Romeo and Juliet at Verona High (1st ed. - 07.14.05) - romeojulietverona7j
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Cast of Characters

THE NARRATOR

THE DIRECTOR

THE ASSISTANT, Assistant to the Director

ROMEO, Captain of the football team

MATT, Romeo's best friend

COACH MONTAGUE, Coach of the football team

SAM, A football player

GREG, A football player

ABE, A member of the chess team

BARRY, A member of the chess team

TIM, Juliet's cousin and a member of the chess team

JULIET, President of the Chess Club

NATALIE, Juliet's best friend

MS. CAPULET, Teacher and sponsor of the Chess Club

COUNSELOR, Verona High guidance counselor

PRINCIPAL, Principal of Verona High

VARIOUS OTHER STUDENTS OF VERONA HIGH

Note: With character doubling (The Director can also play the counselor, and the Assistant can also play the principal, etc.) the play can be performed by as few as 10 students and as many as 20 or more.

Acknowledgments

Romeo and Juliet at Verona High was first presented by Junior Players in cooperation with the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas as part of their "Discover Shakespeare" program on June 28th, 2002. The play was directed by James Venhaus. The Assistant Director was Matt Wahlquist. The cast in order of appearance was as follows:

NARRATOR ..... Elisa Tipton
COACH MONTAGUE ..... Trace Bivins
TIM ..... Ian Flanagan
GREG ..... Nicholas Bostick
THE COUNSELOR ..... Lyndsey Burchett
NATALIE ..... Robin Curtis
MATT ..... Andrew McPherson
JULIET ..... Cene Hale
MS. CAPULET ..... Lauren Odum
THE DIRECTOR ..... Emily Parks-Young
ROMEO ..... Alan Glover
THE PRINCIPAL ..... Elisa Tipton
SAM ..... Lyndsey Burchett
THE ASSISTANT ..... Lauren Odum

ROMEO AND JULIET AT VERONA HIGH
by James Venhaus

Based upon the play
The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet
by William Shakespeare

(At rise, pretentious classical music, possibly a trumpet fanfare, plays as the NARRATOR *enters, dressed in traditional Shakespearean garb.* NARRATOR *sweeps down and strikes a pose.)*

NARRATOR. Ahem…
Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

DIRECTOR. *(Entering from the audience:)* Hold it, hold it, hold it. What are you doing?

NARRATOR. Romeo and Juliet. This is the prologue.

DIRECTOR. The prologue?

NARRATOR. Yeah, the prologue. It tells the audience what is going to happen next.

DIRECTOR. Hey, that's a pretty good idea. Who came up with that?

NARRATOR. The author. William Shakespeare.

DIRECTOR. What? William Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet? I thought it was a Leonardo DiCaprio movie!

NARRATOR. It was. But that movie, and lots of other movies, were based on Shakespeare's play written around four hundred years ago.

DIRECTOR. Four hundred years? No wonder you're dressed like a total weirdo. This will never work.

NARRATOR. What are you talking about?

DIRECTOR. Your outfit, the music, that boring monologue.

NARRATOR. Boring? It's a classic.

DIRECTOR. Yeah, classically boring. We can't torture the audience with this junk.

NARRATOR. What do you suggest?

DIRECTOR. We will have to cancel the show.

NARRATOR. What?

DIRECTOR. You heard me. Pack up your tights. We're leaving.

NARRATOR. We can't do that. My mother is in the audience. These people paid good money to see a Shakespearean play.

DIRECTOR. Well, I guess you're right. Got any better ideas?

ASSISTANT. We could do an updated version of Romeo and Juliet that is more accessible to a modern audience. That way, people get what they came for plus something fun and relevant to today.

DIRECTOR. *(Startled:)* How long have you been standing there?

NARRATOR. I think he's onto something. Shakespeare wrote about problems and social issues that are still relevant today. Romeo and Juliet deals with young love, suicide, family squabbles and lots of stuff that kids today have to deal with. We could tell the story of Romeo and Juliet but with a modern twist.

