

# *Romeo To Go*

a play by Jonathan Rand

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## Cast of Characters

MRS. GUNNYSACK  
CECILE  
WENDY  
JANINE  
THAD  
JOSEPH  
MR. WHIPPLESTICK  
MR. TROLLYBOTTOM  
BETSY  
APRIL  
DANCERS  
GINA  
DEXTER  
HIP-HOP ENTHUSIASTS  
BRIDGET  
KURT  
TRINA  
LOSERS  
SETH  
HORACE  
LARRY  
GREG  
LEWIS  
PATRICK  
SARAH  
VICTOR  
PETER  
WALTER  
KELLY  
FRAN  
WHITNEY  
JENNIFER  
SLOANE  
KATY

## **Production Notes**

Doubling of roles is encouraged, as is cast expansion; many lines can be consolidated, or divvied out more liberally. The play should fit most cast sizes of anywhere between 15 and over 50.

Gender for all the characters is very flexible. The play could easily be performed with mostly females or mostly males, and possibly with an all-female or all-male cast. Any necessary pronoun-switching is permitted by the author.

Mrs. Gunnysack should be played like a freight train. She thinks she's the most brilliant theatre icon since *The Bard*, and therefore doesn't even notice when the students justifiably contradict her, or flat-out ignore her. She is blindly cruising through her own world of self-importance and pseudo-greatness. Don't we all know people like this. (And not all of them are drama teachers.)

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Scene 1 Rehearsal

**GUNNYSACK.** Good morning everyone, good morning. Welcome to Drama One. I'll be your teacher this quarter, Mrs. Gunnysack. But call me Helen. Mrs. Gunnysack is my mother's name. Ha ha ha ha ha. Enough horsing around. It's time to get down to business. What business am I talking about? The business of *theatre*.

Now as you know, due to budget cuts across the state, all schools have been forced to cut down on the number of sessions for all nonessential subjects, including, but not limited to, history, English, lunch, and Drama. This year's restrictions will be even tighter than in previous years, resulting in quite a low number of class sessions for Drama – and by "low number" I of course mean "one."

(JOSEPH raises his hand.)

Yes. You there.

**JOSEPH.** Joseph.

**GUNNYSACK.** Joseph.

**JOSEPH.** Are you saying that today's class is the only day we'll be learning Drama?

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes. And because class times have also been cut, it will only last twenty minutes.

(General hubbub.)

Now now! (There is quiet.) That's enough hubbub. Before we proceed with class, I have some additional news. Principal Trollybottom has informed me that there will be a school-wide assembly at noon. And because [current month] is National Shakespeare Awareness Month, this Drama class has been assigned to present a Shakespeare play for the entire student body.

(General hubbub.)

Class! (There is quiet.) What did I say before about hubbub? Okay.

(JOSEPH raises his hand.)

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes. You there.

**JOSEPH.** Joseph.

**GUNNYSACK.** Joseph.

**JOSEPH.** Are you saying that we only have twenty minutes to put together a play?

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes. That, and our time slot at the assembly is only ten minutes.

(General hubbub nearly begins again.)

Now before you all get all "frizzled," as I've heard the rap singers say, let me tell you this: I've learned many crucial things throughout my years in the theatre. The cruciallest among

them is to always make the most out of what you're given. So while we only have twenty – *(She looks at her watch)* – sorry, eighteen minutes to rehearse a full-length play that you'll end up performing during a ten-minute period—well—that's no obstacle for a *true* Thespian. No... Pressure is where the dramatic *thrive*. And by golly, *(Passionately whispered:)* by *golly*—we're going to put on the best darn play this school has ever seen!

**KELLY.** *(Raising her hand:)* This school has never done a play.

**GUNNYSACK.** *(Overlapping slightly:)* Now who's with me?!

*(Silence.)*

Oh. Well. Everyone's with me because it's...it's required. Okay! Now let's get started quickly, because the time...is out of joint. Now, for those unfamiliar with Shakespeare's work, I just made an amusing Shakespeare reference. That may happen from time to time. What can I say – it's in my blood. *(Beat.)* Out, damned spot! Out, I say! Ha ha ha ha ha!

*(Silence.)*

*(Someone lets out a small, natural cough.)*

All right, we're short on time, so first thing is first. What play will we perform? After much self-deliberation, I have made my choice. Many of you are already familiar with the play I have chosen because it was made into a popular film starring Leonardo D'Onofrio and Claire Forlani. Folks, I'm talking about the greatest tragedy of star-crossed lovers in the sixteenth century – Romeo and Juliet!

*(JANINE – the theatre-lover – claps excitedly. Everyone else remains still.)*

Because there isn't time to discuss the plot in depth, I will simply hand out the scripts and we'll start rehearsing. Who would like to help me?

*(JANINE's hand shoots up.)*

Thank you. Hand these out, please.

*(GUNNYSACK hands JANINE a pile of scripts.)*

**JANINE.** I'm Janine. And I wanted to say that I am really looking forward to this performance.

**GUNNYSACK.** It's nice to meet you, Janine. And might I say, you've got some pep in your step!

**JANINE.** Thank you, ma'am!

**GUNNYSACK.** You've got some jump in your rump!

**JANINE.** Thank you!

**GUNNYSACK.** In fact, I can already picture you in one of the roles.

**JANINE.** Really?!

**GUNNYSACK.** Let me ask you this, Janine: Have you ever heard of a character named... *Juliet?*

**JANINE.** *(Barely breathing:)* Yes I have...

**GUNNYSACK.** And have you ever heard of Juliet's servant?

**JANINE.** Yes I— ... Oh.

**GUNNYSACK.** If you do especially well handing out those scripts, that role might just have Jellyfish written all over it.

