

V E R O N A

by
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inspired by Shakespeare's
"ROMEO & JULIET"

No FADE IN. Just BLOOD SPLATTERING across a MAP OF ITALY.

Moving across this ILLUSTRATED LANDSCAPE, a VOICE guides us.
And though we've yet to meet him, this is FRIAR LAURENCE:

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*It is the year of our Lord, 1495...
Charles the Eighth of France has
conquered Southern Italy. To combat
the invasion, The Pope rallies the
Northern Republics to an alliance.*

SOUNDS OF WAR now audible, the parchment map becomes REALITY:

EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Quick, visceral VIOLENCE. Various Italian provinces attacked
& conquered. KING CHARLES VIII presiding over the CARNAGE.

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*... But it matters not. Our nation
has been at war with itself for
centuries... kingdom fighting
kingdom, family fighting family...*

FRENCH TROOPS gallop, PILLAGING helpless ITALIAN VILLAGES.

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*... And none more fiercely than in
the northern province of Verona:
domain of the Capulets & Montagues.*

EXT. VERONA - DAY

Soaring over a snow-dusted tableau, we're soon overtaken by

A BATTLEFIELD

dotted with troops. THOUSANDS forming TWO CLEAR SIDES.

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*Behold: two households, both alike
in dignity... an ancient grudge
that breaks to new mutiny. From
forth the fatal loins of these two
foes... lies the fate of Italy.*

Galloping from the south, a BATTALION OF SOLDIERS...

THE ARMY OF CAPULET

Regal, refined, protected by ornate, modern armor. On their
breastplates -- their coat of arms: an IBEX motif.

RISING HIGHER reveals a FOREST to the north, defended by...

THE ARMY OF MONTAGUE

Notice the crude armor & weaponry. Stitched leather. Animal pelts. Cloaks adorned with a family crest: an etched WOLF.

Moving through this BARBARIC HORDE, we soon find...

A HOODED WARRIOR

kneeled on the outskirts. He's handsome but filthy. Young skin checked with scars. An inner strength and battle-worn exterior. Focused, he tinkers with SOMETHING...

CLOSER, we now understand he's carving...

A WOODEN RING,

shaping the grain into an intricate visage of WOLVES.

Lost in thought, he gathers fallen shavings in his palm -- watching as they're whisked away by the snowflaked breeze.

In the distance, a VOICE breaks his concentration:

VOICE (O.S.)
Head in the clouds, Montague?
Thought we had a war to fight...

He turns to find: two MONTAGUE WARRIORS, close in age, approaching on horseback. Meet MERCUTIO & BENVOLIO.

With a faint smile, the Hooded Warrior tucks away the ring, mounting his horse with a kick:

HOODED WARRIOR
... Thought we had war to win.

As he rides away, Mercutio shoots Benvolio a GRIN --

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Our Hooded Warrior gallops to the head of the Montague formation, Benvolio & Mercutio close behind. Welcoming them is a gruff, grey-bearded patriarch. Meet LORD MONTAGUE, 60s.

Our four men scan the HORIZON: their ENEMY has landed... ARCHERS, CALVARY... all dwarfed by enormous CATAPULTS. An intimidating advantage. But Lord Montague isn't fazed:

LORD MONTAGUE
Wretched Capulet. Today they may
have us beat in scale... but they
will never have us beat in heart.

ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD

Centered in the Capulet formation: a clear leader presides. A regal man draped in fine silks & gilded armor, wispy locks blown in winter air. Meet LORD CAPULET, 60s.

LORD CAPULET
Barbaric Montague. We may both hail
 from Verona... but God put them
 before us to paint white snow red.

Sneering in agreement is a brooding Capulet General, TYBALT:

TYBALT
 Couldn't agree more, m'lord...

BACK TO MONTAGUE FORMATION

Lord Montague nods to the Hooded Warrior: *it's time.* Taking
 the cue, he rides before his TROOPS, trotting to a STOP --

HOODED WARRIOR
 Many have asked you to kill Capulet
 for honor... *Others: for country...*

All eyes are glued and attentive. None more than a YOUNG
 MONTAGUE SOLDIER. He whispers to an OLDER comrade in arms:

YOUNG SOLDIER
Who is he...?

OLD SOLDIER
 Heir to the Montague throne. They
 say his name means: *The Man From
 Rome.*

The Young Soldier is awestruck: *it's him...*

HOODED WARRIOR (CONT'D)
 ... But as you wield your swords
 this morning, remember: I ask you
 to kill Capulet for family. *I ask
 you to kill Capulet for the House
 of Montague!*

As he UNSHEATHES his sword to sky, MONTAGUE TROOPS break into
 DEAFENING CHANT. And it's now clear who this is:

MONTAGUE TROOPS
 RO-ME-O! RO-ME-O! RO-ME-O!

SLAM TO TITLE:

V E R O N A

An ERUPTION of galloping horses announces a BATTLE underway:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - THAT MOMENT

C-CLUNK, C-CLUNK. OVERCRANKED HOOVES IN BLOOD-SOAKED SNOW....

ROMEO

wields his sword on horseback, dodging catapulted FIREBOMBS --
hacking through CAPULET MEN...

BENVOLIO & MERCUTIO

intercept TORCHED ARROWS with SHIELDS, their arcing blades
SHREDDING armor and flesh...

ROMEO

dismounts his horse, joining his brethren. As swift swordplay
dusts air with enemy blood, there is no debate: these men
were built for war...

CAPULET RESERVES

witness the massacre from afar. With a solemn nod from Lord
Capulet, Tybalt signals their TRIBUNES. And with the WAVE of
BATTALION FLAGS, the message is clear: RETREAT.

Seeing this, CAPULET INFANTRY scatter like vermin. And as the
Montague Army releases a VICTORIOUS ROAR, we RISE...

HIGH ABOVE

the GRAVEYARD of battle, revealing: slaughtered BODIES,
fallen HORSES, clouds of BUZZARDS circling the sky...
CHEERS grow to PEAK, while on scorched earth below...

ROMEO

relishes the bloodsoaked victory -- backlit by orange flames
& purple twilight -- a MYTHIC IMAGE.

CUT TO:

QUIET PATTERNING OF HOOVES

Montague troops -- lead by Romeo & Lord Montague -- return to
BASECAMP. Shelter, food, and family await...

EXT. MONTAGUE FORTIFICATION - THAT NIGHT

... However, they're SHOCKED by what lies in their place: THE
ENCAMPMENT has been RANSACKED, PILLAGED, SET AFLAME --

LORD MONTAGUE

-- *That was no Capulet retreat...*

ROMEO

(and then it hits him)

... *Rosaline...*

Romeo dismounts, sprinting through the BURNING CAMP for --

A SMOLDERING TENT

Inside, he finds his mother, LADY MONTAGUE, alive, but HYSTERICAL. And Romeo soon sees why...

DOZENS OF WOMEN & CHILDREN

hang from their necks. NOOSED. Heads limp with death.

Panicked, Romeo SEARCHES -- one-by-one -- collapsing to his knees as he comes upon... a YOUNG WOMAN, HANGING. Dead.

Paralyzed by rage, Romeo takes out THE WOODEN RING, gripping it tight. In this moment, only one thing is certain: he carved this ring for HER. For ROSALINE.

AT THE TENT ENTRANCE

Lord Montague bears witness to the tragic scene, STUNNED... And as the SCREAMS of Romeo overtake the encampment we

SLAM TO BLACK.

LEGEND:

ONE YEAR LATER**EXT. VERONA - DAY**

A SOARING AERIAL: on one end, a bustling CITY. On the other: sharp, foreboding MOUNTAINS. The connective tissue between the two: a TURBULENT RIVER lined with a VAST FOREST...

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - VERONA - THAT MOMENT

TWO SOLDIERS on horseback whip past bone-white trees.

By the ibex on their armor, it's clear: they're Capulet. Meet SAMPSON & GREGORY. These men are gruff, intimidating, and clearly have somewhere to be. But --

-- a SUDDEN RUSTLE brings them SKIDDING TO A STOP.

They SCAN the foreboding trees, spooked:

SAMPSON

-- On my word, ready your sword.
This be Montague territory...

GREGORY

The war that wages is between our
Lords, is it not?

SAMPSON

And like our Lord we shall kill
their men and sack their maids.

GREGORY
 Deflower Montague maids, you say?
 (an excited sneer)
Reckon they enjoy a good bugger?

SAMPSON
 They shall enjoy it as long as I
 can stay stiff...
 (cupping his codpiece)
 ... Everybody knows I'm a pretty
 piece of flesh.

They BURST into laughter. ABRUPTLY silenced by SOMETHING...

A HORSE

Breezing by the trees. And soon, ANOTHER. They're being
 trailed -- *SHING!* -- they draw their swords. On guard... as --

-- a CLOAKED MAN (Montague wolf emblem on cloak) appears from
 behind a sycamore. Sampson & Gregory BRACE... but are quickly
 confused by his stillness --

SAMPSON
 -- I shall bite my thumb at him...
 see if he bares it...

Sampson's GREY TEETH gnash his THUMB, a medieval "F-you!"

SEEING THIS, the Montague warrior removes his hood and we
 recognize: Benvolio, hand resting on sword.

BENVOLIO
 Gentlemen... I hope you do not bite
 your thumb at me?

Sampson looks to Gregory -- *a silent exchange* -- then:

SAMPSON
 I do not bite my thumb at you. I
 merely bite my thumb.

GREGORY
*However... if you're looking for a
 fight, we are your men --*

-- He defiantly FLAUNTS his ibex shield... soon realizing his
 MISTAKE, when: Mercutio strolls in, DAGGERS in each hand.

MERCUTIO
Looking for a fight. Us? Never...

The Montague men share a smirk, COILING to attack. But
 then... ANOTHER VOICE halts the mounting tension:

VOICE (O.S.)
*You have pulled your swords on
 these heartless hinds? Turn around
 and gaze upon your death.*

Turning, THEY FIND: a familiar Capulet general -- Tybalt --
 approaching through the dense trees, sword ATTENTIVE.

BENVOLIO
 We only try to keep the peace.

TYBALT
 You pull your swords, then speak of
 peace?! I hate the word. Like I
 hate Montague. Like I hate you --

On these words, BLADES ERUPT in a BLUR OF STEEL. And within a
 few SWIFT MOVEMENTS -- Mercutio THROWS his dagger --

-- *THWACK!* -- SKEWERING Tybalt's hand against a tree. Finito.

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Sampson & Gregory lie beaten and injured -- Tybalt's hand
 still PINNED to the tree. Mercutio fixes a threatening blade,
 while Benvolio SEARCHES Tybalt... *Soon finding* --

A SEALED LETTER

Melted wax forming the CAPULET FAMILY CREST.

Benvolio unscrolls the parchment, absorbing SWIRLED INK...
 Mercutio senses the importance, goading Tybalt:

MERCUTIO
*Delivering secret messages, are we?
 If I was your Lord, I'd punish your
 error with death. In his absence:
 I'll happily do the honors --*

-- But as Mercutio moves in for the kill, he is HALTED by

A TRAVELING GARRISON

arriving on the scene. A pack of WATCHMEN led by a stoic,
 Venetian COUNCILMAN with an AMPUTATED ARM... Meet CONSTABLE
 ESCALUS, 40s.

ESCALUS
 Enemies to peace, drop your swords!

Mercutio RELAXES his blade. Benvolio HIDES the letter...

Dismounting his horse, Escalus surveys the scene, the man's
 demeanor is clear: *he has bigger fish to fry...*

Approaching Tybalt, he pulls blade from bark. Punctured hand finally unpinned, Tybalt collapses.

ESCALUS
Upon punishment of death, all men
depart!

The sneering Capulets mount-up, THUNDEROUS HOOVES departing --

-- But Mercutio has unfinished business. *He gestures for his dagger.* Escalus eyes him, handing it back with suspicion. Satisfied, the Montague men disappear into the foggy forest.