DIRECTOR. Well, all right. But we'll have to change everything.

NARRATOR. Not really. Romeo and Juliet were both about our age. We'll pretend that the things that happened to Romeo and Juliet back then are happening to us today. We'll change their world into our world.

ASSISTANT. Romeo and Juliet at Verona High.

NARRATOR. That's good! But what about the "two households both alike in dignity"? What is the high school version of feuding families?

ASSISTANT. I've got it! Romeo can be the captain of the football team, and Juliet…

NARRATOR. Juliet can be the president of the Chess Club.

ASSISTANT. Great!

DIRECTOR. All right. You two figure it out. This whole thing is giving me a headache. Whatever you do, don't make it boring, and no rhyming! *(Exits.)*

NARRATOR. OK. You get the actors ready and I'll introduce the first scene.

ASSISTANT. Got it. *(Exits.)*

NARRATOR. Ladies and Gentlemen: Welcome to our play.
I hope that you will stay a while
and hear what we have to say.

DIRECTOR. *(From off-stage:)* I said no rhyming!

NARRATOR. *(Sigh.)* Our play takes place in Verona High, a school like any other. Two football players, Sam and Greg, are waiting for practice to begin, and looking to start a little trouble.

SAM. I can't believe we have to haul all this equipment for the varsity players. It's not fair.

GREG. It stinks now, but when we get to be on the varsity team, some little twerps will be carrying our stuff.

SAM. Does that make us little twerps?

GREG. I hadn't thought of that. Well, at least we're not total geeks like those Chess Club losers.

SAM. Oh, I hate those guys. Just because they are smarter than us, they run around and act like they're smarter than we are.

GREG. Here come two of them now.

SAM. I'll show them a thing or two about being smart.

GREG. Don't start anything with them. Coach Montague will kick us off the team.

SAM. I've give them a dirty look when they walk by and see if they will start something with us.

*(*ABE *and* BARRY *enter.* SAM *makes a funny face at them.* ABE *and* BARRY *walk by and don't react.* SAM *throws a rock at them.)*

ABE. Did you throw that rock?

SAM. I may have thrown a rock.

ABE. Did you throw that rock at us?

SAM. I threw a rock over there, and if you are stupid enough to walk over there, I can't help that.

BARRY. You are the two waterboys for the football team aren't you?

GREG. That does it. Nobody call me a waterboy and gets away with it.

(They run at each other with clenched fists and before they can start swinging, COACH MONTAGUE *enters with the rest of the team and blows his whistle.)*

COACH MONTAGUE. All right team. Take a knee.

(The players each get down on one knee in a circle around the coach.)

COACH MONTAGUE. We've got a big game tonight, and I want everyone here to be ready. If we win this game, we go to the play-offs, and with hard work, and lots of practice, we can go all the way to the state championships.

TEAM. Yeah!!!

COACH MONTAGUE. Who wants to win?

TEAM. We do!

COACH MONTAGUE. I can't hear you.

TEAM. WE DO!!!

COACH MONTAGUE. That's better. Now, Sam, you take the running backs and work on hand-offs.

SAM. Right coach.

COACH MONTAGUE. Greg, you take the offensive line and work on blocking drills.

GREG. You got it coach.

COACH MONTAGUE. Matt, take a lap.

MATT. But coach, what for? I didn't do anything

COACH MONTAGUE. I don't care. Take a lap anyway. I'm sure you've done something wrong, I just don't know about it yet.

*(*MATT *starts to take his lap, but stays behind to listen in.)*

COACH MONTAGUE. Romeo, come here.

ROMEO. Yeah coach?

COACH MONTAGUE. Romeo, you are my star player. Nobody can throw a pass like you. But, what is this I hear about you trying out for the chess team?

ROMEO. But coach, I like it.

COACH MONTAGUE. Nobody ever got a college scholarship in chess! If it doesn't have to do with football, I don't want you doing it.

ROMEO. Yes coach.

*(*COACH MONTAGUE *exits.)*

MATT. Chess?!?!? Ha, Ha. You play chess?

