Romeo and was furious that a Montague had

come into his house. He wanted to attack and kill Romeo at once. Seeing Tybalt dash towards one of his guests, Lord Capulet came before him and asked him what he was up to. On being told that Romeo had come to the party uninvited, Capulet merely told Tybalt to restrain himself. He







commented that Romeo had not misbehaved in any way and he did not want any blood spilt in his house. Tybalt was not willing to listen to reason, but Capulet managed to hold him back.

Meanwhile, Romeo wanted to know who the fair maiden

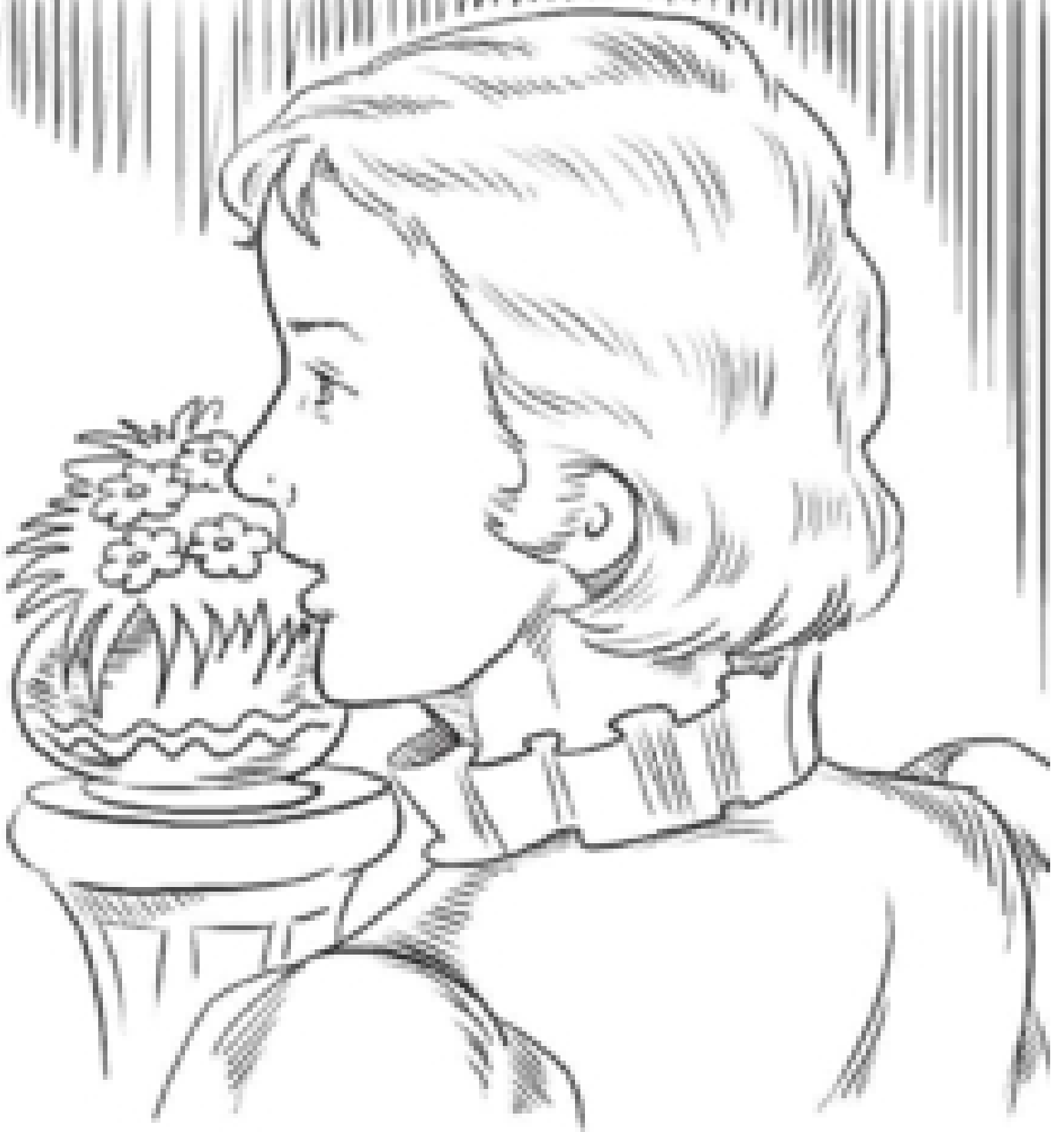


was that had captured his heart. Slowly he moved towards Juliet and managed to pull her away from the crowd. But as he started talking to her, Juliet's maid arrived and informed her that her mother was looking for her. Romeo, who still did not know