**JANINE.** Janine.

**GUNNYSACK.** *(To the class:)* Now class, as the scripts are being passed out, I want you to take twenty, thirty seconds, and skim the play. Get a feel for it. I'll play some music to get you in the mood.

*(GUNNYSACK plays "Greensleeves" on a portable stereo. Moments later, she stops it.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** Is everyone up to speed? Good. Now, since we don't have time to hold auditions, I will be casting the play randomly. On the back of each of your scripts, I've written a character name. That will be your character.

*(Everyone turns over their scripts. Blasé reaction from all.)*

All right, whose script says Romeo? Anybody?

*(LARRY raises his hand. He is not the coolest cucumber. Definitely not popular. Preferably, he is shorter than everyone else in the class.)*

**LARRY.** I— It's me.

**GUNNYSACK.** Excellent! Congratulations! And who is my Juliet?

*(Everyone looks around the class; nobody responds.)*

Anybody? Has everyone looked at their script.

*(JANINE, who was sullenly staring off into space up to this point, turns over her script and suddenly yelps with glee.)*

**JANINE.** Ahh! Me! Me! I'm Juliet!

**GUNNYSACK.** Oopsie. You already have a part. Uh, who's got "Juliet's Servant" on the back of their script?

*(WENDY raises her hand, apathetic. She is sitting next to JANINE. WENDY is beautiful and popular – the unquestioned prom queen.)*

Good. You two switch scripts. Perfect. Problem solved.

*(WENDY holds out her script to JANINE. Beat. JANINE flies out of the classroom, bawling.)*

*(Beat.)*

**SLOANE.** *(Emotionless:)* She forgot the hall pass.

**GUNNYSACK.** Now before we get started with rehearsal, I want to introduce everyone to a very special guest.

*(She indicates MR. WHIPPLESTICK, a very old man, who is sitting off to the side, perhaps in a wheelchair.)*

Students, this is Mr. Whipplestick. He was sent from the school board. Mr. Whipplestick is what the district calls a “decency monitor.” His job will be to ensure everything we include in this performance is according to the school district’s decency standards. Do I have that correct, Mr. Whipplestick?

(MR. WHIPPLESTICK *honks a bicycle horn once. Either that or an airhorn.*)

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** Oh, yes. Almost forgot. I was informed that Mr. Whipplestick has lost his voice in a skiing accident, so he will be communicating with us using a special instrument. Do I have that correct?

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** That must mean Yes.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** How do you say No?

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** So two honks means No.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** And one means Yes.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** And three honks means Maybe.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** Oh. (*Beat.*) Okay, class, let’s get started, because we’re already running short on time. Any questions before we rehearse the greatest love story of all time?

(*THAD – the thick bully type – who constantly cradles a football in one arm – raises his free hand.*)

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes.

**THAD.** Love?

**GUNNYSACK.** Indeed. The greatest love of all.

**THAD.** Love?

**GUNNYSACK.** Quite so. Romeo and Juliet are history’s most timeless lovers, second only to Brad and Angelina.

**THAD.** (*Pointing to WENDY:*) My girlfriend. Mine.

**GUNNYSACK.** Never you worry, young man. Theatre is about make-believe. It’s about *façade*. Your gorgeous girlfriend won’t *really* fall in love with the small, unpopular student – what’s your name – ?

**LARRY.** Larry.



**GUNNYSACK.** Larry. It just doesn't happen in real life. In theater, we use our *craft* in order to fake what isn't true. For example, students: Last year I was in a musical where I played a 16-year-old girl. Do I look 16?

**ALL.** No. / God no. / Not even close.

(LEWIS *raises his hand.*)

**LEWIS.** You don't look 16.

(CECILE *raises her hand.*)

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes. Joseph.

**CECILE.** Cecile.

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes.

**CECILE.** The back of my script doesn't have a character's name. It just says Assistant Director.

**GUNNYSACK.** Ah! Thank you for bringing that to my attention. You have one of the most instrumental jobs in the class. You will be my right-hand man. You will be my eyes and ears. You will be the *glue* that holds together two pieces of wood, so as to keep the two pieces from falling apart, therefore keeping them stuck together with glue. Are you ready to take on this job? Are you READY?!

**CECILE.** I think I'm supposed to be at Bio right now, actually –

**GUNNYSACK.** Then let's get to it! Come on up here with your script, and *shadow* me at all times. Are you shadowing?

**CECILE.** Yes.

**GUNNYSACK.** (*To the class:*) All right, everybody, it's time to get underway! (*To CECILE:*) Assistant! What does the beginning of the play say?

**CECILE.** Prologue.

**GUNNYSACK.** Good, good. Who has Prologue written on the back of their script?

**GINA.** I'm Prologue.

**GUNNYSACK.** Okay, now, because we won't have enough time at the performance to recite the entire Prologue, we'll need to condense it into 10-15 seconds. So I'm going to have you speak the entire section extremely fast. Do you think you can do it? As fast as possible. Go.