ROMEO. Don't laugh. There are lots of good-looking girls who play chess.

MATT. Really?

ROMEO. Really. But, they only like guys who can spell the word "chess" so that leaves you out.

MATT. Hey. Watch it pal.

(They exit.)

NARRATOR. The Vikings of Verona High are the coolest kids on campus. But, there is another group of kids at Verona High that work just as hard as the football team, but never get the same recognition: the Chess Club.

(Enter CHESS CLUB.*)*

NARRATOR. They are coached by Ms. Capulet, and the star of the Chess Club is Juliet. Juliet always practiced with her best friend Natalie and her cousin Tim.

MS. CAPULET. All right girls…

TIM. Ahem!

MS. CAPULET. Sorry Tim. *(Correcting herself:)* All right team, we have a lot of work to do before the state championships next week. I want everyone to pair off and practice, practice, practice.

(They pair off and play each other in a quick game of chess, the winners yell, "checkmate.")

MS. CAPULET. Good job team. Now, I want everyone to practice tonight, and I don't want to hear about anyone going to that silly football game!

TEAM. Aww!!!

(All exit but JULIET *and* NATALIE.*)*

JULIET. So Natalie, are you going to the game tonight?

NATALIE. What game?

JULIET. The football game. If we win, we go to the playoffs.

NATALIE. We? Have you lost your mind? Since when do you care about football?

JULIET. Since we got that cute new quarterback.

NATALIE. I'm ashamed to know you.

JULIET. Come on. Go with me.

NATALIE. How can we? If Ms. Capulet caught us, she'd kill us.

JULIET. We can go in disguise.

NATALIE. Disguise? What kind of disguise?

JULIET. I don't know. Help me think of something. How could we dress so that no one would know that we are in the Chess Club? I know…

JULIET and NATALIE. Cheerleaders!

NARRATOR. Well, tonight is the night of the big game and as you may have guessed, the entire chess team is in the stands rooting on the Verona High Vikings.

(The players make a circle and link arms.)

COACH MONTAGUE. What time is it?

TEAM. Game time.

COACH MONTAGUE. What time is it?

TEAM. Game time.

COACH MONTAGUE. What time is it?

TEAM. Game time.

(The team exits except for ROMEO *and* MATT *who practice throwing the ball. Enter* JULIET *and* NATALIE *with pom-poms.)*

JULIET and NATALIE. Go Romeo, Go Romeo, Go Romeo.

*(*JULIET *attempts a cheerleading-style jump and falls.)*

JULIET. Ouch!

ROMEO. Are you OK?

JULIET. I think so. *(*JULIET *tries to walk:)* Ow. Maybe not.

ROMEO. Here, let me help you.

*(*ROMEO *helps* JULIET *to the bench.)*

JULIET. Thanks.

ROMEO. I don't think I've seen you before. Are you new?

JULIET. Yeah. I'm new. I just transferred. I'm Juliet.

ROMEO. My name is Romeo.

JULIET. Duh. You're only the star of the football team.

ROMEO. Oh yeah. I almost forgot.

COACH MONTAGUE. Romeo, get over here. It's almost time for kickoff.

ROMEO. OK, coach.

NATALIE. Juliet. What are you doing? If Capulet finds out you were talking to a football player…

ROMEO. Capulet? Wait, I know you. You're not a cheerleader, you're in the Chess Club. I love chess.

JULIET. Really?

COACH MONTAGUE and NATALIE. Come on, let's go!

JULIET. Well, I guess I'll see you later.

ROMEO. I hope so.

CAPULET. Juliet! Natalie! What is going on?

NATALIE. Well, we were just…

CAPULET. I know what you were doing. Juliet. Listen to me. Stay away from that, that, football player. They are nothing but trouble. Believe me.

JULIET and NATALIE. Yes ma'am.

ROMEO. Wow! She is so amazing. It's like her face lights up the night sky and she makes the stars seem dim. I only thought I was in love before, but I've never seen true beauty until tonight.