Juliet's true identity, asked the maid who her mother was, to which she replied, "Her mother is the lady of the house."

Romeo was crestfallen. He exclaimed to himself, "She is a Capulet!" Unable to bear the weight of this knowledge, he drifted away from the party. Juliet, seeing Romeo leave, asked



her maid who the young man was, because she had fallen in love with him. On being told that

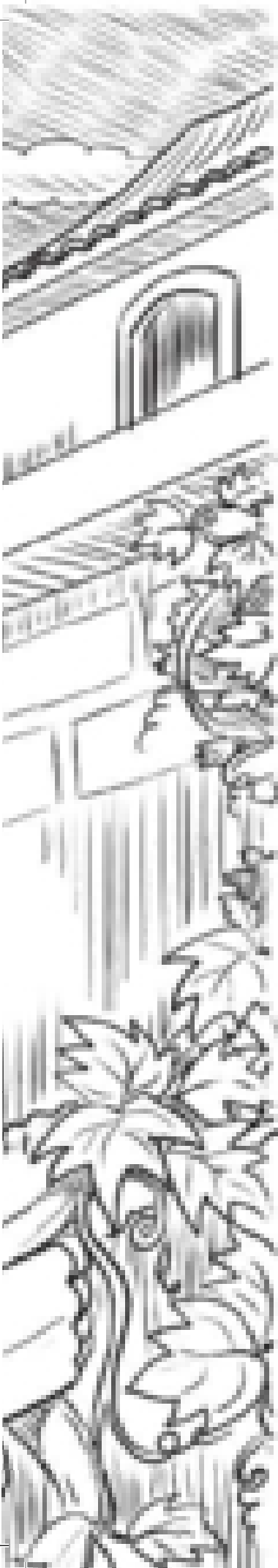


he was a Montague, the only son of her great enemy, she cried, “My only love has sprung from my only hate!”

Unable to stay away from Juliet, Romeo climbed the wall of the orchard at the back of the Capulet house. As he stood