**GINA.** Two households –

**GUNNYSACK.** Faster.

**GINA.** (*Same slow speed:*) Two households –

**GUNNYSACK.** Faster.

**GINA.** (*Same:*) Two households –

**GUNNYSACK.** Faster!

**GINA.** (*Same:*) Two households—

**GUNNYSACK.** Okay, this isn't working. You're not an actor, are you?

**GINA.** No.

**GUNNYSACK.** Do you have any special skills?

**GINA.** I do art...?

**GUNNYSACK.** All right, we can work with that. Who else here is an art student trying to fulfill some sort of requirement by taking Drama?

(JENNIFER, KATY, and PETER *raise their hands.*)

**GUNNYSACK.** Perfect. You four team up and come up with an artistic interpretation of the Prologue, and make sure it only lasts 15 seconds.

**JENNIFER.** Are you looking for something post-modern? Baroque? Impressionist?

**PETER.** Maybe some Renoir.

**GUNNYSACK.** All those sound good. Do those. Your name again!

**CECILE.** Cecile.

**GUNNYSACK.** Cecile! What's next!

**CECILE.** Scene One.

**GUNNYSACK.** Who are the characters?

**CECILE.** Gregory, Sampson, and Abraham.

**GUNNYSACK.** Who is playing Gregory, Sampson, and Abraham?

(*Beat.*)

**WALTER.** Me?

**GUNNYSACK.** Which one are you?

**WALTER.** All?

**GUNNYSACK.** Oh. Okay. I suppose that was intentional of me. Perhaps we don't have enough actors to fit the many parts. So you will be playing the roles of both Gregory and Sampson and Abraham.

**WALTER.** Okay?

**GUNNYSACK.** In order to distinguish among the three characters, I will need for you to use slightly different accents for each character.

**WALTER.** Yes?

**GUNNYSACK.** Excellent. Shaquille!

**CECILE.** Cecile.

**GUNNYSACK.** Next up!

**CECILE.** They fight. Benvolio enters. They fight. Tybalt enters. They fight.

**GUNNYSACK.** Okee dokee. Who is my Benvolio?

*(THAD raises his hand.)*

**THAD.** Benvolio.

**GUNNYSACK.** Good. And who is my Tybalt.

**THAD.** Benvolio.

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes, yes. Thank you. And my Tybalt?

*(JOSEPH raises his hand.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** Great. What's your name.

**JOSEPH.** Joseph.

**GUNNYSACK.** Joseph. Okay everyone, we'll have to choreograph a quick swordfight here.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

**GUNNYSACK.** Ah. Right. Thank you, Mr. Whipplestick. Boys and girls, the school district now considers Elizabethan fencing to be a direct endorsement of in-school knife fighting. We will have to replace the swordplay with something else. Let's see. Ah. Do any of you dance?

*(Several DANCERS raise their hands.)*

Perfect. I will need you to put together an interpretive dance to represent the fight sequence. Good? Good. Cellophane!

**CECILE.** Cecile.

**GUNNYSACK.** What's next?

**CECILE.** Romeo and Benvolio talk about love.

**GUNNYSACK.** Great. I have already cut down that scene to the bare essentials. Next scene.

**CECILE.** Lord Capulet and Paris talk about Juliet.

**GUNNYSACK.** Skip it.

**CECILE.** Juliet prepares for the party.

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes! Let's work on that.

*(JANINE suddenly enters with PRINCIPAL TROLLYBOTTOM.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** Perfect timing, Juliet's servant! We are just about to begin your scene. Hello, Mr. Trolleybottom. Everyone say hello to Principal Trolleybottom.

*(A scattered, quiet response from some of the students.)*

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** Good morning, students. *(Aside to GUNNYSACK:)* Helen... Janine here tells me that you took away the role of Juliet from her for no reason?

**GUNNYSACK.** Mr. Trollybottom, I don't know if you are familiar with the play *Romeo and Juliet*, but the role of Juliet is very much overrated. Most scholars consider her to be nothing but Romeo's foil. Take Juliet out of the play, it doesn't really affect the plot. On the other hand, Juliet's *servant* is the literal *blood* of the play. She has a soliloquy in Act One, Scene Three that holds such beauty – such grace – such *je ne sais fois* (*sic*) – it will bring an entire audience of high school students to tears. (*To JANINE:*) Now Joseph, listen closely. Are you listening?

**JANINE.** (*Quietly:*) Janine.

**GUNNYSACK.** LA LA LA. Can you hear me when I'm speaking.

**JANINE.** (*Quietly:*) Yes.

**GUNNYSACK.** Over the next few minutes, I need you to dive into these lines, and explore the life of this character. You will *become* Juliet's servant. You will breathe the air she breathes. You will smell the smells she smells. You will clean the toilets she cleans. And when your exploration is complete... When you have inhabited Juliet's servant's soul... When you are ready for your spotlight... (*Pause.*) ...you will *shine*.

**JANINE.** (*Moved:*) Yes, ma'am!

(*With new determination, JANINE strides away to work on her script.*)

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** I stand corrected.

**GUNNYSACK.** Indeed. Who else is in this scene? Celsius!

**CECILE.** Juliet, Lady Capulet, and Juliet's nurse.

**GUNNYSACK.** Splendid. Who is playing Lady Capulet?

(*SARAH raises her hand.*)

Good. And who is my Nurse?