NARRATOR. Oh please! *(Makes gagging motion.)* Now, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what happens next. Romeo and

Juliet fall in love. They talk on the phone, walk each other to class, write notes all the while trying to keep the football team and the Chess Club from finding out.

JULIET. Natalie was supposed to meet me at nine o'clock. That was almost three hours ago. What is her problem.? She is so lame. When she gets here, so help me I'll…

*(*NATALIE *enters.)*

JULIET. Natalie! My bestest friend. It's so good to see you! Did you see him? What did he say? What was he wearing? Tell me, Tell me, Tell me.

NATALIE. Well…

JULIET. Why do you look sad? If the news is sad, tell me with a happy face, so it won't seem so bad; if the news is good, then why spoil it with a sad face. What is wrong with you?

NATALIE. I am so tired. Let me sit down a while and rest, then I'll tell you…

JULIET. Rest? Have you lost your mind? Tell me.

NATALIE. Why the rush? Can't you see I'm tired? I'm practically out of breath.

JULIET. How can you be out of breath when you have enough breath to tell me that you are out of breath?

NATALIE. Well, the deal is…Oh, my feet hurt. I'd probably be able to tell you if my feet didn't hurt so much.

*(*JULIET *starts to rub* NATALIE's *feet.)*

NATALIE. Well, he likes you.

JULIET. I knew that. What else?

NATALIE. And…he wants you to meet him at the mall today at 4:00!!

(They both start to jump up and down and scream.)

NATALIE. Wait. Why am I happy? I don't have a boyfriend.

NARRATOR. Meanwhile, tensions between the two groups were getting worse and worse.

NATALIE. Matt, Matt. Wait up.

MATT. What is it now?

NATALIE. I've got another note for you to give Romeo from Juliet.

MATT. Yeah, OK, Whatever.

NATALIE. Aw, c'mon. I think it's sweet.

MATT. You approve of this?

NATALIE. Well, I didn't at first, but now that I've gotten to know Romeo, I think it's great. Plus all this sneaky-spy stuff makes it kind of romantic. I'm a sucker for romance.

MATT. Really? Well how about going to the movies with me on Saturday?

NATALIE. I said I was a sucker for romance, not stupid.

MATT. What is that supposed to mean?

TIM. Why don't you just leave her alone, jock?

MATT. Well, why don't you just mind your own business?

TIM. Natalie is my business.

MATT. What, is she your girlfriend?

TIM. No, but the Chess Club has to stick together.

MATT. You're on the Chess Club? I should have known. I'm gonna pound you into the dirt. Geek-face.

TIM. Sure. Resort to violence. It's just like a jock. Sure you could beat me up, I take comfort in the fact that I am your intellectual superior.

ABE and BARRY. Yeah!

MATT. I don't know what that is, but I'm sure you're wrong, chess-loser.

TIM. Oh yeah, let's see. Instead of a fight, I challenge you to a chess match.

MATT. Chess match? No problem. I'll whup your butt.

TIM. We'll see about that. Tomorrow in the gym. Three o'clock. Be there.

GREG. What are you thinking? You don't know how to play chess.

SAM. Chess is easy. You take the little black circles and you hop over the red circles…

GREG. That's checkers, dummy. Chess is the one with the bishop and the rook and the…the…horsey.

SAM. Oh. Dude that game is hard.

MATT. I know. But I couldn't back down in front of everybody. What am I gonna do?

SAM. Hey, doesn't Romeo play chess? He could coach you.

GREG. Good idea.

MATT. Yeah. Good thinking.

GREG. What's wrong?

SAM. No one has ever said that to me before.

NARRATOR. Word of the "grudge chess match" spread through the school like wildfire. Soon, everyone was talking about it. Even though most of the kids thought it was a stupid, petty, and immature way to settle things, they still couldn't help but watch. Kind of like a Fox network TV special. The day of the big match, the gym had more people in it than anyone expected. Even Coach Montague and Miss Capulet were there. Incognito. It seemed like the whole school was there. The Chess Club gathered to get Tim ready.