Tension hanging in the air, Escalus stews, looking down to the VALLEY of VERONA... his destination awaiting below:

EXT. CITY OF VERONA - DAY

This is not the garish Verona you think you know.
Renaissance refinement traded for torch-lit grunge...
Cobbled streets abuzz with drunken BEGGARS & filthy TROLLOPS.

The GARRISON trots through the dense CROWDS -- headed for an opulent building of Corinthian columns and coffered domes...

INT. HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT - CITY OF VERONA - DAY

A large MAP TABLE. MARBLE FIGURINES occupy ITALIAN REGIONS. Escalus regards the map -- surrounded by LOCAL CONSTABLES cloaked in DOUBLETs, stacked in the terraced auditorium...

ESCALUS
I travel with news from the Pope!

His words drop the room to SILENCE. He has their attention.

ESCALUS
His holiness has formed an alliance
against King Charles of France. All
territories have joined except the
Republic of Venice -- and you...
the Province of Verona!

The chamber fills with MURMURS. Fighting for attention, Escalus SLIDES a marble figurine towards for the north:

ESCALUS
Having sacked Naples, Charles's
troops move north for Pisa... and
Verona is next. *Your Lords must
make peace and join the alliance.*
Verona unifies... or Verona falls!

Murmurs turn to LAUGHTER. An ITALIAN DIGNITARY stands:

ITALIAN DIGNITARY

Lord Capulet & Montague unified?!
 The Pope may grant miracles, but
that is a chore for God himself!

ESCALUS

Tell me then: who began this feud?
 Which household is responsible for
 generations of such bloodshed?

HUSHED WHISPERS from the assembly. Then silence. No one speaks... because no one knows.

Dead serious now, Escalus grabs a final figurine, displaying it to the room:

ESCALUS

If Capulet & Montague cannot forge
 peace in Verona -- their ignorance
 will be replaced with despair. Let
 me be living proof, for the French
 have already seized my good arm...
*And if Verona fails to unite --
 should all of you only be so lucky.*

He slides the MARBLE SOLDIER across the map, landing directly on VERONA. The gesture carries weight, MURMURS returning...

EXT. MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - DUSK

Tracing JAGGED TRAILS up TOWERING MOUNTAINS, Benvolio & Mercutio gallop feverishly for --

-- a bustling VILLAGE: bathwater dumped, hens plucked, deer butchered. And looming above it: an epic STONE CASTLE carved into the face of a sharp peak. Behold: CASTLE MONTAGUE...

EXT. CASTLE MONTAGUE - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - MOMENTS LATER

A stitched LEATHER BALL bounces through puddles of mud. And soon... a foot wrapped in rags connects with a KICK.

WIDER, we're on a FIELD OF GAMES... Montague SOLDIERS playing an archaic form of SOCCER. Lord Montague is in the fray -- throwing elbows -- keeping up impressively for his age...

ON THE SIDELINES,

Benvolio & Mercutio are spotted on approach...

Eyeing them, Lord Montague grabs the ball: *pausing the game* --

-- Out of breath, he meets the men at a sideline table overflowing with ALE & CURED MEAT. Grabbing hearty handfuls:

LORD MONTAGUE
I heard you boys had a run-in with
Capulet troops?

Benvolio moves to present the LETTER, but Mercutio stalls:

MERCUTIO
My Lord... how'd you know?

Benvolio gets the hint, tucking the letter away. Lord Montague finishes a slug of ale, wiping suds from his beard --

LORD MONTAGUE
'Tis my land -- I know everything.

WITH A HURL of the ball to Mercutio's gut, he lumbers for the castle. *The men know they're in for it...*

INT. MAIN HALL - CASTLE MONTAGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Mid-feast, stained-glass twilight spills onto an epic banquet. Mounds of dripped wax form candlelit centerpieces...

Chomping a turkey leg, Lord Montague eyes the boys:

LORD MONTAGUE
Forcing your uncle to beg, are we?

BENVOLIO
It's true... Capulets descended on our land. We sought to teach them a lesson, but a Constable parted the rage...

Lady Montague sits beside her Lord, a shell of her former self. Her pale lips part, air barely behind breath:

LADY MONTAGUE
And my boy... Romeo?

A HANDMAIDEN delicately spoons a powdery dose of LAUDANUM into her wine. Benvolio looks at his aunt, sympathetic:

BENVOLIO
He was not involved, m'lady.

She takes a medicating sip... then struggles to a stand:

LADY MONTAGUE
If you'll excuse me, this talk of violence is... unbecoming.

Helped by her handmaiden, she slinks from the room...

Lord Montague watches, heavy hearted. With the WAVE OF HIS HAND, the festivities are over -- SERVANTS & DINERS exiting.

Alone now with Benvolio & Mercutio, Lord Montague confides:

LORD MONTAGUE
 Since Rosaline's passing, her
 Ladyship hasn't been the same.
Nor has Romeo, for that matter...
 That child is a strong tree of oak,
 but inside he's rotted by mites...
 (beat)
 This war wages on with the
 Capulets, while our most valuable
 soldier hides from the day. Please,
 my boys, *only you can intervene...*

Sharing a look, Benvolio & Mercutio understand the gravity of his request... And soon, we're overtaken by a familiar image:

ROSALINE

Rope noosed around neck. A lifeless body hanging.

Yet her eyes are OPEN, staring at --

-- ROMEO... approaching... disturbed by the sight...

... Without warning, her pale lips part with a GASP:

ROSALINE
 Ro-me-o...

ROMEO JOLTS AWAKE. *Just a dream...*

INT. ROMEO'S TOWER - CASTLE MONTAGUE - THAT MOMENT

Rising from bed, Romeo appears sleep-deprived. Haunted even. But his surroundings paint an upside: he's been busy...

Shelves filled with MANUSCRIPTS, workbenches littered with TOOLS, a drafting table brimming with SKETCHES...

Approaching the desk, he begins DRAWING, deep in thought. But soon his ink PAUSES, SENSING SOMETHING --

-- In a flash -- he spins around -- SWORD FIXED ON:

BENVOLIO
 Morning, cousin...

A smiling Benvolio & Mercutio cause Romeo to RELENT... Trading sword for QUILL, he returns to his sketches:

ROMEO
 ... *Is it morning so soon?*

Ben & Merc share a look of concern: *Romeo's looking rough.*

MERCUTIO

Maybe we get some air, Romeo. Clear
the cobwebs...

Ignoring the suggestion, Romeo waves his men over...
Approaching, they peer over his shoulder at the DRAWINGS --

ON CLOSER LOOK, notice a resemblance to the works of DaVinci.
Detailed BLUEPRINTS of ARMOR, WEAPONRY... MACHINES OF WAR.

ROMEO

My father thinks winning wars is
about *heart*. But that day we faced
Capulet, they had *innovation*. We
either *innovate*, or we surely die.

MOVING IN on a sketched CATAPULT, the ink comes to LIFE as:

A HUGE BOULDER

splinters through a grove of trees -- *THWACKKK!*

EXT. BLACKSMITH SHOP - CASTLE MONTAGUE - THAT MOMENT

Outside the barn doors of a bustling workshop, Romeo
auditions a scaffolded CATAPULT. Ben & Merc are impressed...

As Montague SERVANTS reload a new BOULDER, Romeo enters this
laboratory of dancing embers and hammered steel...

Lifting a tarp reveals: more PROTOTYPES of his drawings...
A TELESCOPING SWORD, a MULTI-ARROW CROSSBOW, a SPRING-LOADED
DAGGER -- *SHINK!* -- Romeo demonstrates, ejecting the blade:

ROMEO

The renaissance is upon us, but
father still clings to the middle
ages. With these... Verona will
finally be ours.

In his sleep-deprived eyes, it's hard to tell what burns:
vengeance or desperation...

BENVOLIO

Romeo, we know you miss Rosaline...
but you must forget this brooding --

Romeo relaxes the blade, thumbing a trinket around his neck.
We recognize the WOLF RING, strung on twine...

ROMEO

Then teach me to forget to think...

Mercutio SCOFFS, sick of listening to this "love" talk.

ROMEO

Do you laugh at me, friend?

MERCUTIO
 No, friend, I sigh. This is not
 you. This is not Romeo...

But Romeo doesn't want to hear it, walking back to the
 catapult. Benvolio smacks Mercutio: *you're not helping...*
 But Mercutio waves him away, bullish...

Catching up with Romeo, he puts a chummy arm around him:

MERCUTIO
 There are many women in Verona.
 Tonight we shall go out and fix
 your eyes on another!

ROMEO
*A man who goes blind never forgets
 he once could see...*

WHOOSH! Romeo catapults another boulder. Trees EXPLODE.

Mercutio slumps: *it's useless*. But Benvolio steps in:

BENVOLIO
 Well, cousin -- if *lust* won't do,
 then perhaps you will settle for
revenge...

With that, Benvolio reveals: the STOLEN CAPULET LETTER.
 Romeo takes it in his hands -- reading -- *mind turning...*

CUT TO:

A DAGGER

STABBING through the CAPULET LETTER -- Lord Montague QUIETING
 a room full of shouting:

LORD MONTAGUE
 Must I paint pictures of this
 letter?! A French noblemen plans to
 marry the Capulet heir! That is an
 alliance with the French!

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE MONTAGUE - AFTERNOON

Lord Montague eyes a room of ADVISORS, the tone is grave:

LORD MONTAGUE
That makes occupation of Verona all
 but certain! *It could signal the
 end our land! The end of Montague!*

-- Romeo TUGS the dagger from wood, releasing the letter:

ROMEO
But it won't...

All eyes turn: Romeo paces the room, a commanding presence.

ROMEO
This letter says there is to be a
ball announcing the marriage. I
shall attend it... and kill the
heir to the Capulet throne. No
*bride, no wedding, no union to the
French.*

CHATTER erupts. Mercutio grins, stoked, Benvolio thinks,
worried. But Romeo nods with assurances, facing his father:

ROMEO
I give you my word: by the light of
tomorrow's moon, this one they call
Juliet... shall fall upon my sword.

CUT TO:

AN OPULENT CASTLE

From within its regal walls, SCREAMS echo a familiar name:

VOICE (O.S.)
... JULIET!...

INT. BALLROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - AFTERNOON

A TRAIN OF FEET scurry across polished marble: SERVANTS,
CHAMBERLAINS, all lead by the owner of the SHRIEKING VOICE:
LADY CAPULET, 40s, a haughty MATRIARCH. Searching feverishly,
she is flanked by a panicked HANDMAIDEN: MARIA, 30s.

MARIA
I swear, m'lady, she musn't be far!

They rush by painting ARTISTS, chiseling SCULPTORS -- *notice
the Capulet refinement* -- yet still haven't found:

LADY CAPULET
JULIET!

MARIA
JULIET!

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

Enclosed in a MAZE OF HEDGES, two masked FENCERS are mid-
practice. The bladework is fierce, elegant, balletic. They
PARRY and LUNGE -- expertly commanding basket-hilted SABERS.

Lady Capulet marches across the lush GARDENS, servants barely
keeping up, her shrill CALLS soon causing --

-- the fencers to PAUSE mid-strike. And with the shedding of
helmets, we're surprised to find -- a BEAUTIFUL GIRL:

JULIET
I'm here, Madam, what's the matter?

Meet JULIET CAPULET, 17. Strong, stunning... and yet, enigmatic. Not quite a tomboy, not quite a princess.

LADY CAPULET
I'll tell you *what's the matter!* --
(pausing, to Maria:)
-- How old is my daughter to be?

Juliet rolls eyes at her mother's aloofness.

MARIA
If memory serves me: Juliet and my daughter -- *God rest her soul* -- were born on the same year...

LADY CAPULET
Enough! Just answer the question!

MARIA
Sorry, Madam. Eighteen tomorrow.

Lady Capulet grips Juliet, practically nose-to-nose:

LADY CAPULET
That is exactly the matter. Verona has girls younger in age -- *already married* -- and you remain a virgin!

Juliet drops her gaze, embarrassed before dozens of servants.