(*Silence.*)

Anybody? Anybody? That's odd. Okay. Mr. Trollybottom, would you please lend a hand.

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** Mmm? Oh, no no no.

**GUNNYSACK.** We need you to play the Nurse.

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** I can't.

**GUNNYSACK.** You can!

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** No, I'm quite certain that I can't.

**GUNNYSACK.** You can!

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** I— (*Beat.*) Isn't the nurse a female?

**GUNNYSACK.** Not necessarily. These days nurses can be male or female. Haven't you seen *Scrubs*?

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** Well, no —

**GUNNYSACK.** Mr. Trollybottom... There's a reason they call it "Must See TV"; if it was optional, they'd call it "Must See TV, Unless You're Unavailable That Night." Irregardless, it's important for you to know that in theatre – there *is* no gender.

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** Oh. Of course. Well, I would love to help, but –

**GUNNYSACK.** Excellent! Thank you so much, Principal Trollybottom. On behalf of the entire student body, I thank you. *(Prompting the class:)* Hip hip –! *(Nothing.)* Hip hip –! *(Nothing.)* Now sir, please take the time now to review your lines. Sacagawea!

**CECILE.** *(Unfazed by now:)* Yes, ma'am.

**GUNNYSACK.** Next scene!

**CECILE.** The costume party.

**GUNNYSACK.** Okay. We won't have time to recite all of the lines that set the scene of the party, so we'll need to represent the party through a musical interlude of sorts. Who here is good at music?

*(Some HIP-HOP ENTHUSIASTS raise their hands.)*

Stupendous. I will need for you to assemble a short piece that tells the audience "This is a party."

**DEXTER.** Not a problem, Mrs. G.

**GUNNYSACK.** Oh I like that. "Mrs. G." That's very hip. *(To CECILE:)* How much time left in class?

**CECILE.** Nine minutes.

**GUNNYSACK.** Okay, we've gotta move, people! Focus! Where's my Romeo and my Juliet?

*(WENDY and LARRY raise their hands.)*

Okay, you two step forward. Because of our time constraints, I have changed your lines in the party scene. You'll say those lines, move toward each other, kiss, and then –

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

**GUNNYSACK.** Ah yes. We'll have to alter the kissing somehow. According to the school board, first base is a gateway base.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk.]*

**GUNNYSACK.** So I'll need you two to come up with some replacement for kissing. Be creative.

**THAD.** No kissing?

**GUNNYSACK.** No kissing.

**THAD.** *(Pleased:)* No kissing.

**GUNNYSACK.** Soupnuts!

**CECILE.** Yes?

**GUNNYSACK.** What's up next?

**CECILE.** The balcony scene.

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes, yes. The balcony scene. Now, folks – because of our lack of budget, we were unable to construct a balcony. Or *any* set for that matter. But it is *crucial* that we have a balcony. So we'll need to think on our feet here. Do I have any losers in the group?

*(Several LOSERS raise their hands.)*

More specifically, losers into engineering?

*(Two of the LOSERS drop their hands.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** *(To the hand-droppers:)* You two are into what exactly?

**BRIDGET.** Chemistry.

**KURT.** I'm just socially awkward.

**GUNNYSACK.** Good, good. So my engineers: I will need for you to construct a balcony.

**TRINA.** What materials do we have to work with?

**GUNNYSACK.** Well, nothing, really.

*(The engineers all simultaneously stroke their chins in thought.)*

Time check!

**CECILE.** Seven minutes.

**GUNNYSACK.** We've gotta hustle, people. Hustle! Next scene!

**CECILE.** Friar Laurence and Romeo.

**GUNNYSACK.** Who's my Friar Laurence?

**HORACE.** *(Quietly:)* Me.

**GUNNYSACK.** Who? Who said that?

**HORACE.** *(A little louder:)* Me. I'm not very – I don't really – want to do this.

**GUNNYSACK.** Nonsense. Everyone wants to do theatre. Without people wanting to do theatre, there wouldn't be theatre at all! And without theatre, old people would have nowhere to go at night. Is that what you want? You want your grandmother to die of boredom?

**HORACE.** No ma'am.

**GUNNYSACK.** Now listen closely, because here's what you're going to do: Friar Laurence's speeches are so long, and he likes to rhyme, so I'm just going to have you say the last word of each line. The audience should understand the meaning of your dialogue, even though you are only delivering one-tenth of the words in each line.

**HORACE.** Okay. But –

**GUNNYSACK.** You can do it! You can do anything you set your mind to.

**HORACE.** Okay. I guess so.

**GUNNYSACK.** I *know* so. All you need to do is remember one thing: Keanu Reeves gets paid to act. What's next, Staplegun?

**CECILE.** Tybalt slays Mercutio and Romeo slays Tybalt.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** Slaying isn't allowed, so dancers?

**DANCERS.** Sure. / No problem. / We're on it.

**GUNNYSACK.** Excellent. Now – because our time slot at the assembly is only ten minutes long, I have had to make some...slightly major...changes to the script. It can sometimes take Shakespeare a full five minutes to explain how poison works. So I have rewritten the rest of the play in my own words. (*Beat.*) Actually, I'll be honest with you: The *Fear Factor* season finale was on last night, so my son did most of the writing for me.

(JOSEPH *raises his hand.*)

Yes. Joseph.