> *(The* CHESS TEAM *makes a circle and does a warm-up mocking the football team.)*

ABE. What time is it?

CHESS CLUB. Chess time.

ABE. What time is it?

CHESS CLUB. Chess time!

ABE. What time is it?

CHESS CLUB. Chess time.

MATT. Ready, punk?

TIM. I'm ready.

MATT. All right, let's play.

> *(*MATT *and* TIM *begin the chess game and three moves later,* TIM *wins.)*

TIM. Checkmate!

MATT. What? No way. You cheated!

TIM. No I didn't. Look.

> *(*TIM *tips the chessboard over and a chess piece hits* MATT *in the eye.)*

MATT. Ahhh! My eye. I'm blinded for life. You little twerp. I'm gonna…

ROMEO. *(Entering:)* What is going on here? What are you doing? What have you done to my friend?

TIM. I didn't do anything. It was an accident.

ROMEO. Sure. I'll show you an accident.

THE CROWD. *(Ad-libs:)* The principal. Here comes the principal. Oh no. look out, etc.

PRINCIPAL. What is going on here? What's the meaning of this? Romeo. I'm surprised at you. You of all people should know better than to get in a fight at school.

ROMEO. Fight? No wait. You don't understand…

PRINCIPAL. No, you don't understand. I'm giving you the harshest punished I can think of.

COACH MONTAGUE. Please don't kick him off the team. Please don't kick him off the team. Please don't kick him off the team.

CAPULET. Please kick him off the team, please kick him off the team, Please kick him off the team.

PRINCIPAL. Romeo. You are expelled!

EVERYONE. *(Shocked:)* Expelled?

COACH MONTAGUE. *(Angry:)* Expelled?

CAPULET. *(Elated:)* Expelled!

ROMEO. Expelled, right before the big game? Why don't you just have me executed!

PRINCIPAL. Don't tempt me Romeo.

ROMEO. Never mind. This is worse.

SAM. What about the big game?

NATALIE. What about Juliet?

MATT. What about my eye!?!

(Everyone exits.)

NARRATOR. When Juliet heard the news, she was devastated. To her it seemed that her whole life had lost all meaning. She was inconsolable. She had no one to talk to, no one who understood her problems. There was only one person left who could possibly understand her: The High School guidance counselor.

COUNSELOR. Juliet, how can I help you?

JULIET. Well, it's kind of personal.

COUNSELOR. That's what I'm here for.

JULIET. OK. You see, it's about a boy.

COUNSELOR. Who, Roger?

JULIET. Roger? No way! I can't stand that jerk.

COUNSELOR. But weren't you two dating?

JULIET. Yeah, last week.

COUNSELOR. Oh, I see. What happened to that foreign exchange student.

JULIET. The guy from Paris? Miss Capulet wanted us to get together but we never really hit it off.

COUNSELOR. So, who's the guy?

JULIET. Romeo.

COUNSELOR. Romeo? The quarterback?

JULIET. He has a last name, you know.

COUNSELOR. What is it?

JULIET. You know, I never asked him.

COUNSELOR. Well, how can I help?

JULIET. Romeo's been expelled.

COUNSELOR. Really, what happened?

JULIET. Didn't you hear about the big chess game?

COUNSELOR. No, I'm stuck in this office most of the time.

JULIET. Well, it's a long story.

COUNSELOR. Where is he now?

JULIET. He is living with his uncle in Mantua. The principal said that if he ever came back on campus, he would be arrested. So now I can't see him and it's driving me crazy. What should I do?

COUNSELOR. Well, I can't really tell you what to do, Juliet. You have to make these decisions on your own. For example, I can't tell you to follow your heart, or you'll regret it for the rest of your life. I can't tell you to transfer to Mantua High School. I can't tell you any of that.

JULIET. I could really transfer to Mantua?

COUNSELOR. Sure, if you had all the right paperwork. Which, I can't give you. Most of the time, it just sits on my desk. Right here on the corner.