LORD CAPULET
My Juliet, do tell: what is your opinion on the subject?

JULIET
It is an honor I dare not dream of?

Lady Capulet fumes -- *but suppresses it* -- forcing a smile:

LADY CAPULET
Dare to dream, Juliet. For a noble French suitor -- with eyes for you -- will attend your birthday ball.

JULIET
A French nobleman in Verona...
Has the Pope not declared war?

LADY CAPULET
We are at war with no one... *save for Montague!* So come tomorrow, study his face, admire his power... For whomever becomes his bride will be just as admired. And all that he possesses will be yours -- *without losing a thing yourself.*

MARIA
Besides your virginity...

Maria covers her mouth, *surprised that was audible*. Lady Capulet shoots her a stern look, leaving them with a SCOFF...

MARIA
 Worry not, m'lady, a noble is bound
 to fair better than a *commoner*...

As Juliet stews, the *SOUND OF TRUMPETS* becomes *AUDIBLE*...

EXT. CASTLE CAPULET - THE NEXT MORNING

... POMP & CIRCUMSTANCE greet a GOLDEN CARRIAGE flying the COLORS OF FRANCE. As its horses trot to a halt --

-- A COACHMAN opens the door, unfurling steps to announce
 TWO PURPLE SLIPPERS

belonging to a chapeau-wearing French Nobleman: PRINCE PARIS, 27. Draped in velour, cradling a TOY POODLE, he is showered in rose petals, waving a silken handkerchief.

BEHIND HIM

Two royal ESCORTS exit as well. First in line: an imposing BODYGUARD. Next up: a mysterious PRIEST... carrying a CRUCIFIXED STAFF of IVORY, face obscured by hooded VESTMENT.

The Frenchmen relish the vastness of their greeting: HUNDREDS OF SUBJECTS lining parapets and balconies.

FROM THE CROWD, Lord & Lady Capulet eagerly approach:

LORD CAPULET
 Our land welcomes you, your
 Highness --

LADY CAPULET
 -- And may we do our finest
 to meet all your pleasures...

Lord & Lady PART, displaying the first of these pleasures...

Dressed in a lavish, brocaded GOWN, Juliet cleans-up nicely. But it's clear: she hates this clothing -- *these customs* -- and even amongst a kingdom of her own... *Juliet is alone*.

Paris sizes her up -- *unimpressed* -- but gives a formal nod to Lord Capulet... The message is clear: *she'll do*.

CUT TO:

A DEAFENING WATERFALL

Rising above this blue plateau -- Romeo is found hiking a cliff-face... headed for: a modest, wooden TEMPLE.

INT. WATERFALL TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

Passing rows of barren pews, Romeo approaches a latticed
CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Taking a seat, an anonymous VOICE can be heard:

VOICE (O.S.)
Speak, my child...

Stripes of light illuminate Romeo in the darkened enclosure.
He is torn, anxious, voice shaky & hushed:

ROMEO
Father, I come to ask forgiveness.
For sins I've committed. For ones
I'll soon commit...

VOICE (O.S.)
*Remember, son: the gray-eyed
morning smiles on the frowning
night, checkering the eastern
clouds with streaks of light.*

Confusion grips Romeo's face -- until -- the privacy door
SLIDES OPEN to reveal: an aging FRIAR, exhaling CLOUDS OF
SMOKE from a PEARWOOD PIPE. *Coughing with laughter --*

FRIAR LAURENCE
*-- Love those words -- no idea what
they mean, but it sounds heavenly.*

Dressed in a COWLED ROBE, tangled beard, and balding tuft
shorn to TONSURE, meet FRIAR LAURENCE, offering his pipe:

FRIAR LAURENCE
Care for a toke, my boy? *It's
medicinal...*

But with a read of Romeo's expression, he quickly relents:
This is serious...

INT. GREENHOUSE CAVE - WATERFALL TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

MOVING THROUGH CASCADING WATER reveals: a humid CAVE hidden
behind the waterfall. Overgrown with moss and plants... this
wet cavern doubles as a lush GREENHOUSE.

Passing JARS OF MUSTY SEEDS and HANGING LINES of FLOWERS,
Friar Laurence leads Romeo, pipe puffing, mid-conversation:

FRIAR LAURENCE
*I chose vows of chastity, but you,
my son, have choices of your own.
Will this life on Earth be
heaven... or a waking hell...*

The Friar comes to a worn WORKTABLE littered with oddities: dried weeds, bizarre plants, stretched skins of fish. And among them... one living specimen:

A PET FALCON

Petting his loyal bird, Friar elaborates:

FRIAR LAURENCE

You ask my forgiveness so that you
may kill an innocent girl tonight.
*Either I thought more highly of
you, or you think very low of me --*

ROMEO

She may carry an innocent soul, but
her Capulet blood is far from
clean!

Friar's wise eyes process, glowing seeds pulsing in his pipe. With a hearty inhalation, he moves for a sinister tangle of flora growing from a pot -- a TWO-HEADED VENUS FLYTRAP.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Everything from Earth's womb is
born with good & evil. For inside
this little plant, one can find
both *poison...* and *cure...*

The flytrap's MOUTH opens with a soft HISS...

Reaching into its throat, Friar extracts a wet, ovular SACK. Dropped in a MORTAR & PESTLE, it's mashed into green PASTE...

FRIAR LAURENCE

With this specimen, I have cross-
pollinated nature to become
stronger than its predecessors. The
result: an elixir of somnus.
Medicinal sleep.

Swirls of green now merge into a BOTTLE OF LIQUID. Collecting a DROP, Friar FEEDS his eager falcon... Romeo watches as the bird's movements SLOW, soon collapsing into peaceful SLUMBER.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Some claim I tamper with God. I
say: He works in mysterious ways.
And whether it be *mother nature* or
human nature -- you must choose how
to use God's gifts.

Friar locks eyes with Romeo. An intense, fatherly gaze:

FRIAR LAURENCE

So, tonight, if you choose to take
the life of this young Capulet
(MORE)

FRIAR LAURENCE (CONT'D)
 girl, remember: *God can forgive...*
but absolution will only come from
here --

-- Friar gives a caring tap to Romeo's heart. And as threads of smoke envelope our men -- it's clear: *Romeo is torn...*

CUT TO:

THREE MASQUERADE MASKS

in the purple light of dusk. These are no regular masks, rather: menacing busts fastened of horns & hide...

As the masks are removed, identities are revealed: Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio -- overlooking the city of Verona...

E/I. WAGON - VALLEY OF VERONA - NIGHT

Romeo & his men ride the valley in a horse-drawn WAGON -- its flatbed filled with MOUNDS OF GRAPES and BARRELS of WINE.

Having traded animals pelts for quilted doublets & muffin caps, they look absurd, but they'll fit in. *Undercover.*

BENVOLIO
 Think we're properly disguised?

UNCORKING the BARREL, Mercutio gulps a FLOW of RED WINE, grinning as he regards Benvolio's HIDEOUS MASK:

MERCUTIO
 In your case, I'd say it's an improvement.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CITY OF VERONA - NIGHT

Torch-lit GONDOLAS row beneath an arched bridge as our three Montagues trot over the VERONA CANAL --

Ahead, the streets are abustle with goatskin drums, flutes awirl, PARTYGOERS rowdy with drunkenness. All approaching...

CASTLE CAPULET

alive with torched flame, fireworks aglitter. Beckoning...

EXT. FRONT GATES - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Slowing to a stop, Romeo & his men assess the uninviting landscape: a mountainous perimeter of walls protected by vast MOAT, its arched entrance guarded by a long DRAWBRIDGE...

BENVOLIO
 One way in, one way out.

SHINK! -- Romeo auditions his spring-loaded dagger:

ROMEO

If this was going to be easy... we
would've sent somebody else --

With a grin and a crack to the reins: *Here goes nothing...*

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

tracks the wagon across the drawbridge... over the murky
moat... under fortified walls lined with ARCHERS... SCOUTS...
TROOPS... soon galloping into the highly guarded

CASTLE COURTYARD

A sprawling labyrinth of TOWERS, TERRACES...

And as the wagon SLOWS, we GLIDE UP, soaring for one, very
specific BALCONY WINDOW:

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

Juliet looks out to the sparkling city of Verona...

Donning a beautiful gown and stoic stare, she's surrounded by
HANDMAIDENS. Hair is brushed, girdle laced, her trusted Maria
choreographing the effort:

MARIA

Paris may not be handsome in looks,
but he must be educated in mind.

JULIET

Wits can bring happy nights to the
end of happy days. But with him,
I'm not holding my breath --

With a CINCH to Juliet's girdle, her pained gaze multiplies.

INT. DRESSING CHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

Paris & Lord Capulet sample bowls of figs, sip goblets wine,
their REFLECTIONS repeated endlessly in a HALL OF MIRRORS...

As FOOTMEN ready them in fine silk and regal tunics,
discussion is underway:

LORD MONTAGUE

I hope you're finding the
accommodations worthy of a prince.

PRINCE PARIS

It may not be France, but your land
impresses more than I imagined...
And as Mother always says: *may your
Princehood come first... as your
country will always follow.*

Paris caws a tight-lipped giggle. Lord Capulet fakes a chuckle, then quickly steers back towards business:

LORD CAPULET
Your highness, if King Charles
arrives in our province... I need
assurances of Juliet's safety.

PRINCE PARIS
Understandably so. But before the
chivalry continues: my council
warns of an opposing house in
Verona. Will this cause my King
any... complications?

In the refracting mirrors, Paris locks eyes with his wretched Priest -- KICKS OF LIGHT penetrating his hood to tease glimpses of his FACE: a sickening knot of flesh. A LEPER.

LORD CAPULET
Your *council* speaks of the
Montagues... Worry not, *they are a*
dying breed. As I like to say: *all*
Italian grapes are not fit for
making wine.

With a smile, their goblets CLINK. *The deal is done...*

CUT TO:

A PILE OF ANIMAL BONES

Gnawed clean by a PACK of GUARD DOGS. Suddenly, a WAGON WHEEL comes CRUNCHING through, scattering the hounds...

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

On security detail, Sampson & Gregory clock their gaze to:

THE APPROACHING WAGON

slowing to a stop. Ben & Merc pull masks low, while Romeo displays a piece of PARCHMENT to a suspicious Sampson:

ROMEO
Vendor papers, sir...

Sampson gives it a read, eyeing Romeo's travel companions, their faces obscured by long sips from pewter tankards. The moment is tense: *will Sampson recognize the Montague men...?*

SAMPSON
To the kitchen, straight-away.

Phew... With a nod, Romeo whips the reins. As they depart, another CARRIAGE pulls up, steered by --

CONSTABLE ESCALUS

Presenting his VENETIAN BADGE, he eyes the castle, attention caught by *CELEBRATORY CHEER* emanating from within...

INT. GRAND STAIRCASE - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

APPLAUDING GUESTS announce the noble FAMILY CAPULET: beaming parents flanked by Juliet & Prince Paris. As Lord Capulet leads a TOAST, Juliet tries to play the part...

... but on the inside: nerves claw, eyes welling with tears.

LORD CAPULET
May we all raise a glass to my
little girl, who on this day, not
only turns the page on another
year... *but becomes a woman.*

As MINSTREL MUSIC erupts, Juliet lowers her GOLD MASQUERADE MASK, hiding all emotion. *Just in time...*

INT. MAIN HALL - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

As FOOD & DRINK flow through the party...

LADY CAPULET

barks at servants, scolding them for dilly-dallying.

ESCALUS

weaves the crowd -- sipping a drink -- suspicious eyes soon narrowing on Prince Paris, mingling with guests...

TYBALT

watches as well -- decked in full battle regalia -- brooding as ever. Dropping his mask, he begins to do the rounds. And just as he exits, we notice an important ENTRANCE...

ROMEO, BENVOLIO, MERCUTIO

Faces hidden by masks, they grab goblets of wine, surveying MASQUERADING PARTYGOERS by the HUNDREDS:

ROMEO
*Juliet, Juliet... which one shall
you be?*

BENVOLIO
By the looks of it: a needle in a
very big haystack.