**JOSEPH.** Joseph. (*Beat.*) Oh. You actually – Wow. (*Beat.*) Anyway – isn't rewriting the entire second half of a play illegal?

**GUNNYSACK.** That's a fine question, and it has an interesting answer, but since we're pressed for time, I'll give you the abbreviated version: Because Shakespeare died so long ago, anyone can legally do whatever they want with his plays. For instance, in this situation, my twelve-year-old and I have *improved* Shakespeare's *flawed* writing. What was once long and drawn out will now be quick, to-the-point, and far more meaningful. I think we can all agree that if William Shakespeare were alive today, he'd be quite pleased – nay, *grateful*.

(*Beat.*)

**SLOANE.** You're really cocky.

**GUNNYSACK.** (*Barreling on, not hearing:*) So everything after the fight sequence has been condensed and modernized and sped up. Every bit of new dialogue has been written in your script, all the way from the wedding arrangement with Paris, to the double-suicide at the end.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** Oh. I almost forgot. Double-suicide is a big no-no; therefore I have changed the plot of the ending juuuuust a little bit. Not too much, though. It will still be as powerful – probably far *more* powerful. And maybe – just maybe – the audience will learn a valuable lesson... (*Intensely whispered:*) ...*about life.*

**CECILE.** Miss Gunnysack?

**GUNNYSACK.** Yes?

**CECILE.** We're almost out of time.

**GUNNYSACK.** You are right, oh my goodness, you are right. Okay, folks. We'll stop planning here, but I need all of you to use your strengths, as well as all of the skills we've honed in the last twenty minutes – use your *creativity* to fill in all the gaps we haven't yet

worked on. Be sure to have all your lines memorized, and use whatever costume ideas you can come up with by altering whatever clothes you're already wearing. Meet in the auditorium immediately after lunch.

**WHIPPLESTICK.** [*Honk honk.*]

**GUNNYSACK.** Ah yes, I almost forgot. Lunch is no longer in the budget. I'll meet you in ten minutes.

Remember, class: I want you to be both spectacular *and* fabulous; I want you to illuminate the stage with your brilliance; and I want you to make that audience *leap* to its feet in glorious celebration.

And if you don't, since this is your only grade for the year—I'll fail you. (*Beat.*) Any questions?

*(Now that so much is at stake, all hands go up in a frenzy.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** None? Great! Break a leg, everyone!

*(The bell rings. Blackout. Music.)*



## Scene 2 Showtime

*(Music stops. Lights come up to TROLLYBOTTOM facing the audience. He is in the middle of an announcement to the assembly of students.)*

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** ...and as a result, toilet paper will no longer be made available in school toilets... Moving away from disciplinary business on toward something along the lines of ... *show* business, if I may – *(He was proud of that one.)* – today we have a special treat. In honor of Shakespeare Awareness month, Miss Gunnysack's Drama One class will be performing a play for us this morning. And while I don't wish to give anything away, you might just see a familiar face in the cast. *(He winks broadly.)* This performance is especially exciting, because, as I am told, the play will be performed almost exactly the way it was performed back in Shakespeare's time. A little peek into history for all of us, what a treat... So without further ado, let's all put our hands together for Romeo and Juliet!

*(TROLLYBOTTOM exits. Lights up to GINA, JENNIFER, KATY, and PETER. They hold up poster board or canvases with houses painted on them. GINA makes a valiant attempt, but she's no actor, so there's not much going on in her voice.)*

**GINA.** So there are these two houses, and they look alike, and they fight a lot,

*(JENNIFER and KATY make the two signs bang together lightly.)*

then they give birth to these baby houses,

*(The posters are lifted and tiny baby houses plop down below the big houses.)*

and then the baby houses die,

*(PETER knocks the baby houses over.)*

and at the end the big houses make up.

*(JENNIFER and KATY make the two posters embrace. They exit.)*

*(WALTER enters. He uses a different stereotypical accent for each of his three roles. They are way overdone.)*

**WALTER/SAMPSON.** *(French:)* Gregory, o' my word, we'll not carry coals.

**WALTER/GREGORY.** *(British:)* No, for then we should be colliers.

**WALTER/SAMPSON.** *(French:)* A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

**WALTER/GREGORY.** *(British:)* Draw thy tool! Here comes two of the house of the Montagues.

**WALTER/SAMPSON.** (*French:*) I will bite my thumb at them; which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.

*(He bits his thumb.)*

**WALTER/ABRAHAM.** (*Scottish:*) Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**WALTER/SAMPSON.** (*French:*) I do bite my thumb, sir.

**WALTER/ABRAHAM.** (*Scottish:*) Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**WALTER/SAMPSON.** (*French:*) No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

**WALTER/ABRAHAM.** (*Scottish:*) You lie!

*(WALTER/ABRAHAM reaches for his sword. Suddenly, the DANCERS appear and represent the first fight sequence, complete with beautiful background music. The music can either be fight-appropriate – e.g. Carmina Burana – or quite the opposite – e.g. Enya.)*

*(THAD/BENVOLIO enters.)*

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** (*Having trouble:*) Part. Swords, stop.

*(The DANCERS and the music stop.)*

*(JOSEPH/TYBALT enters.)*

**JOSEPH/TYBALT.** Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** No. I. Swords?

**JOSEPH/TYBALT.** Have at thee, coward!

*(They reach for their swords, but a split-second before they draw... the DANCERS and music resume – another danced interpretation of a brawl.)*

*(WHITNEY/PRINCE enters. The dancing and music cease.)*

**WHITNEY/PRINCE.**

Rebellious subjects, enemies to the peace

On pain of death, all men depart.