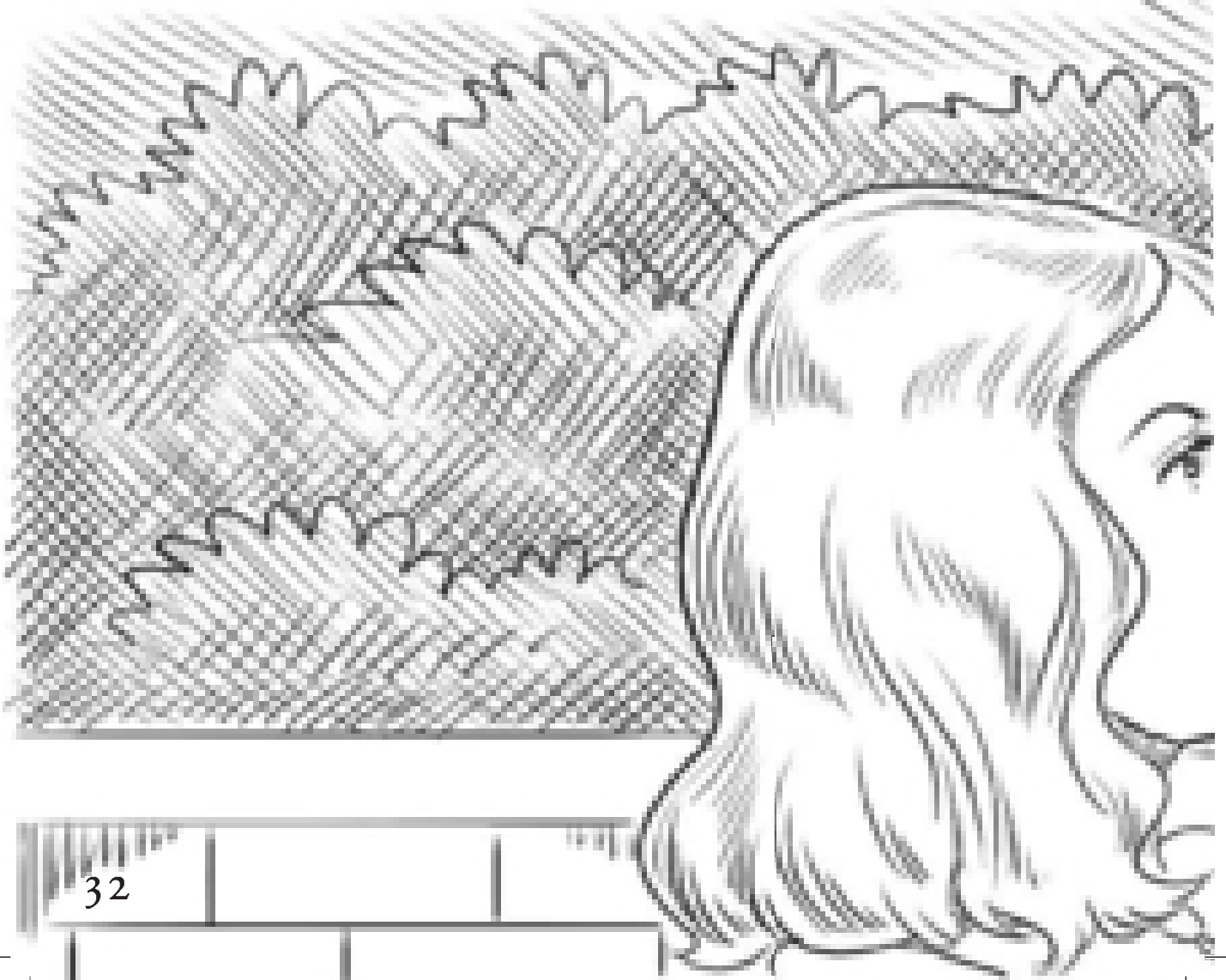


thinking about his newfound love, he saw her on the balcony. Soon, he heard her say, “O Romeo, Romeo! Why do you have to be Romeo? O, be of some other name! What is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet!”

Romeo now knew that Juliet had fallen in love with him, and unable to restrain himself any longer, he came out of the bushes and said, “Call me Love, or by any other

name. Henceforth I shall never be Romeo again!”

They talked through the night, expressing their love for each other, and soon they realised they would not be able to live without each other. But time was ticking and dawn was







fast approaching. If Romeo were found, he would surely be killed, so they bade farewell, promising to meet again.

Romeo could not contain his excitement and immediately went to Friar Lawrence's chambers



to make arrangements for his marriage to Juliet.

At the same time, Mercutio called on Benvolio to find out if Romeo had returned home the previous night. He had not, and Mercutio was told that Tybalt

had left a message for Romeo, challenging him to a duel. Benvolio and Mercutio set off in search of Romeo.

After leaving Friar Lawrence's chambers, Romeo went to meet Juliet's maid. He told her that she must tell Juliet to go to



Friar Lawrence's church that afternoon. Juliet's maid hurried back to convey Romeo's message, and as planned, Romeo and Juliet got married that same day.

It was late in the evening when Benvolio and Mercutio finally found Romeo walking





towards them, beaming from ear to ear. They asked him where he had been all day, but suddenly, Tybalt came on the scene and wanted to exchange blows with Romeo. But now that he was married to Tybalt's cousin, Juliet, Romeo had no intention of getting into a fight





with him. But Mercutio, not knowing the truth, thought that Romeo was afraid to fight the evil Capulet, so drew his own sword and challenged Tybalt to a duel. Romeo tried desperately to stop them, but in the confusion, Tybalt thrust his sword and stabbed Mercutio to death.