MERCUTIO
A very posh haystack at that --

Mercutio grabs a passing HORS D'OEUVRE, eyeing the CANNELLE OF TARTARE as if it was a foreign artifact:

MERCUTIO
 Damn Capulet, a finicky bunch. And
 how a bout this sampling of ladies.
 (grabbing his crotch)
 The lusty hand is now pricking
 midnight.

Slugging wine, the men LAUGH -- but Romeo focuses his team:

ROMEO
 Remember: we come first to deliver
 death. Then we worry about love...

With a knowing nod, they split up. *Romeo on a mission...*

INT. BALLROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

A RING OF CANDELABRAS. In the center: twirling gowns and ornate masks form a dance floor. Among them, a masked Juliet & Lord Capulet perform a customary waltz --

LORD CAPULET
 Juliet, sometimes... drastic deeds
 are all that may light our darkest
 hours. As much as it weighs on my
 heart: aligning with France is the
 only way the House of Capulet
 survives.

JULIET
 Prince or not, I despise him...

LORD CAPULET
 Then in these times: your only love
 must spring from your only hate...

As the DUET OF MANDOLINS pluck a new tune, Paris CUTS IN --
 extending his limp hand -- *a dance awaits...*

INT. MAIN HALL - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

Like a hunter and its prey, Romeo stalks the dense crowd,
 surveying MASKED WOMEN -- *TALL, SHORT, WIDE, SKINNY* -- but
 none are sticking out...

Changing strategy, he bows to a YOUNG DEBUTANTE:

ROMEO
 Care for a dance, m'lady?

INT. BALLROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Clumsily swirling to minstrel strings, this is clearly not
 Romeo's bag. Eyes alert, he unknowingly waltzes right past...

JULIET & PARIS

Mid-dance, the body language is clear: *Juliet is repulsed.*

PRINCE PARIS

When I propose to you, remember: a
royal is never to show too much
excitement. If anything, you should
 be silent... humbled by the honor.

As Juliet rolls her eyes, *the music's TEMPO increases...*
 Paris SPINS Juliet, the whole room TWIRLING in unison... And
 as everyone SWAPS dance-partners, Juliet lands right in

ROMEO'S ARMS

JULIET

Don't let me go.

Romeo is surprised by the new, mysterious partner.

ROMEO

I won't... but that may very well
 find you cushioning my fall.

Juliet laughs, guiding him through the dance's steps. Holding
 him close, she is fascinated by his brute masquerade mask:

JULIET

Having attended many balls, *I can't*
quite say I've seen such a thing...

ROMEO

It struck me that a manly man
 should have a mask just as fitting.

She grins, their sparks undeniable. Seeing this, Paris pushes
 away his new DANCE PARTNER, eyes shooting daggers...

ROMEO

So, you must be close with Juliet?

JULIET

(amused he's unaware)
Can't say I truly know her...

ROMEO

Neither can I. You wouldn't know
 what she looks like, by chance?

JULIET

Imagine she's a bit... stuffy, no?

ROMEO

You read my mind. But I can safely
 say -- even without seeing your
 (MORE)

ROMEO (CONT'D)
*face: you are cut from a very
different cloth...*

JULIET
*And I can safely say: you're better
with words than you are with dance.*

With another smile, she now draws concerned looks from Paris & Lady Capulet. But no one is more suspicious than --

INT. TERRACE - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- TYBALT, overlooking the ballroom, hand fixed on his sword. He whispers to Sampson & Gregory -- instincts sharpening:

TYBALT
*Find out what masked man dares
scorn this celebration by dancing
with my cousin...*

INT. BALLROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

With each dancing rotation, Juliet sees Paris is WAITING. And upon their next spin: the Prince is readied with...

A RING BOX

Seeing this: *Juliet knows what's coming.* Mustering an escape, she GRABS Romeo, WHISKING them away from the dance floor...

ON THE TERRACE

Tybalt finally SPOTS what he was looking for: the WOLF RING hanging from Romeo's neck...

TYBALT
*By the disgrace of my house, this
man be a Montague...*

INT. GRAND STAIRCASE - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

Juliet pulls Romeo beneath the grand staircase, out of sight, secluded. Passing SHADOWS dance through the underpass.

JULIET
*Your feet may falter in dance, but
your hands don't get enough credit.*

Juliet finally removes her disguise. For the first time, a SMILE graces her unmasked face. Romeo is stunned by her beauty. He plays along with the flirtatious girl...

ROMEO
*If you're not offended by the touch
of my hand, then my lips await...*

He removes his mask, eliciting a similar reaction in Juliet.
She takes his hand, tracing the rough lines of his palm:

JULIET
You touch hands on the statues of
Holy Saints. Holding one's palm
isn't close enough to a kiss?

ROMEO
Don't saints have lips too?

JULIET
To pray with...

ROMEO
Well saint, let my prayers be
sealed with your lips....

Leaning in... something happens that surprises them both...

ROMEO & JULIET KISS

As they release, Juliet is overtaken by paralyzing emotion.
Romeo's in the same boat, confused by whatever possesses him.
Yet moments like this never last -- abruptly INTERRUPTED by:

MARIA
Madam! Lady Capulet looks for you!

Juliet looks beyond Maria to find a dreadful image:

LADY CAPULET & PARIS

searching the room in haste. Juliet releases Romeo, FLEEING
up the grand staircase --

Romeo's head is spinning: *do his ears play tricks on him?*
He grabs Maria, intense now, desperate to understand:

ROMEO
*What did you just say?! What about
Lady Capulet?!*

MARIA
Her mother! The Lady of the house!

Maria pulls free, running up the steps. We now CIRCLE Romeo --
utterly stunned -- as his gaze finds the top of the
staircase, where...

JULIET

locks eyes with him. And as the room falls SILENT -- Romeo
makes the grave realization:

ROMEO
A Capulet... Juliet...

Benvolio & Mercutio RUSH IN, snapping Romeo out of it:

MERCUTIO
When things are most fun is the
best time to leave!

Romeo finally understands the trouble they're in as TYBALT & HIS SOLDIERS push through the crowd, swords DRAWN:

TYBALT
The enemy is in our midsts! Romeo!
A Montague!

The word "MONTAGUE" might as well be a BOMB THREAT. Capulet partygoers ERUPT into a panicked FRENZY.

Lord Capulet, Paris, and Escalus all PAN to find: CHAOS.

Festivities traded for pandemonium, Mercutio CUTS A ROPE -- CHANDELIERS CRASHING to the floor, BLOCKING Capulet men.

INT. UPSTAIRS - GRAND STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Juliet clocks to Maria, confused by the carnage --

MARIA
M'lady, Tybalt says he is Romeo!
Son of our worst enemy: a Montague!

In shock, Juliet looks back down, where...

BEYOND CASTLE DOORS

Romeo SEARCHES for his men amongst the FLEEING COMMOTION. Clocking around, he spots Juliet, PAIN gracing her face...

JULIET
*My only love... sprung from my only
hate...*

In this moment, Romeo realizes: *Juliet knows who he is...*
And as this fleeting glance fades -- Romeo is GONE.

EXT. FRONT GATES - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Terrorized SCREAMS pierce the air as Tybalt & Lord Capulet SCAN THE PANICKED CROWD, finding no sign of Romeo.

TYBALT
(to his Guards)
... Find him.

CUT TO:

AN AERIAL

soaring over the castle's complex HEDGE MAZE...

In the center: CAPULET GUARDS fan out...

EXT. HEDGE MAZE - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

As they solider by, *someone* slinks from behind the hedges...

ROMEO

Alone, crossbow ready, stalking the moonlit labyrinth...

And when the coast is clear, he finally SPOTS IT from afar:

JULIET'S BALCONY

Window glowing orange. Long curtains blowing in the breeze.
A petite FIGURE framed within: *Juliet*...

ROMEO'S EYES

lock on her -- *a battle of heart and mind* -- but then...
he digs deep -- REMEMBERING -- his hand gripping the WOLF
RING. *The Romeo we know has returned...*

EXT. FOOT OF TOWER - HOUSE OF CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Trekking wet mud, Romeo reaches the MOAT'S EDGE. SNAPPING
into position, he readies his crossbow, eyes SQUINTING...

IN HIS CROSSHAIRS: Juliet framed in the window.

ROMEO

*But soft, what light through yonder
window breaks? It is the east, and
Juliet is the sun...*

CLOSER, his finger hovers over trigger. Honing his aim:

ROMEO

*Rise up, beautiful sun, and kill
the jealous moon...*

And just before SQUEEZING THE TRIGGER, he hesitates...

Another look: the balcony window is NOW EMPTY. *SHIT.*

CUT TO:

A HAND GRIPPING ROCK

Pebbles skipping down the deadly tower face, Romeo CLIMBS
precarious slate footholds. As more rocks RAIN DOWN --

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

-- Juliet HEARS THE SOUND, TWITCHING her gaze towards the
balcony window. Quickly bolting up, she grabs... her SABER.

Adrenaline spiked -- sword readied -- she tip-toes marble, extinguishing candles. The room dimming to moonlit blue...

EXT. TOWER - CONTINUOUS

With a final REACH, Romeo GRABS the balcony lip and PULLS --

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

-- himself over. He quietly creeps forward -- *SHUNK!* -- unfurling his telescoping sword as he descends into the darkened room... Soon halted when, from behind a column...

JULIET POUNCES

with her fencing saber! -- an intense FLURRY of blades -- LUNGES, PARRIES, RIPOSTES -- Romeo BLOCKS, DEFENDS, as -- *BOOM!* -- he CRACKS Juliet with the butt of his sword --

-- sending her SLIDING across the floor... And as she spins to a stand: Romeo is gone. Just a room of sharp shadow...

Saber attentive, Juliet weaves marble columns:

JULIET
*Romeo, Romeo... wherefore art thou
Romeo?*

Behind one column: *no Romeo...* behind the next: *no Romeo...*

JULIET
I have not heard you utter but a few words, yet I know who you are. A Montague. If my family finds you, you are as good as dead. That is, unless I kill you first...

ROMEO (O.S.)
Your family is no obstacle. And I'm afraid, neither are you...

Juliet freezes, scanning the room -- *Romeo's voice echoing* -- Trying to place the sound, she approaches a column, when --

FROM BEHIND HER

Romeo steps out from shadow... and with delicate precision -- *SHINK!* -- pins his blade against her throat.

Juliet freezes, saber hitting ground:

JULIET
Do it, Montague, end my suffering.

Romeo spins her around... blade still fixed on her throat... He stares into her eyes, she back at him, *emotions awhirl*.

ROMEO
 First you fight for life, then you
 request to die -- *do you change*
your mind as often as you change
your dresses?

But Juliet isn't laughing. She tries to reason with him:

JULIET
 Your name is my enemy... But you
 are you -- not just a Montague.
 (beat)
 Spare me... and spare your soul.

Before Romeo can think, the DOORS BURST OPEN: Tybalt & his
 GUARDS enter, swords FIXED.

Romeo grips Juliet -- dagger to throat -- backing his hostage
 towards the balcony. A tense standoff.

TYBALT
 Drop her, Montague!

Romeo's feet INCH towards the balcony edge. A DEAD END...
Or is it... Looking down below: a welcome surprise awaits --

EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

-- Benvolio & Mercutio, parked in the WAGON:

MERCUTIO
Did you think we were going home
without you?!

Romeo grins. And in one swift motion: grabs Juliet, wrapping
 a firm grip around the balcony CURTAINS -- and with a LEAP --

SWINGS DOWN

Curtains TEARING in half, lowering them to a terrace below --
 Feet now planted on a PARAPET of CASTLE WALLS...

Romeo looks down to the wagon -- CLOSER NOW... but still a
 decent drop. He eyes Juliet, then back down to the FLATBED,
 brimming with GRAPES...

ROMEO
 Think those grapes are pretty soft?

JULIET
What?!