*(All depart except THAD/BENVOLIO. He's a little lost. LARRY/ROMEO enters, startling THAD. Hanging around nearby is FRAN/SERVANT, biding her time – perhaps tying her shoes.)*

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** Uh. Hey.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Is the day so young?

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** *(Beat.)* Yes?

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Ay me! sad hours seem long.

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** I— No.

*(SETH enters as a random servant.)*

**SETH/SERVANT.** Hey Benvolio—just so you know: In order to retain thine position as starting center, thou needest a minimum 2.0 GPA. So let's not fail this class.

*(SETH yanks the football out of THAD's grasp.)*

*(Beat. Then as an afterthought, as if to cover for his side note:)*

Uhhh—forsooth.

*(SETH exits.)*

*(A moment, as this sinks in. THAD is dumbstruck. It's as if he's lost his powers. Now he actually tries. He's not fantastic, but it'll do.)*

**THAD/BENVOLIO.**

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,  
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof.

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,  
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!

*(FRAN/SERVANT looks up.)*

**FRAN/SERVANT.** There's gonna be a party.

*(That's it for FRAN/SERVANT. She briefly gestures to the two and exits.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.** I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,  
But to rejoice in splendor of mine own.

*(Lights shift to a room in Capulet's house with SARAH/LADY CAPULET and TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE. He is still wearing the suit that all principals wear, but he's covered in accessories clearly borrowed from the school nurse, including a hat and stethoscope. It looks ridiculous on him, but he doesn't realize that.)*

**SARAH/LADY CAPULET.** Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me.

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.** Where's this girl? Juliet!

*(WENDY/JULIET enters.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** How now. Who calls.

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.** Your mother. She must be upset about your *report card!*

*(TROLLYBOTTOM, very pleased with this education reference, does a big take to the audience.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** Madam, I am here. What is your will?

**SARAH/LADY CAPULET.** The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.**

A man, young lady! lady, such a man  
As all the world – why, he's a man of wax.

**SARAH/LADY CAPULET.** Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

**WENDY/JULIET.** I'll look to like, if looking liking move.

*(Enter JANINE/SERVANT. The spotlight shines directly on her, and the lights dim everywhere else. Her speech is very dramatic, drawn out, and well-rehearsed, as if it were the most important soliloquy ever performed.)*

**JANINE/SERVANT.**

Madam, the guests are come, supper served up, you called, my young lady asked for, the nurse cursed in the pantry, and every thing in extremity. I must hence to wait; I beseech you, follow straight.

*(She sobs with intensity.)*

*(The lights shift back to the scene at hand.)*

**SARAH/LADY CAPULET.** We follow thee.

*(All exit.)*

*(Suddenly the HIP-HOP ENTHUSIASTS have sprung into action. They make it very clear that a party is upon us. Music blares. Various people come onstage and yell "We're at a party!" or hold up an obvious sign that says "This is a party." People come out and*

*breakdance, if possible. Someone might do The Worm. This should go on as long as it's funny. If possible, have a DJ spinning as the dancing and music goes on.)*

*(At some point, LARRY/ROMEO and WENDY/JULIET are set apart from the rest of the party. They see each other. To represent them falling in love at first sight, two students appear with mobiles consisting of a few dangling hearts. Each student dangles a mobile above LARRY/ROMEO and WENDY/JULIET's head and bounces it. After a bit, they walk off.)*

*(LARRY/ROMEO approaches WENDY/JULIET.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

If I profane with my unwortheiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

**WENDY/JULIET.**

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;

*(They move closer to one another. Instead of kissing, however, they give each other a firm handshake.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.

**WENDY/JULIET.** Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!  
Give me my sin again.

*(They wave at each other. Or a high-five.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** You kiss by the book.

*(TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE enters.)*

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.** Madam, your mother craves a word with you. Maybe she's upset because you need to finish your *homework!*

*(Nobody really pays attention to this lameness.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.** What is her mother?

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.** Her mother is the lady of the house.

*(They separate from LARRY/ROMEO.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

Is she a Capulet?

O dear account! my life is my foe's debt.

*(He exits, sad.)*

**TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE.**

His name is Romeo, and a Montague;

The only son of your great enemy.

**WENDY/JULIET.**

My only love sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

*(Suddenly the HIP-HOP ENTHUSIASTS have again sprung into action. Now they make it clear that the party is winding down. Perhaps the same people appear onstage and yell "The party's over!" Perhaps the DJ can spin a record-scratching remix of a well-known end-of-party song – e.g. "That's What Friends Are For" or "New York, New York." This fades into...)*

*(JANINE/SERVANT, alone onstage, cleaning up the party with a mop. She wipes the sweat off her brow. She looks out in both despair and determination. Very dramatic.)*

*(Lights shift to the balcony scene. The engineers' idea was to represent a balcony by using a human pyramid. WENDY/JULIET is at the very top of the pyramid. LARRY/ROMEO enters.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

**WENDY/JULIET.**

Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

O, be some other name!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet;

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

I take thee at thy word:

Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

*(LARRY/ROMEO climbs up the pyramid. This is not easy. Once in reaching distance, they give each other pound – i.e. fists up, fists down, fists together. He climbs back down.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.**

Good night, good night! parting is such sweet sorrow,  
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.