Romeo was enraged by what had happened. He told Tybalt,



“Either you, or me, or both, must go with Mercutio.” And they started to fight. After some time, Romeo killed Tybalt. Benvolio

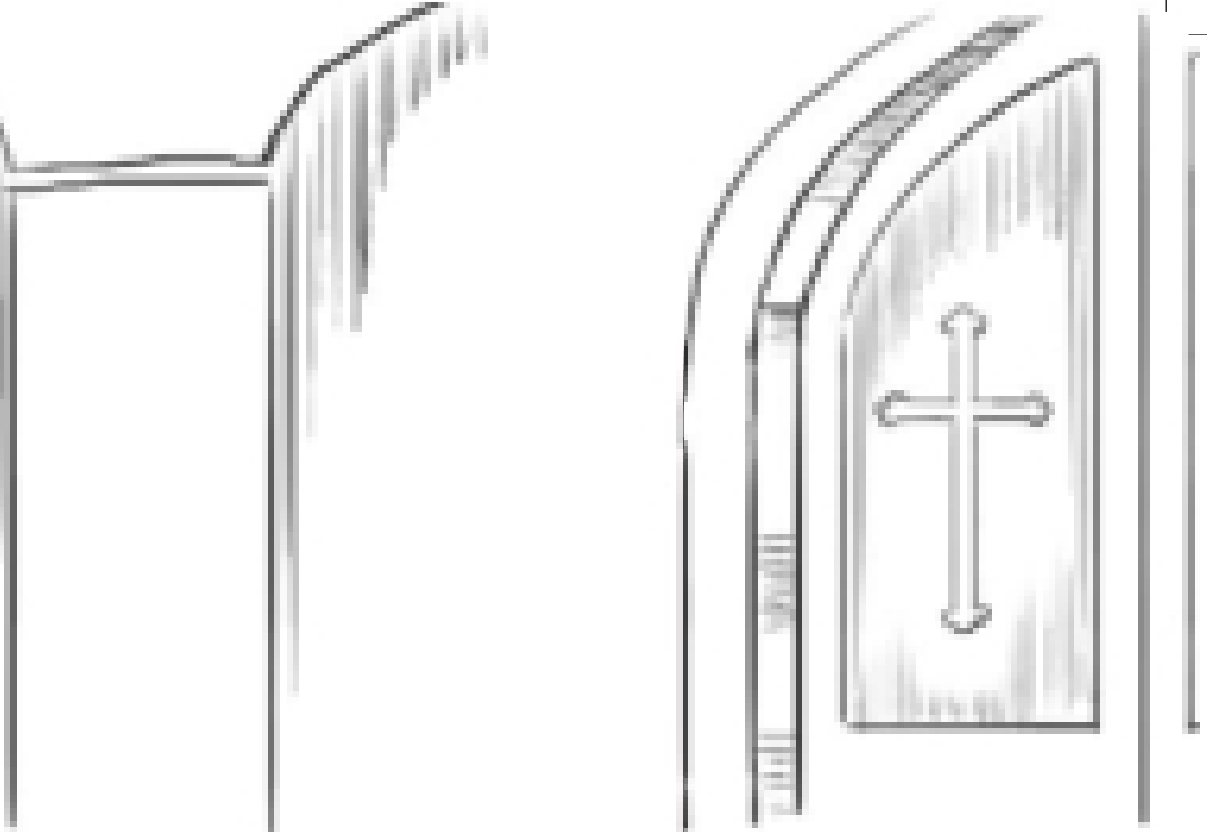
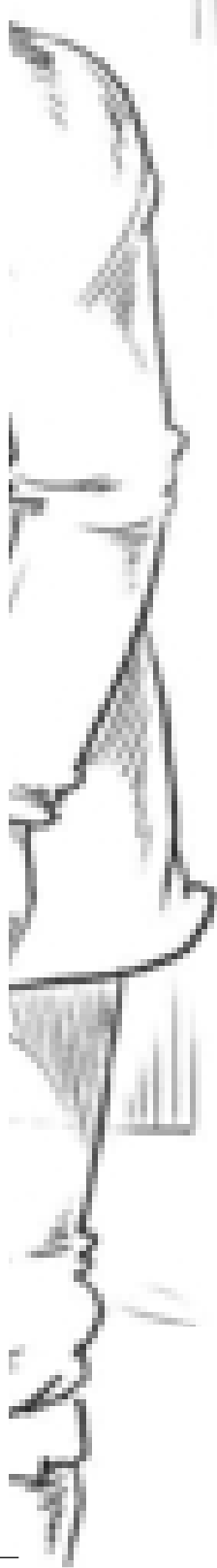




urged him to run away, as the prince's men would surely kill him if he were found.