ROMEO
 Forgive me later --

-- Romeo SHOVES Juliet off the edge. She PLUMMETS for:

THE FLATBED

PSHH! -- SPLATTERING into a thick mattress of GRAPES.
Disgusted, she stands drenched in burgundian sludge.

FROM TOWERS ABOVE, Maria & Lady Capulet watch in horror...
Lord Capulet scouting from a neighboring BASTION:

LORD CAPULET
Stop them! They have Juliet!

But his voice is eclipsed by the violent ringing of --

A BELLTOWER

Deafening GONGS, signaling enemy intruders...

BENVOLIO & MERCUTIO

hear the warning... And then SEE the trouble they're in:

ARCHERS

ready their BOWS atop TOWERS. *SHIT*. And with the drop of a
GUARD'S HAND -- *WOOOOSH!* -- a CLOUD OF ARROWS RAIN DOWN...

LORD CAPULET
Stop firing! They have Juliet!

But it falls on deaf ears. Juliet hides behind BARRELS as --
SHINK-SHINK -- they're PEPPERED with arrows, WINE fountaining
into the flatbed. Benvolio & Mercutio surface, unharmed.

As the ARCHERS reload -- DRAWING BACK BOWS -- Romeo eyes the
PATHWAY of CASTLE WALLS: a long RUNWAY of turreted paths...

ROMEO
(yelling down to his men)
Go! Now! Meet me at the end!

Mercutio whips the reins as -- *SHUNK, SHUNK, SHUNK* -- they
OUTRUN the next tidal wave of ARROWS --

Romeo bolts, SPRINTING a parallel path with the wagon -- as
TYBALT & CAPULET SOLDIERS

flank on horseback below. A deadly formation SWARMING --

Benvolio DRAWS HIS SWORD as -- *CHING-CHING* -- Tybalt SLICES
violently -- wagon wheels LUNGING for pattering hooves as
they FIGHT FOR SPACE through narrow courtyard ARCHWAYS --

ABOVE

Romeo TIGHTROPES the narrow ledge, leaping turrets, dodging
arrows... while --

BELOW

the wagon RACES -- keeping pace -- now parallel with Romeo...

AHEAD

the castle wall is ENDING -- THIS IS IT -- legs blurring in sprint as -- ROMEO LEAPS -- *a stunned silence* -- LANDING in --

E/I. WAGON - CONTINUOUS

-- the FLATBED. Now juiced with wine, Romeo surfaces...

MERCUTIO

I thought we were sent to kill her,
not keep her?!

ROMEO

It's complicated!

JULIET

Complicated?! You danced with me!
Kissed me! Then tried to kill me!

BENVOLIO

YOU KISSED HER?!

MERCUTIO

YOU KISSED HER?!

ROMEO

I apologize, your ladyship --

-- Romeo is silenced with a slap:

JULIET

I don't!

BENVOLIO

ROMEO! --

-- He's tossed a SWORD as Capulet Horsemen FLANK THE WAGON --
Romeo turns -- ducking BLADES -- when -- *BOOM!* -- the wagon
CRUSHES Capulet Guards against a STONE ARCHWAY --

Now CAREENING for the HEDGE MAZE, the carriage --

EXT. HEDGE MAZE - CONTINUOUS

-- BLASTS through walls of hedges -- *BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!* --
explosions of leaves and twigs DIG a hallway as --

-- HORSEMEN ARCHERS follow their path -- ARROWS sinking into
the wagon -- GAINING on them through this leafy tunnel.

ROMEO

Juliet, get down! You trying to get
yourself killed?! --

WHOOSH! -- Romeo ducks -- sharp branches ZIPPING BY --

JULIET

-- Says the man sent to kill me!

WHOOSH! -- With ONE LAST IMPACT -- the wagon BURSTS THROUGH a final WALL OF SHRUBS, revealing ahead... their only escape:

THE DRAWBRIDGE

Chunking CHAINS SIGNAL: it's being RAISED. Mercutio WHIPS REIGNS, pushing the steeds to the limit as:

ROMEO

We're not going to make it!

BENVOLIO & MERCUTIO

We're going to make it!

But Mercutio's face soon DROPS, seeing the bridge has quickly become: a 45° ANGLE. A gnarly RAMP --

MERCUTIO

You're right! We're not going to make it!

He SCREAMS, GRABBING Benvolio, BAILING them both

OFF THE CARRIAGE

Where they PLUMMET into the murky MOAT.

UNDERWATER,

arrows STREAK BY -- bubbling projectiles of death -- barely missing Benvolio & Mercutio as they SWIM & DODGE. ABOVE...

ROMEO & JULIET

LAUNCH through the AIR -- *horses hurdling* -- barely CLEARING the gap as -- BOOM! -- they LAND with a creaking THUD...

OUTSIDE THE CASTLE WALLS.

The wagon intact, Romeo & Juliet surface: *they made it!* Romeo takes the reins as the carriage RACES into the night...

EXT. MOAT - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

GASP! Crawling from the moat -- panting, caked in muck -- Benvolio & Mercutio look up to find --

TYBALT & HIS TROOPS

standing above, swords FIXED...

Cornered, they surrender -- but it won't be a silent one:

MERCUTIO

Hey... how's the hand? You know: I felt bad about that. Glad I finally get a chance to apologize --

WHAM! -- Tybalt silences Mercutio with a KICK to the gut.

SLAM TO BLACK.

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

An air of desperation permeates the room as Tybalt, Sampson, and Gregory nervously eye a pacing Lord Capulet.

TYBALT

Our sentries have searched the city... but they fear entering the Montague forest. Send us, Uncle. We are your most trusted riders --

LORD CAPULET

(grabbing Tybalt's throat)
-- My *trust* in you has allowed a Montague to slip in and out of my castle as if he were an invited guest to our occasion! --

A VOICE (O.S.)

-- *And must I say: it was quite the occasion...*

Lord Capulet releases Tybalt. Clocking to the VOICE, he finds Constable Escalus, leaning against the doorway... with a healthy amount of snark:

ESCALUS

Constable Escalus of Venice. I wish to ask a few questions...

LORD CAPULET

And what gives you the right to interrogate a noble?

ESCALUS

(rapid-fire)
Only the intrinsic fiber of our sovereign government and my elected position as a keeper of the peace.
(smiles, saunters closer)
Checks. Balances. Decisions made by popular vote. Nasty things, these Republics. In a sense, you might say... *we're all in this together.*

Lord Capulet nods to Tybalt & his men. The room clears...

ESCALUS

Help me understand: Capulets &
Montagues wage battle with each
other in Verona, yet do not care
that we are at war with France?

LORD CAPULET

Naples is at war! Rome is at war!
Verona is not! Yes, I have learned
of the Pope's proposed alliance.
And while Venice may want a war, it
will not get my vote! It will not
get my army! The troubles of the
peninsula are none of my concern!

ESCALUS

You just answered my next question.
This *lack of concern* must be the
motive for hosting Prince Paris,
cousin to the King of France?

PUSHING IN on Lord Capulet. He stews, a man conflicted...

LORD CAPULET

Preposterous. Which of my rivals
clouds your head with such rumors?

Suddenly -- *WHAM!* -- doors SLAP their hinges -- as Prince
Paris STORMS IN, flanked by his Priest and Bodyguard. Behind
him, his poodle trails: *YIP! YIP! YIP!*

PRINCE PARIS

Is this how you treat a prince in
this God-forsaken country?! Offer
him your hospitality. Your loyalty.
Your excuse for a daughter... and
then, *poof*, it's all gone!

YIP! YIP! -- PUNT! -- Paris BOOTS his dog across the marble.

In stunned silence, Escalus clocks to Lord Capulet with a
knowing look: *Rumor, you say?* But the old man's done
cooperating. With a NOD to his guards, they flank to remove
Escalus, but not before he gets his final word:

ESCALUS

When you hear Pikemen knock on your
castle walls, France will be your
concern. And it will be too late...

As Escalus is ushered from the room, Lord Capulet looks to
Paris, contorting his face into the fakest of smiles:

LORD CAPULET

Prince Paris, excuse that unseemly
interruption. I want to assure you,
tonight's disturbance --

PRINCE PARIS
 Puts our tenuous agreement on even
 thinner ice! Is that understood?

Lord Capulet fidgets, knowing he's powerless...

LORD CAPULET
 Yes, your majesty.

PRINCE PARIS
 After seeking council with my
 cousin, I shall return in three
 days' time. If by then your
 daughter is not perched on an
 altar, awaiting my hand, then I
 won't be able to guarantee your
 protection once French troops reach
 Verona. And mark my words: they
will reach Verona.

As Paris whirls around, stomping for the door, his dog
 surfaces from behind a servant's robe with a WHIMPER.

PRINCE PARIS
 Keep the dog.

With a SLAM!, Paris is gone. Lord Capulet SLUMPS, stewing...

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - CASTLE CAPULET - MINUTES LATER

Drawbridge clanking to the ground, Paris and his caravan
 GALLOP from the castle gates... And soon, we notice...

... someone following them. Constable Escalus on horseback,
 tracking the caravan's trail...

CUT TO:

WHUMP!

Juliet is dropped to the forest floor, hands-bound.

ROMEO
 (pointing a finger)
 Stay.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SYCAMORE FOREST - NIGHT

As Romeo approaches their wagon, Juliet rises, moving to run,
 but she STUMBLES, panting, out-of-breath...

ROMEO
 -- Do you ever listen?

JULIET
Occasionally...
(beat, GASPING)
Help -- I, can't -- breathe.

Romeo rolls his eyes. *SHING!* Springing his blade, he grabs her. SLICES at her torso. Juliet SCREAMS, then REALIZES: he simply cut her CORSET.

ROMEO
Now you can.

Juliet plops to a sit, watching as Romeo throws open the wagon's doors. Unlatches its flatbed...

JULIET
It's no use, Montague. My cousin Tybalt is the finest tracker in all of Verona. To him, finding a single carriage is but a child's game.

ROMEO
I should hope so...

WHAP! Romeo SLAPS the horses' rears. They gallop off with the wagon, SLUDGY WINE spilling a trail of decoy breadcrumbs.

JULIET
Clever plan, Montague.

ROMEO
(offering his hand)
Romeo.

Juliet shuns it. Another eye-roll from Romeo as he YANKS her up and gives her a light shove towards the dense trees...

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - NIGHT

Romeo & Juliet trek between towering trunks, like mice at the feet of giants. Juliet soon slows, FREEZING at the sight...

ROMEO
What is it? Never laid eyes on some trees before?

Eyes wide, Juliet takes in the spooky scene: MIST shrouding gnarled trunks and ghostly branches.

ROMEO
You haven't, have you? An entire life spent within castle walls --

JULIET
-- For my own protection, thanks to your family.

ROMEO
Well, m'lady... you're about to get
quite familiar.

He pushes her onward, seeping into the dense FOG...

EXT. SWAMP - SYCAMORE FOREST - NIGHT

The forest is now denser, wetter... a giant muddy bramble.
Romeo uses his SWORD like a machete, HACKING at the branches.

JULIET
I hope you know, killing me will
only further enrage my father...

ROMEO
I don't mean to kill you. Granted,
that was my original intention, but
sometimes...
(eyes her, a faint spark)
... things change.

HACK! HACK! -- Romeo continues clearing the brush.

JULIET
Seeing that you've had your fill of
violence and savagery... what are
your current intentions, then?

ROMEO
To ransom you...

JULIET
(scoffs)
For money.

ROMEO
No... For my cousins.

CUT TO:

MERCUTIO & BENVOLIO

Faces clenched in grisly pain --

INT. DUNGEON - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

-- PULLING BACK, we reveal our Montague boys on "racks" --
ropes STRETCHING their limbs in opposite directions...

Pulling a LEVER, Sampson & Gregory release the tension.
Mercutio & Benvolio SLAM to the stone slab. Gasping.

TYBALT
Again, I ask you... where did Romeo
take my cousin?!

MERCUTIO

To bed, if he has half a brain...