*(LARRY/ROMEO exits.)*

*(HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE enters. He wears something that makes it obvious he's the friar. HORACE is shy, but as his "monologues" continue, he gets faster and more confident--gradually getting his body into the rhythm--and eventually takes full control of himself and the stage.)*

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.**

Night,  
light  
reels  
wheels:  
eye,  
dry,  
ours  
flowers.  
tomb;  
womb,  
kind  
find,  
excellent,  
different.  
lies  
qualities: *(Rhymes it exactly with "lies")*  
live  
give,  
use  
abuse:  
misapplied;  
dignified.  
flower  
power:  
part;  
heart.

still  
will;  
predominant,  
plant.

(LARRY/ROMEO *enters.*)

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Good morrow, father.

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.**

Benedicite!  
me?  
head  
bed:  
eye,  
lie;  
brain  
reign:  
assure  
distemperature;  
right,  
to-night.

**LARRY/ROMEO.**

Then plainly know my heart's dear love is set  
On the fair daughter of rich Capulet:  
I'll tell thee as we pass; but this I pray,  
That thou consent to marry us to-day.

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.**

here!  
dear,  
lies  
eyes.  
brine  
Rosaline!  
waste,  
taste!  
clears,  
ears;  
sit  
yet:  
thine,



Rosaline:  
then,  
men.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** O, let us hence; I stand on sudden haste.

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.** Fast. *(Pause.)* Fāste?

*(Lights shift to THAD/BENVOLIO and BETSY/MERCUTIO.)*

**THAD/BENVOLIO.** By my head, here come the Capulets.

**BETSY/MERCUTIO.** By my heel, I care not.

*(JOSEPH/TYBALT and other Capulets enter. LARRY/ROMEO enters soon after.)*

**JOSEPH/TYBALT.** You steppin'?

**BETSY/MERCUTIO.** Ohhh I'm steppin'.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** I really wish you'd refrain from stepping.

*(All except Larry/Romeo are about to draw swords, when the DANCERS intervene with a new dance. Without violence, it represents BETSY/MERCUTIO about to kill JOSEPH/TYBALT, then LARRY/ROMEO stopping BETSY/MERCUTIO, then JOSEPH/TYBALT killing BETSY/MERCUTIO. The music and DANCERS stop.)*

**BETSY/MERCUTIO.** A plague on both your houses!

*(The DANCERS start back up again for LARRY/ROMEO killing JOSEPH/TYBALT.)*

*(Everything from this point forward is very quick. Players make their entrances and exits almost in conveyor belt fashion. Or they poke their head through whatever scenery exists. Fast, fast, fast.)*

**WHITNEY/PRINCE.** Romeo is banished!

*(Back to Juliet's place.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.** I'm banished.

**WENDY/JULIET.** Really?

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Yeah.

**WENDY/JULIET.** Why?

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Killed your cousin.

WENDY/JULIET. Oh. Why?

LARRY/ROMEO. Vengeance.

WENDY/JULIET. Oh. Gotcha.

LARRY/ROMEO. So I gotta go.

WENDY/JULIET. Before ya do, can we...? —y'know...

LARRY/ROMEO. Okay.

*(They approach each other, seemingly to begin the love-making process. They proceed to thumb war, quickly. Someone emerges victorious.)*

LARRY/ROMEO. Off to Mantua.

WENDY/JULIET. See you soon, right?

LARRY/ROMEO. Prolly.

*(They give each other the friendly finger gun shot. LARRY/ROMEO exits.)*

TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE. Your mom's on her way.

SARAH/LADY CAPULET. On Thursday you're marrying Paris.

WENDY/JULIET. Nuh-unnhh.

SARAH/LADY CAPULET. Oh yeah? Tell that to Dad.

VICTOR/CAPULET. On Thursday you're marrying Paris.

WENDY/JULIET. Nuh-unnhh.

VICTOR/CAPULET. Yuh-huhh.

WENDY/JULIET. Man...

*(In Friar Laurence's cell.)*

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. 'Sup.

WENDY/JULIET. I'm gonna kill myself.

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. I've got a better idea.

WENDY/JULIET. Sock it to me.

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. Drink this fake poison.

WENDY/JULIET. Fake poison?

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. Fake poison. It'll make you look like you're dead, but you won't be.

WENDY/JULIET. Seriously?

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. Yes.

WENDY/JULIET. What about Romeo?

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. I'll tell him.

WENDY/JULIET. Promise?

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. Yes.

WENDY/JULIET. Pinky-swear?

*(They pinky-swear.)*

WENDY/JULIET. Rock on.

HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE. Indeed.

*(Back at Juliet's place.)*

WENDY/JULIET. L'chaim.

*(She drinks, and immediately passes out.)*

TROLLYBOTTOM/NURSE. She's dead!

SARAH/LADY CAPULET. She's dead?

VICTOR/CAPULET. This hasn't been the best week.

*(Exiled in Mantua.)*

PATRICK/BALTHASAR. So I got good news and bad news.

LARRY/ROMEO. Bad news first.

PATRICK/BALTHASAR. Juliet's dead.

LARRY/ROMEO. What? No! *(Beat.)* What's the good news?