When the prince and his officials arrived at the scene of the crime, Benvolio, who was the only witness, was forced to tell them what had happened. The prince was confused, as he knew that Romeo had only killed Tybalt because Tybalt had killed Mercutio. Therefore, he did not send Romeo to the gallows,





but declared that he should be banished from the city of Verona immediately.

Romeo was hiding in Friar Lawrence's chambers when he was brought the news. Friar Lawrence advised him to leave for Mantua until he could announce his marriage to Juliet, when, upon seeking the prince's forgiveness, he could return to Verona.



Meanwhile, Lord Capulet was making arrangements for Juliet's marriage to Paris in three days' time. Juliet tried to resist, citing Tybalt's death as a cause for mourning, not a celebration, but her pleas fell on deaf ears.



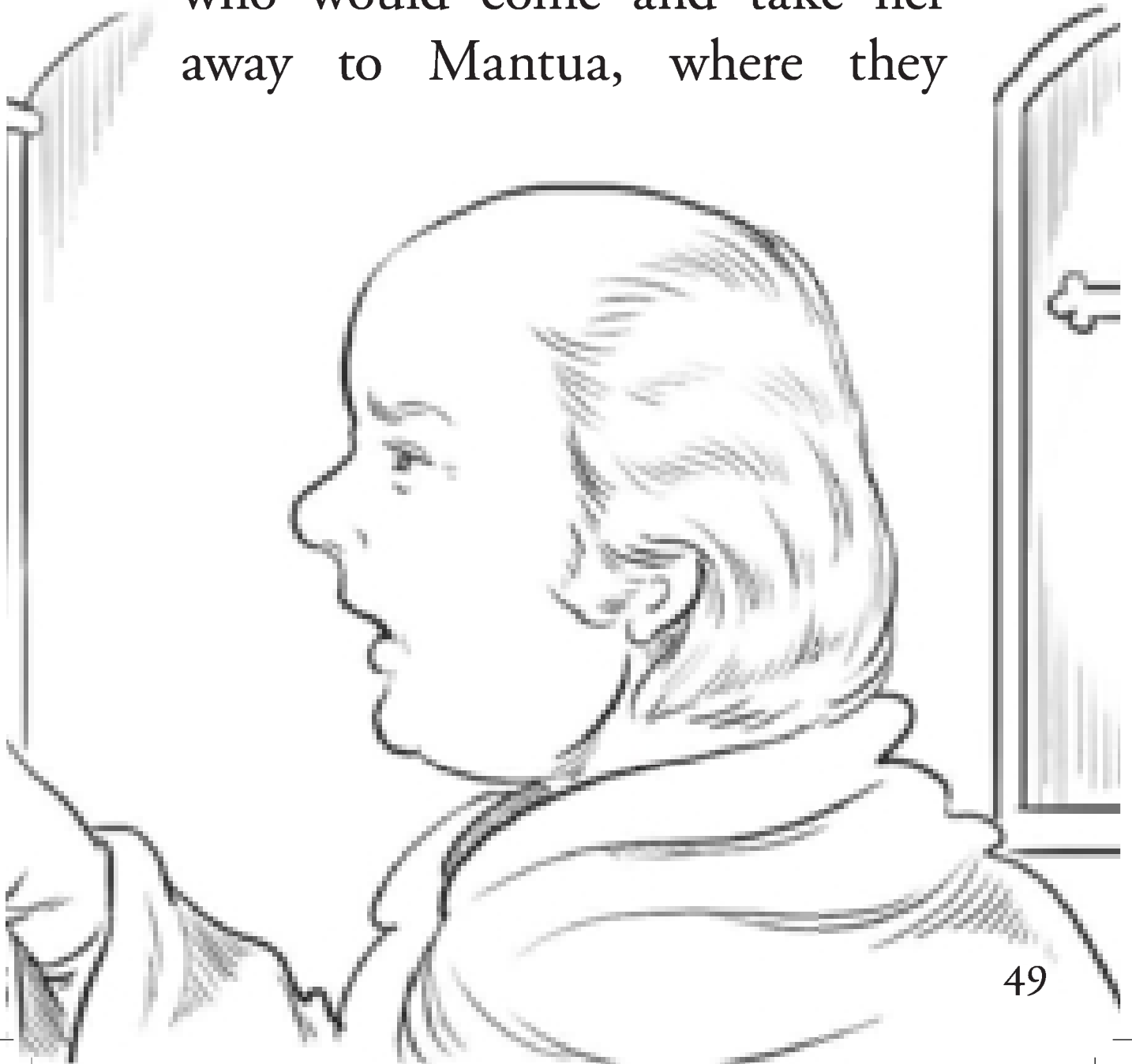
Juliet was heartbroken, as Romeo had already left for Mantua. Faced with such trouble, she decided to pay Friar Lawrence a visit, believing he was the only man who could help her.