Tybalt nods to Sampson, who reaches to re-engage the LEVER, but is HALTED by the sound of FOOTSTEPS...

Lord Capulet and his guards enter the damp dungeon -- passing rusted TORTURE DEVICES, mounds of RATS scurrying across stone tiles, gaunt PRISONERS moaning in agony...

TYBALT

They won't talk, uncle...

LORD CAPULET

... Montagues never have. So it is in these desperate times, nephew, that you get the chance to redeem yourself. Take your men... and find Juliet. Our future depends on it...

Mercutio & Benvolio swap glances: *what the hell is going on?*

TYBALT

... I shall not fail you, m'lord...

EXT. SWAMP - SYCAMORE FOREST - DAWN

Romeo continues to HACK vines, Juliet STRUGGLING behind:

JULIET

Admit it, Montague. You're lost...

ROMEO

Afraid not, your complainingship. This is merely a shortcut home.

JULIET

And where precisely is this home of yours? No doubt one of these stumps... or perhaps you make rest in this slimy bog itself? --

HACK! -- Romeo clears a final batch of branches. As they fall, LIGHT pours in, revealing in the distance...

AN EPIC MOUNTAIN RANGE

The rising sun's rays GLOW behind the endless, jagged peaks. Verona's unmatched Dolomite Mountains.

Juliet's eyes trace a TRAIL winding up the canyon. Sharp switchbacks ascend, until the path disappears into clouds.

ROMEO

I give you... Inferno Pass.

Smiling, Romeo slaps Juliet on the back as he hikes onward.
Off her stunned face, we...

DISSOLVE THROUGH:

THICK, MISTY CLOUDS

Soaring up the canyon, we notice TWO FIGURES traversing a
NARROW FOOTPATH -- no more than a meter wide -- cut directly
into the rock face...

EXT. INFERNO PASS - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - MORNING

Romeo bounds up the pass effortlessly. Behind him, Juliet
inches along, hugging the mountainside, eyes glued on...

THE THOUSAND FOOT DROP

JULIET

Inferno Pass. An appropriate name.
Has it always been called this?

ROMEO

I gave it the name. From Dante's
poem. But as you can see, our hell
spirals up instead of down.

JULIET

You know Dante?

ROMEO

Of course. While I'm partial to the
works of DaVinci, one cannot
discount the influence of Dante.
From peasants to politicians, he
was the toast of Rome during my
travels.

JULIET

You... *can read*?

ROMEO

Astonishingly, I can... I've also
managed to walk upright and
implement a marvelous invention
known as 'the wheel.' I'm afraid
your perception of my family is
severely misplaced. We do not, in
fact, pray to Pagan gods, drink the
blood of children, or sacrifice a
virgin with every full moon.

Juliet's amusement fades as the pair stops at a LARGE GAP in
the path. Romeo LEAPS across with ease, offering a helping
hand... But again, Juliet shuns it:

JULIET
I'm quite capable, Montague.

Romeo backs off. Juliet gathers her courage, JUMPING across the gap. But she LANDS SHORT, FEET SLIPPING, ABOUT TO FALL --
-- but something SNAGS her dress. She looks back: it's Romeo.

JULIET
(dangling, frantic)
Don't let me go!

Laughing, Romeo pulls her onto solid ground, entertained:

ROMEO
You keep saying that...

As he walks away, Juliet follows: annoyed... yet intrigued.

CUT TO:

THE ABANDONED WAGON

With a CREAK, its door opens, light spilling inside...
Tybalt peers into the space. Nothing. Empty. Growling, he --

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SYCAMORE FOREST - AFTERNOON

-- SLAMS the door shut, looking to Sampson & Gregory, who sit atop horses nearby.

SAMPSON
No passengers. No horses. No
footprints.

GREGORY
Clever, that Romeo.

Tybalt shoots his men an angry scowl, which shuts them up.

TYBALT
Onward. They can't be far...

Tybalt mounts up, WHIPPING reigns, the men GALLOPING OFF.

EXT. ALPINE FOREST - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - NIGHT

SPARKS POP from a campfire, casting an eerie red glow on the softly falling SNOWFLAKES...

In a clearing of a tree-lined plateau, Romeo & Juliet eat by the humble fire. Small game roasting on skewers...

Distracted, Juliet is fixed on the stunning mountain vista:

JULIET
 I have seen your mountains
 before... in paintings.
 They did not do them justice.

ROMEO
 This is the Verona I know.

Juliet bites a small DRUMSTICK. Chews, skeptical...

JULIET
 What did you call this again?

ROMEO
Scoiattolo.
 (off her confused look)
Squirrel.

A look: *Gross.* Then... *Screw it.* Juliet DIGS IN, scarfing
 down the welcome meal. Romeo watches her. Intrigued...

ROMEO
 Last night, you asked me to end
 your life. Why? You have
 everything. *Wealth, luxury.* What is
 missing in such magnitude to cause
 you to ask a stranger for death?

Annoyed, Juliet glares at Romeo, matter-of-factly:

JULIET
 Love.

For a moment, Romeo is surprised... then he begins to LAUGH:

ROMEO
Love, she says! You are but a child
 who knows nothing of love. You may
 be rich in beauty, but you are poor
 in experience. Or do I exaggerate?

JULIET
 (blushing, irritated)
 Go to hell.

ROMEO
 That may well be my final
 destination... For if hell is the
 resting place of lost souls and
 broken hearts, then mine will feel
 right at home.

JULIET
 And what do you know of love?

ROMEO
I know that love can make the sun's
rays feel like a cold chill.

JULIET
By your words, Montague, one would
think you are in love...

ROMEO
Out... Out of love...

Romeo's eyes are heavy. Weary. A haunted man.

JULIET
Now I see. Upon sight of your face,
she was not slain by Cupid's arrow?

ROMEO
Not Cupid's... no... she cannot be
touched by the weak & childish
arrows of love. Nor can she listen
to words of love... nor be gazed
upon with loving eyes...

JULIET
I see... *she is celibate, then?*

ROMEO
She is dead. *Her name was Rosaline.*

Beat. Juliet freezes. An awkward silence. Only the crackling
of the campfire... Finally:

JULIET
You are right, Romeo...

That gets his attention. Juliet seems haunted as well:

JULIET
... I have never loved. And my
father has promised me to a man I
do not love. And hearing how you
speak of it, I am now certain... I
would rather die than know I will
never feel love as you have...
That is why I asked for death.

ROMEO
Your marriage to Paris was to be
your father's final move. An
alliance that would exterminate my
family once and for all.

Juliet is beyond confused...

ROMEO
Why else do you think we came for
you? To protect my family's future.

JULIET
You sound just like my father.

Without warning, Romeo LUNGES forward -- *SHING!* -- springing
his DAGGER against Juliet's throat, furious:

ROMEO
Your father gave the order to
murder my entire camp of women &
children! For the sole purpose of
ending the Montague bloodline!
I am nothing like your father.

Juliet glances to the knife digging into her throat:

JULIET
Are you certain...?

Romeo stops. Realizes he's gone too far -- *SHINK.* -- he
retracts the blade, retreating to the other side of the fire.

JULIET
There are people in Verona beyond
Capulet and Montague. Can you not
see beyond your own family? Beyond
your own future?

Eyes heavy, Romeo looks to his RING. Its beautifully-carved
woodgrain glimmers in the firelight:

ROMEO
I can only see the past...

As he turns the ring on his finger, we PUSH IN on the dancing
flames -- closer and closer -- until they're nothing but...

EXT. ALPINE FOREST - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - NIGHT

... glowing embers. DRIFTING from Romeo's sleeping form... we
find Juliet, hands tied to a tree -- motionless -- until

HER EYES SPRING OPEN

Awake. Alert. Quietly, she works her ring's sharp JEWEL
against her binds. The ropes FRAY... then snap LOOSE.

Juliet rises, moving to flee... but something stops her:

ROMEO'S SLEEPING BODY

She steps forward, eyeing the DAGGER amongst his belongings.

Silently, she GRABS it. And as she does, we reveal...

ROMEO

behind a nearby tree. His sleeping form nothing but a decoy.

JULIET

springs the blade -- raising the dagger above her head...

Romeo watches, eyes widening -- heart pounding -- but then...
Juliet lowers the blade. Pity in her eyes. She can't do it.

ROMEO (O.S.)
I have seen many things...

Juliet SHRIEKS. Spins around. Blade out as Romeo approaches:

ROMEO
... But until this night, mercy
from a Capulet was not one of them.

Juliet waves the dagger, yet Romeo advances with steely calm.
Reaching her, his chest presses against the blade --
no words -- just palpable energy. Unbearable tension. Then...

... Juliet lowers the dagger. As she does, they fall into a

SUDDEN KISS

Primal. Passionate. An outpouring. A *release*...
It goes on for moments. Lips finding lips. Fingers running
through hair. Hot GASPS forming in the cold air like steam.

Then... as Romeo's eyes open... something makes him FREEZE:

A PAIR OF PUPILS

flicker in the dark trees. As Romeo slowly turns 360°, more
and more EYES appear. Grey fur and glistening fangs
approaching from shadow, finally revealing themselves to be:

A PACK OF WOLVES

ROMEO
Stay behind me. This will get worse
before it gets better...

Romeo draws his CROSSBOW with one hand, clasping Juliet's
with the other -- then -- in a blink -- *SNARL!* --

THE WOLVES BLITZ

THWICK-THWICK! -- Romeo manages two KILL SHOTS -- but a wolf
broadships him -- knocking his WEAPON to the snow -- as

MORE WOLVES CHARGE

Juliet cowers back -- *SHINK!* -- Romeo UNFURLS his sword -- but jaws CLAMP onto his calf -- BUCKLING him to the ground --

HIS BLADE SCUTTling INTO THE FIRE.

Losing strength, Romeo begins to waver as another CHOMPS, teeth STREAKING for his jugular, but just before they SNAP --

A SEARING BLUR

slashes across the wolf's spine. Romeo looks up to find...

JULIET

wielding his sword. Snowflakes HISSING as they fall on the hot blade. Her feet coil into a FENCER'S STANCE, ready, as --

THE WOLF RUSHES HER

Juliet DODGES -- SLICING the beast's hind legs -- Romeo watching her fencing moves unfold like a violent ballet...

Now limping, the wolf CHARGES AGAIN -- LUNGING FOR HER FACE, it LEAPS -- but Juliet sidesteps -- sword SLASHING flesh --

SPLATTERING BLOOD TO SNOW.

The pack YELPS, retreating into the night, soon gone. Juliet exhales, lowering the sword.

Wincing, Romeo struggles up, but COLLAPSES, caught by Juliet, easing him to a delicate sit:

JULIET
Save your strength.

She pulls back his cloak. It's SOAKED with BLOOD. Turning now to Romeo's face, she sees the color fading from his cheeks:

ROMEO
Not bad... for a Capulet...

Juliet springs to action: packing Romeo's wounds with snow, slicing bandages from her dress. As she works...

... we slowly PUSH IN on Romeo's eyes. Irises losing focus. Eyelids growing heavy. Soon, they close. Silence...

MATCH CUT TO:

ROMEO'S EYES

flutter open. Looking around, he's alone. JULIET IS GONE.

EXT. ALPINE FOREST - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - MORNING

Grimacing, Romeo struggles to his feet. Checks his wounds. They've been sutured. Bandaged. Then suddenly --

-- FOOTSTEPS. Romeo reaches for his dagger... but it's only Juliet. She drops an armful of brambles into the fire pit:

JULIET
You're awake...

Juliet smiles. Dress tattered, face dirty, hair down... And yet, she looks comfortable. At peace. Perhaps... at home.

ROMEO
You saved my life. A *Montague's* life. I am forever in your debt.

Romeo spots a ROSE sprouting from the brambles. Before the fire reaches it, he PLUCKS the flower, struggling to a stand:

ROMEO
You are no longer my prisoner. Be it to my house or yours, I shall deliver you... and let no harm come to you. I swear it on my family's name...