**PATRICK/BALTHASAR.** I bruised my elbow. Wait – shoot – there’s no good news.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** This really sucks.

**PATRICK/BALTHASAR.** Yeah.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** I’m going to go be with her.

**PATRICK/BALTHASAR.** Wait! Did you get a note or anything – you know, in case she used fake poison or something?

**LARRY/ROMEO.** No.

**PATRICK/BALTHASAR.** Oh.

(APRIL/ APOTHECARY *enters.*)

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Suicide poison, please.

**APRIL/APOTHECARY.** The real kind or the fake kind?

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Real.

**APRIL/APOTHECARY.** Forty bucks.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** That’s highway robbery!

**APRIL/APOTHECARY.** What do *you* care? You’re buying suicide poison.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Ah, touché.

(LARRY/ROMEO *exits.*)

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.** Did you give Romeo that letter I gave you?

**GREG/FRIAR JOHN.** What? No. You didn’t give me a letter.

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.** Yes I did. I said, “Friar John, be sure Romeo gets this letter.”

**GREG/FRIAR JOHN.** No, you told me “Friar Hans, for sure J. Lo is a bed wetter.”

**HORACE/FRIAR LAURENCE.** You’re an idiot.

**GREG/FRIAR JOHN.** Fair enough.

(*In the churchyard.*)

**JUNGKEUN/PARIS.** I'm Paris. Let's fight.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** I'd really rather not, but if you insist.

**JUNGKEUN/PARIS.** I insist.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Okay.

*(They reach for their swords. A single DANCER leaps across the stage in a balletic move, with a tiny segment of music in the background. Or maybe the DANCER runs onstage, does a little old school hip-hop dance in place – the one where you grab your foot and dance funky in a circle. Whatever the dance, that's all it took – JUNGKEUN/PARIS is no more.)*

*(LARRY/ROMEO approaches WENDY/JULIET's dead body.)*

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Yep. She's dead.

*(He drinks the poison, passes out. WENDY/JULIET wakes up.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** What the – What's going on? Did Romeo just...

*(She sips the poison.)*

Oh.

*(She shakes him. He revives.)*

I thought you drank poison, but this is just flat Mountain Dew.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Seriously? *(He looks at the vial.)* Well I'll be... Good thing I kept the receipt.

**WENDY/JULIET.** But look, we're both alive.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Hey, nice. I guess I learned my lesson.

**WENDY/JULIET.** Me, too.

*(Beat.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** Wanna kiss?

*(There is a pause. This isn't in the script. LARRY breaks character a little.)*

**LARRY.** Seriously?

**WENDY.** Yeah.

**LARRY.** Okay.

*(They move in for a delicate, tender, and short kiss. They break apart and smile, both blushing.)*

*(THAD storms in.)*

**THAD.** No kissing!

*(He is about to pummel LARRY, when WHIPPLESTICK suddenly appears, honking up a storm. THAD – who is still just about to attack – looks at WHIPPLESTICK.)*

**THAD.** You mean I can't kick his –

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

**THAD.** But I –

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

**THAD.** But they –

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

**THAD.** Kissing isn't allowed eith –

**WHIPPLESTICK.** *[Honk honk.]*

*(Pause. A brief standstill. Then:)*

**THAD.** Man...!

*(THAD lumbers off, quite miffed.)*

*(Pause. WHIPPLESTICK looks to LARRY and gives him a little head gesture, granting him the go-ahead. Beat. LARRY and WENDY kiss again.)*

**WENDY/JULIET.** Well, I sure am glad you didn't kill yourself.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** Same here. Because suicide is *wrong*.

**WENDY/JULIET.** It sure is. And so is all of this feuding between our families! Hey, I've got an idea – how about we get our families to set aside their differences.

**LARRY/ROMEO.** That's a great idea.

**WENDY/JULIET.** Hey everybody!

*(Everybody appears.)*

**ALL.** Yes?

**WENDY/JULIET.** How about we all get along? Montagues? Capulets? Can we put a stop to this horrible feud? Let's be friends!

**ALL.** Yaaaaaaaay!

*(Montagues hug Capulets. Then, a sudden change in atmosphere to normal-paced gravitas.)*

**WHITNEY/PRINCE.**

A glooming peace this morning with it brings;  
The sun, for sorrow, will not show his head:  
Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things;  
Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished:  
For never was a story of more woe  
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

*(GUNNYSACK stands up from the audience.)*

**GUNNYSACK.** I have an important announcement for the whole class: Everyone gets A-plusses!

**ALL.** Wooooooooooooo!

*(TROLLYBOTTOM runs onstage.)*

**TROLLYBOTTOM.** I just got a call from the school board. They heard about our performance and have decided to put funding back into Drama!

**ALL.** Wooooooooooooo!

*(WHIPPLESTICK stands.)*

**WHIPPLESTICK.** I'm cured!

**ALL.** Wooooooooooooo!

*(Hip-hop music fills the stage and everybody dances in celebration. If the crowd is into it, this can last a while and can be combined with the curtain call. For instance, WHIPPLESTICK can dance or wheel through, and honk on rhythm all the while: Honk ... honk-honk ... honk ... honk-honk [and so forth]. Students can carry signs that say "Hate is a Four-Letter Word" or "We Learned Our Lesson" or "Capulets + Montagues = 4evah" or "We're totally not feuding anymore.")*

*(Blackout.)*

*End of Play*

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