Friar Lawrence listened and felt that there was only one way

he could help her. He asked her to go home and give her consent to marry Paris, but he gave her a vial containing a special liquid which, once consumed, would make people believe she was



dead. So, the next morning, when her family members found her, they would have to bury her in the ancient vault where all the Capulets lay. Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence would inform Romeo, who would come and take her away to Mantua, where they





could lead a happy married life without anyone knowing.

Juliet agreed to Friar Lawrence's proposal. She went home and told her father that she was willing to marry Paris. Before she went to bed, she had second thoughts about



consuming the special liquid the Friar had given her. What if it was poison? What if Romeo arrived too late and she awoke? Perhaps she would suffocate in the vault and die! But her love for Romeo made her overcome her fears and she drank the entire contents of the bottle.

As expected, the next morning her maid found her dead. The Capulet household was shocked at her sudden demise, and just as Friar Lawrence predicted, she was laid to rest with all the other Capulets in their ancient vault.







Meanwhile, Friar Lawrence had sent his friend, Friar John, to Mantua with the message for Romeo. However, before Friar John could reach him, the unfortunate news about Juliet had spread far and wide, also reaching her beloved Romeo.



Romeo was moved to tears at the news and decided to return to Verona that very night. But before leaving, he acquired some poison for himself.

When Friar John returned and told Friar Lawrence about Romeo's disappearance from

Mantua, the Friar knew that there was great danger lurking that night. He knew that Romeo would not take the news of his beloved Juliet lightly and there was no telling what he might



do to himself. He therefore decided to bring Juliet to his own chambers until Romeo could be found.