JULIET
(frustrated, torn)
Montague. Capulet. What's in a name?

ROMEO
A rose by any other name... would smell as sweet.

Gently, Romeo places the flower in her hair, falling into
ANOTHER KISS,

wrapped in the rays of the rising sun. As they release, we see Juliet is crying:

JULIET
You are... not what I expected...
(collecting herself)
But to think we could be together is a fool's wish. With every kiss, we endanger not only ourselves... but our families. We cannot do this. I must return home...

We sense Romeo's heart crack. A mix of pain & agreement --

ROMEO
 -- *Then I will keep my promise...*
 I will take you back, but... we
 must assure the safe release of my
 cousins. That is all I ask.

JULIET
 You have my word.

Romeo offers his hand. This time, Juliet takes it...

INT. DUNGEON - CASTLE CAPULET - DAY

Bolted to the ceiling: a row of dangling METAL CAGES...

Shackled inside, Mercutio paces while Benvolio feeds a
 FRIENDLY RAT meager crumbs from a crust of bread. Suddenly --

CA-THUNK! -- with a horrible GRIND, the doors open to reveal:

DUNGEON GUARDS.

DRAGGED from their cages, Mercutio & Benvolio are DROPPED to
 the foot of a rusty GUILLOTINE. Its razor-sharp blade GLINTS.

HEAD GUARD
 Which of you sad sacks goes first?

MERCUTIO
 (stroking his hair)
 Just a bit off the top, please --

-- but before he can step forward, Benvolio DOES, offering a
 WINK. As the guard SHOVES his head for the yoke, Benvolio
 SHAKES his sleeve, and onto the guard's hand scurries...

THE RAT

Startled -- the guard JUMPS -- a split-second distraction --

WHAM! -- Benvolio CLOCKS a guard in the face with his metal
 cuffs -- CRACK! -- Mercutio UPPERCUTS another with his.

More guards CHARGE -- blades OUT -- Mercutio & Benvolio BLOCK
 slashes with their cuffs, SPARKS flying as metal hits metal.

YANK! PULLING their shackles tight, our boys

CLOTHESLINE THE GUARDS

Bones CRACKING as they TUMBLE DOWN stone steps.

As the Head Guard moves to flee, Mercutio & Benvolio CHASE.
 THROWING him down -- they SNATCH his KEY RING then -- BOOM! --
 Mercutio HEAVES the guard into an IRON MAIDEN --

SPIKES PIERCE FLESH

as blood SEEPS from the metal coffin, SCREAMS dying out...

BENVOLIO
Was that really necessary?

Mercutio just SHRUGS, tossing the KEYS to a chained PRISONER:

MERCUTIO
The way out?

The prisoner meekly points to a SEWER DRAIN.

INT. SEWER PIPE - DUNGEON - MOMENTS LATER

As Mercutio & Benvolio crawl through the SLUDGE:

MERCUTIO
When we get home... remind me to
kill Romeo.

CUT TO:

A FLOWING CAPE

fluttering behind Lady Montague as she winds dark halls, eyes moist, passing mounted ANIMAL HEADS: boar, bear, ibex...

Approaching a WOODEN DOOR, two axe-wielding GUARDS block her path -- but she THRUSTS them aside, BURSTING IN --

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE MONTAGUE - NIGHT

-- to find: Lord Montague debriefing with a battered Benvolio & Mercutio. She searches the group, finding, to her dismay...

NO SIGN OF ROMEO.

Her lips begins to tremble. Eyes sunken. A wreck:

LADY MONTAGUE
Where is my son?

BENVOLIO
We do not know, m'lady. We have
been separated for two moons...

Lord Montague waves the room to clear, but his wife SNAPS:

LADY MONTAGUE
You have sacrificed our son to win
a battle?!

LORD MONTAGUE
TO WIN A WAR!!!

As his BELLOW fades, Lady Montague nods sheepishly... then approaches her husband, leaning close, whispering in his ear:

LADY MONTAGUE
 If you don't find my son, you will
 answer to a fate worse than war.
 You will answer to... me.

As Lord Capulet's expression falls, PRELAP: GALLOPING HOOVES.

EXT. CASTLE MONTAGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Benvolio & Mercutio ROAR through the castle gates, thundering
 down the mountain, CLOUDS of DUST rising in their wake...

CUT TO:

PRINCE PARIS'S CONVOY

galloping for a RIVERSIDE VILLAGE in the distance. Peaking
 from the skyline of straw roofs: dozens of long, sharp PIKES.

Seeing this, the Prince's face twists into a VILE GRIN...

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - SYCAMORE FOREST - MORNING

QUICK CUTS as WOMEN are manhandled. MEN beaten to the ground.
 CHICKENS lifted from coops. Meager TREASURES pocketed...

... All by steel-armored SOLDIERS in sharp, angular helmets
 with soulless eye-slits. Medieval stormtroopers. These are...

THE PIKEMEN

All armed with long, deadly, double-edged POLL-AXES...

Suddenly, HORNS SOUND. The Pikemen CLOCK to the sight of
 PRINCE PARIS, flanked by his entourage, galloping in...

PRINCE PARIS
 What is the meaning of this?!

The Pikemen fidget, busted. The TOWNSPEOPLE look on, hopeful.

PRINCE PARIS
 Your orders were not to plunder...
 ... but to eradicate.

GASPS from the onlookers. We zero-in on a poor, weary farmer,
 TANNER, and his FAMILY (a MOTHER, a BOY).

PRINCE PARIS
 This clearing is perfectly
 positioned for a fortification.
 Ready it before the King arrives...

Tanner can't take it anymore. He steps forward:

TANNER
And what gives you the right?! This
is not your land!

SHOUTS of agreement from the townsfolk. Paris's lips curling:

PRINCE PARIS
Not yet.
(beat, to the Pikemen)
Burn it.

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

Romeo & Juliet hike through the dense forest. An awkward, heartbroken silence. But soon the stillness is broken by --

PLUMES OF SMOKE

filtering through the trees...

JULIET
What is that -- ?

Romeo hushes her, listening to the sound of CRACKLING FIRE.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - SYCAMORE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Romeo & Juliet crawl to the edge of an embankment. Their faces show gutted dread as we reveal the village...

ON FIRE

FLAMES BILLOW from humble huts. Children WAIL as their PARENTS struggle to fight. Many are SHACKLED. Others KILLED.

ROMEO
*Pikemen... Mercenaries from
Switzerland... Employed by the
French... Already in Verona...*

PUSHING IN on Romeo, gears turning, finally getting it...

ROMEO
Turned loose in our country, no one
will be safe -- *Montague, Capulet* --
it won't matter. Full occupation...

As Romeo eyes the horrific BLAZE, something inside him burns as well. Violence. Vengeance. He points at Juliet:

ROMEO
Stay.

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - SYCAMORE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Slipping into the smoldering village, back against an untorched hut, Romeo scans the scene, when suddenly --

-- Juliet slides next to him. Back-to-back.

ROMEO
Do you ever listen?

JULIET
Occasionally.

Romeo can't help but smile. He plops his sword in her hand:

ROMEO
Make yourself useful, then.

Juliet nods, nervous... but inspired. Romeo has that effect. As Romeo loads a battery of arrows, he COCKS his crossbow:

ROMEO
If it wears metal... kill it.

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - SYCAMORE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Drifting through the THICK SMOKE. Visibility is near zero. Through black plumes, glimpse Pikemen loading CHILDREN into

PRISON CARRIAGES

Tears streaming from ash-caked faces. Then, without warning --

ROMEO & JULIET

barrel in -- *SLASH!* -- SHREDDING the row of Pikemen --

Binds are SLICED. Cells OPENED. The children set FREE.

BOY TANNER

runs into his parents' arms. A momentary victory, but --

MORE POLL-AXES

charge -- swinging air -- *CHING!* -- Romeo & Juliet block the BLUR of axe heads -- their movements fluid & synchronized -- Romeo's brutality mixing with Juliet's elegance to form...

A VIOLENT DANCE

But it matters not... Soon, they're surrounded by...

A CLUSTER OF POLL-AXES

Romeo & Juliet DROP their weapons, surrendering...

EXT. MAIN SQUARE - PEASANT VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Romeo & Juliet are SHOVED before Paris. Grabbing Juliet's bloody cheeks with a gloved hand, he inspects her:

PRINCE PARIS
 If it isn't my lovely bride-to-be.
 Now, this look suits you perfectly.

As Juliet snaps free, Paris turns to Romeo:

PRINCE PARIS
 I remember you...

... WHAM! Paris CLOCKS Romeo in the face. Surprisingly hard.

PRINCE PARIS
 That was for stealing my fiancé.
 And this...
 (grabbing his cheeks)
 ... is for bringing her back.

Paris proceeds to KISS both cheeks -- a *French thank you* --
 breaking into relieved, laughter:

PRINCE PARIS
 You have saved me a sizable
 headache! You see, empires don't
 build themselves... and our maiden
 here is the key to a genuine claim
 on the throne. Thankfully, her
 father was foolish enough to buy
 into the ruse...

Now understanding, Juliet shares a grave look with Romeo.

PRINCE PARIS
 And you, monsieur, have just sealed
 your country's fate --

-- THPPP! -- Romeo SPITS BLOOD on Paris's shoes.

PRINCE PARIS
 (to the Pikemen)
Kill him. She comes with us.

JULIET
 ROMEO!!!

As Juliet's screams ECHO, our scene ramps to SLOW-MO:
 Romeo's head is FORCED upon a tree stump, STRUGGLING as a
 Pikeman RAISES HIS AXE. Romeo fixes his eyes on Juliet as

THE AXE FALLS FOR HIS NECK

But just before it HITS, a WHISTLING SHRIEK cuts through the
 air -- shocking us back to REAL-TIME as -- THUNK!

AN ARROW

snaps into the eye of the executioner. He crumbles to death.

Romeo blinks, somehow... alive. Everyone spins 360° as

THUNK! THUNK! THUNK!

More ARROWS find Pikemen. Paris CLOCKS to the sight of --

MERCUTIO & BENVOLIO

riding in -- GUTTING Pikemen in their wake...

ROMEO BEAMS

Breaking free, he grabs a SWORD -- CUTTING DOWN Juliet's captor -- and as he GRABS HER HAND -- mayhem erupts:

PIKEMEN CHARGE

our Montague warriors -- who fall into formation: back-to-back-to-back... to-back -- Mercutio steals a confused glance at Juliet -- her hand clasping Romeo's:

MERCUTIO

Romeo, I hope we survive long enough for you to explain this.

With the Pikemen regiment scattered, VILLAGERS take up arms. FARMERS grab makeshift WEAPONS, joining the FIGHT.

ROMEO

hacks & slashes -- not noticing a Pikeman's axe --

RUSHING HIS BLIND-SIDE

But wait -- at the last second -- Tanner SKEWERS the soldier with a RUSTY SICKLE. Romeo clocks around, stunned. This humble farmer just saved his life.

Atop his horse, Paris watches as THE BATTLE RAGES. Villagers fall. Pikemen fall. A bloody stalemate... Paris looks to his Bodyguard, who flashes a grave look. Paris nods, furious:

PRINCE PARIS

Retreat! Retreat!

As Paris GALLOPS OFF, his men FOLLOW. Wounded Pikemen scramble for horses, climbing into departing carriages as the battalion disappears into the forest...

CUT TO:

A DEAD MAN'S BODY

gently lowered into a shallow grave...

EXT. PEASANT VILLAGE - SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio back away from the body as Boy Tanner kneels, wiping soot from the man's face, revealing

HIS FATHER

The boy breaks down, tears flowing.

Across the way, Juliet tends to injured villagers, watching as Romeo kneels beside the devastated child:

ROMEO

Do not stifle your sadness. Your father was brave. Weep until your tears run dry, and then honor him. Honor him with your bravery.

Romeo RISES, but not before placing something in the boy's hands. The boy looks: it's his father's SICKLE.