(She looks away, and JULIET *grabs the papers.)*

JULIET. Thanks for all your help.

COUNSELOR. Me? Help? I didn't do anything. *(She winks.)*

JULIET. *(Playing along:)* Right. Then thanks for nothing.

NARRATOR. As you might imagine, things did not turn out well. Because Juliet's transfer had to be kept secret, Romeo didn't know she was transferring to Mantua High. His despair led him to end his life…

DIRECTOR. Stop! Hold it. Hold it. Hold it. Now what are you doing.

NARRATOR. I'm telling the story. After Romeo dies, Juliet learns the tragic news and then she kills herself.

DIRECTOR. Wait. Wait. Wait. They both die? That stinks! How did Shakespeare get this reputation as a great writer with an ending like that? We can't have a sad ending.

NARRATOR. But it's a tragedy. All tragedies end this way.

DIRECTOR. Yeah, but they don't know that. *(Pointing to the audience.)*

NARRATOR. Yeah, I think they do.

DIRECTOR. No, they don't. If they had seen Romeo and Juliet before, they wouldn't be here now. No one goes to see the same play twice. Especially one that has a sad ending.

NARRATOR. Well then, how would you end the story?

DIRECTOR. I don't know. But, they wouldn't die, that's for sure. People want to see a happy ending. I've got it! Romeo and Juliet get back together and everyone is happy.

NARRATOR. But then it's not a tragedy.

DIRECTOR. Does everyone have to die in a tragedy?

NARRATOR. That's how you tell them apart from the comedies. Look, what if they don't die, but they never get together and the football team and the Chess Club learn an important lesson about hate and accepting each other in spite of our differences.

DIRECTOR. Blah, Blah, Blah. That is so boring.

ASSISTANT. Why don't we let the audience decide?

DIRECTOR. *(Startled:)* Why don't you stop sneaking up on me like that?

ASSISTANT. I'm serious. If the audience wants to see a happy ending, we'll show them a happy ending, if they want to see a tragedy, we can show them that instead. We should take a vote.

DIRECTOR. Good idea. I knew I kept you around for a reason.

NARRATOR. All right audience. You get to decide how our play ends. Are you ready? *(Waits for an audience response.)* Are you really ready? *(Waits for response.)* OK. Now, I want you to applaud if you want to see a happy ending *(Waits for audience reaction.)* Great. Now, applaud if you want to see a tragic ending. *(Waits for reaction.)*

> *(If the applause in the audience was louder for* COMEDY *continue in the script on page 23. If the applause was louder for* TRAGEDY, *continue in the script on page 26.)*

Comedy Ending

NARRATOR. Comedy? You people are pathetic. All right, you asked for it. Now, where were we? Oh yeah, Romeo had been transferred to Mantua High School, and Juliet was going to transfer to be with her beloved. Word of her plan got back to Ms. Capulet, and she was not happy.

MS. CAPULET. Principal Prince, there you are. Do you have a minute?

PRINCIPAL. I suppose.

COACH MONTAGUE. Principal. Just the person I was looking for. We need to talk.

PRINCIPAL. Hold on, she was here first.

COACH MONTAGUE. Look, this is important.

MS. CAPULET. Juliet may be trying to run away.

COACH MONTAGUE. I've got to have Romeo back on the team.

MS. CAPULET. She's the star of the Chess Club.

COACH MONTAGUE. He's the star of the football team.

MS. CAPULET and COACH MONTAGUE. We have to get them back.

PRINCIPAL. Hold on, hold on. *(To* COACH MONTAGUE*:)* I can't just "un-expel" someone after they have been expelled. *(To* MS. CAPULET*:)* And I can't get involved in student's private lives.

MS. CAPULET and COACH MONTAGUE. Why not!

PRINCIPAL. *(Not sure:)* Well…

COACH MONTAGUE. Look, with Romeo here, we could be state champions.

MS. CAPULET. Same with Juliet. She's the best chess player in the history of this school.

COACH MONTAGUE. We have a chess team?

MS. CAPULET. Oh be quiet.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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