That night, Paris also decided to pay his respects to Juliet at

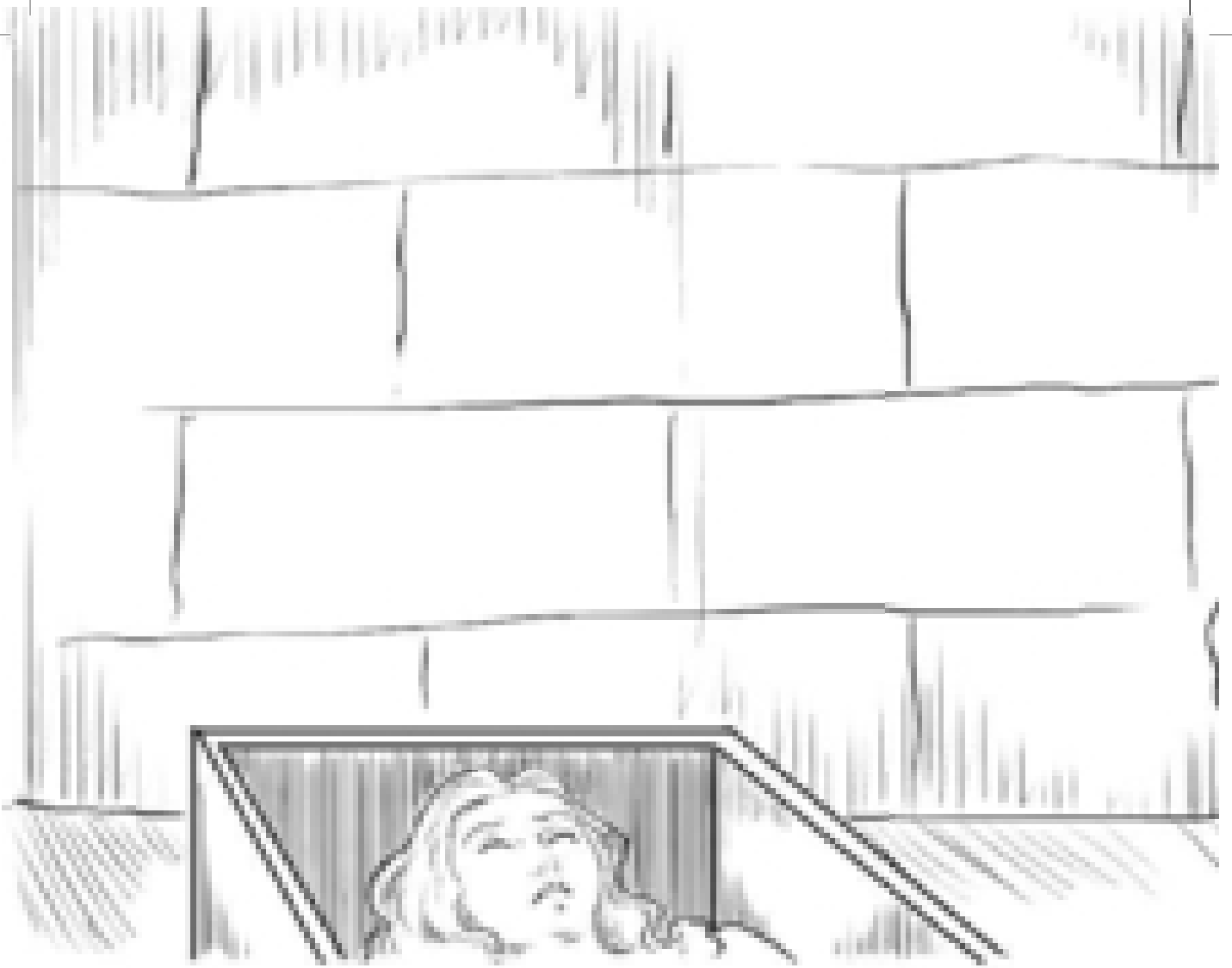


her grave. As he was leaving, he saw Romeo enter the vault. He thought Romeo had come to degrade the bodies of Tybalt and



Juliet, and enraged, he drew his sword and leapt at Romeo. But Romeo was not in the right state of mind and, within a few minutes, he had slain Paris.

At Paris' dying request, Romeo carried his body into the grave so that he could lie with Juliet. Finally, Romeo got to see Juliet again. The Friar's liquid had indeed proved quite effective, for though it was nearly time for Juliet to wake up from her slumber, she still




appeared dead to Romeo. With one parting kiss for his beloved wife, Romeo stood and drank the poison he had brought from Mantua. Within a few moments, he lay next to Juliet, dead.

Just as Romeo breathed his last, Friar Lawrence arrived



to find that he was too late. At that moment, Juliet woke up and realised what had happened. Friar Lawrence told her that she should leave with him, but she was in no mood to listen. She was devastated to see Romeo lying there dead before her, and





decided that without him she had no reason to live. Taking Romeo's dagger, she stabbed herself and fell onto Romeo, dead.

When the watchman discovered what had happened, both families were asked to gather in the vault. The prince declared that the two young lovers had died because of their families' erring ways, and it dawned on them how futile their enmity had been, taking from them their own children.



Capulet took Montague's hand in his and they ended their feud once and for all, deciding to erect statues to commemorate Romeo and Juliet's love for each other.