ROMEO

For too long, people like you have lived in fear of two names... Montague and Capulet. To come between us was to ask for death. I tell you now... that time is over! We now face a common enemy. You may believe this is the darkest day you've ever faced... but it isn't.

Romeo now has the entire village's attention. Juliet rises, making her way through the crowd...

ROMEO

Today, I make you a promise. When the Pikemen return, and they will, I will not fight for the House of Montague. Or the House of Capulet. I will fight for you. I will fight for Verona!

As Juliet reaches the front, her eyes lock with Romeo's...

The survivors muster a CHEER. Boy Tanner thrusts his sickle in the air. Mercutio & Benvolio look on:

BENVOLIO

What's gotten into him?

MERCUTIO

What else? A woman.

BENVOLIO

I can see why he likes her...

MERCUTIO

... I can see why you're an idiot.

Shaking his head, Benvolio steps away, approaching Romeo:

BENVOLIO

Romeo, half the Capulet Guard is
searching for us. Every moment
spent here endangers these people.

A conflicted beat, then Romeo nods. PRELAP THUMPING HOOVES --

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

-- as Prince Paris's convoy GALLOPS in retreat. From a
carriage, a SLAIN SOLDIER is heaved overboard. Dead weight.
The body TUMBLES to the dirt, a rag doll.

Soon, the convoy is gone... but we linger as...

CONSTABLE ESCALUS

emerges from the trees. Dismounting his horse, he inspects
the dead Pikeman, gears spinning...

MINUTES LATER

Escalus is now disguised in the Pikeman's ARMOR. Mounting his
horse, he WHIPS his reigns, GALLOPING for Paris's convoy.

EXT. CANOE - RIVER - DAY

A snaking RIVER framed by broccoli-crown forests...

Mercutio & Benvolio paddle oars against the gentle current.
At the bow, Romeo's gaze is fixed on the village's still-
billowing SMOKE in the distance. Juliet leans against him.

MERCUTIO

So... Romeo... friend... question:
did you feel any need rescue us? I
mean, I've lost count on how often
we've done so for you.

ROMEO

I had my hands full...

MERCUTIO

(sarcastic pelvic thrusts)
Your hands full, eh?!

BENVOLIO

Mercutio. She deserves our
courtesy.

MERCUTIO

The courtesy of my sword, perhaps!
She is a Cap-u-let!

ROMEO

None of that matters anymore.

MERCUTIO

Ha! Her father means to destroy our
bloodline and you weaken our
efforts by bedding the enemy?!

JULIET

I have been bedded by no one! And
as for my father: he has been
manipulated by Prince Paris, who
means to rule us all once the
alliance is complete. This is no
longer about petty feuds. This is
about Verona. Your home. My home.
(gesturing to the smoke)
Their home. If we cannot unite, our
country will fall just like that
village.

Romeo is weary... but inspired. Juliet has that effect.

Mercutio scoffs... but we see his gears turning. A lifetime
of hate... challenged.

BENVOLIO

So what do we do?

ROMEO

I don't know... but I know someone
who will.

Romeo's eyes drift up the canyon... to a distant WATERFALL.

EXT. TEMPLE GROUNDS - WATERFALL - DAY

Friar Laurence exits an outhouse, 'newspaper' in hand...

... Soon startled by Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio, waiting.

FRIAR LAURENCE

My boys! --

But his cheer is halted by Juliet, smiling as only she can.

FRIAR LAURENCE

-- And *girl*?

JULIET

Hello, Friar...

As she curtsies, our Friar's heart is already melted...
 But as he bows and takes her hand, he pauses at the sight of
 HER CAPULET RING.

FRIAR LAURENCE
 (turning to Romeo)
 Clearly you are in need of
 confession...

INT. WATERFALL TEMPLE - NIGHT

CANDLELIGHT FLICKERS as Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio and Benvolio
 rest in pews, passing around a loaf of leavened bread.

BENVOLIO
 I say we assassinate Paris. No
 Prince, no war.

ROMEO
 The Prince is but a pawn of the
 King, who surely has another play.

MERCUTIO
 I say we return Juliet. Lighten
 ourselves of this load.
 (flashes her a fake smile)
 No offense.

JULIET
 Much taken.

ROMEO
 Mercutio may be right. What if I
 returned you to your father? Surely
 when he sees you unharmed -- and
 learns of the Prince's plan -- he
 will reconsider.

FRIAR LAURENCE (O.S.)
It won't be enough...

They all clock to Friar, who enters holding a flaming TORCH.

FRIAR LAURENCE
 Tell me. This ancient grudge
 between your families: who do your
 fathers say cast the first stone?

ROMEO
 The Capulets...

JULIET
 The Montagues...

FRIAR LAURENCE
 You are both wrong.
 (gesturing)
 There's something you need to see --

INT. GREENHOUSE CAVE - WATERFALL TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

Silhouetted against falling water, our group carries torches, following Friar Laurence...

PUSHING a KNOB OF LOOSE ROCK pivots a SECRET DOOR of slate -- revealing: a STAIRWELL descending deep into the mountains.

CUT TO:

A PRAYING FRIAR

Pulling back, we see he is one of a HUNDRED... a sea of black wool and sun-starved skin forming ROWS of skeletal faces.

Led by Friar Laurence, our group gazes in awe at the ancient, subterranean city: a MONASTERY buried deep below the temple.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Ordo Fratrum Minorum. The Order of Friars Minor. A sacred brotherhood dating back centuries...

Stacked in scaffolded levels, the cavern is a brimming ant-farm of ROBED FRIARS. Some pray, others tend to work: milking COWS, harvesting CROPS, sharpening SPEARS.

FRIAR LAURENCE

... At one time, every Capulet and Montague had a Friar like me... until allegiances grew dangerous and they were forced underground by your families' bloody feud. Ever since, they've kept a hermetic life, sealed off from Verona...

TILTING UPWARD, the space spirals into a DOME of chiseled bedrock, the only LIGHT pouring from an OCULUS high above.

FRIAR LAURENCE

Below ground, they stay unified by a divine calling: *peace*. Their other calling: *finding you two*.

Everyone turns to Romeo & Juliet: *they're just as confused*.

INT. SANCTUARY - HERMETIC MONASTERY - MOMENTS LATER

Led further into the torch-lit space, hushed WHISPERS bounce the acoustics, the holy cavedwellers curious, watchful...

MOVING ACROSS SUSPENDED PLANKS,

the Friar leads our team to the center of the dome: a lush SANCTUARY overgrown with flowers and plantlife, where a BEAM OF SUNLIGHT falls from the oculus above, pooling onto...

A PETRIFIED TREE TRUNK

Resting on top: a GLASS COFFER protects an OBJECT within...
As the Friar lifts the humid glass, air exhales, revealing...

AN ANCIENT BOOK

As the Friar peels the pages, our team eyes the scrawled
CURSIVE accompanied by ornate RENAISSANCE DRAWINGS...

FRIAR LAURENCE
In the age of your grandfather's
grandfather... a friar, like me,
served both Capulet & Montague...
and left behind this account...

Friar begins thumbing the parchment, the drawings FLUTTERING
TO LIFE, like an animated FLIP-BOOK...

FRIAR LAURENCE
A Capulet boy, a Montague girl...

EXT. VERONA - VARIOUS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

UNDER TOWERING SYCAMORES

The BOY and GIRL embrace...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
... Two souls, in love...

IN AN ANCIENT CHURCH

The pair visits with an OLD FRIAR, asking for his blessing...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
Two families, to be joined...

WITHIN TWO CASTLES

Opposing LORDS pace, conflicted...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*Two Lords, gripped by fear...
A marriage... to unite their
resources... their armies... their
destiny. But as it has always been,
men wish to decide their own...*

IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

A MONTAGUE SPY slinks in, slipping POWDER into one goblet
before it's placed on a platter, bound for the ALTAR...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
Two cups, poisoned...

A CAPULET USHER

Stealthily pours LIQUID into the other glass...

AS THE WEDDING BEGINS

The boy and girl DRINK from their goblets. Smiles soon fading as they CHOKE. COLLAPSE. SEIZE on the floor.

As they reach their DYING HANDS for each other, men SHOOT UP in their pews, SHOUTING, DRAWING SWORDS.

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
Two deaths, requiring justice...

ON A BATTLEFIELD

The ominous sequence CRESCENDOES as ARMIES BATTLE ARMIES.

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*Two families to blame. Equal sin.
Equal guilt. A feud never-ending...*

Blood SPILLS. Bodies PILED into graves as --

INT. SANCTUARY - HERMETIC MONASTERY - NIGHT

-- WHAM! Friar SHUTS the book. Our group is affected deeply. The entire Brotherhood looks on with eager eyes...

FRIAR LAURENCE
As long as your families carry this
lie, there can be no peace. And
soon, they will bow to a foreign
King because of it...
(beat)
However... hope is still alive. In
this book, it speaks of a man from
Rome. A man that will unite Verona.
For centuries our brotherhood has
searched for a man by his city,
instead of a man by his name...

BENVOLIO
... Romeo. The man from Rome.

The Friar nods with confirmation, staring at Romeo: he is the one. Turning to the Brotherhood, he RAISES his torch:

FRIAR LAURENCE
L'uomo da Roma! L'uomo da Roma!

The brotherhood REJOICES... overwhelmed by the revelation!

ROMEO
Friar... Now would be a good time
to explain what's going on.

The Friar turns to Romeo, one of many overcome with hope:

FRIAR LAURENCE

*Don't you see, Romeo -- days ago
you came to me, intent on killing
your mortal enemy. And days
later... here she stands, alive.
This is not only love... but divine
order. The two of you standing
before us... this is bigger than
Capulet & Montague... this may
unite all of Verona...*

As the Friar's words register, we PUSH IN on Juliet -- *gears spinning* -- then, in her beautiful eyes... it all clicks:

JULIET

We must be married...

The room drops to SILENCE, the Brotherhood turning to Juliet.

JULIET

If Romeo and I were married, our
families would be joined under the
eyes of God. A forced truce to
unite Verona against its invaders.

Realization washes over Friar. He nods: *this is the answer.*

FRIAR LAURENCE

*Yes, my child... a new union. One
so happy, that even the age-old
rancor between Capulet and Montague
becomes something sweet...*

Benvolio & Mercutio swap glances, soon speaking up:

MERCUTIO

*Whoa, whoa, whoa -- I know this is
the age of enlightenment and all...
but this is crazy!*

BENVOLIO

Mercutio's right. Romeo can't risk
the future of our family -- all for
some ancient words in a book!

The Friar turns to Juliet, gravely serious now:

FRIAR LAURENCE

They both must risk it. For
together as man & wife... only then
can Romeo & Juliet unite Verona...

The room fills with hopeful MURMURS, soon halted by a voice:

ROMEO (O.S.)
 Uh...do I have a say in the matter?

They all spin to Romeo -- clearly beside himself -- until:

JULIET
 You do...
 (dropping to a knee)
 Romeo of the House of Montague...
 will you marry me?

Romeo glances to his cousins. Benvolio's jaw is on the floor.
 Mercutio just laughs, CACKLING at the surreal moment:

MERCUTIO
 Any woman that forward is fine by
 me... *Welcome to the family!*

Romeo turns to Juliet. Sees the purpose behind her smile.

AS MUSIC SWELLS, he takes her hand... and...

INT. SANCTUARY - HERMETIC MONASTERY - MOMENTS LATER

... THEY KISS.

Framed by beautiful flowers in this underground oasis, LIGHT
 spills down from the heavenly oculus, wrapping our bride &
 groom in a BEAM OF SUNLIGHT.

The Friar presides over the ceremony, all of the Brotherhood
 watching as Romeo & Juliet embrace. Their 'groomsmen' --
 Mercutio & Benvolio -- APPLAUD as our pair releases...

We notice they've been cleaned-up: a fresh ROSE in Juliet's
 braided hair. And now, they exchange RINGS... his WOODEN BAND
 sliding onto her finger. Her JEWELLED RING around his.

As their eyes meet, sound FADES AWAY... and they KISS AGAIN.

HOOTS & HOLLERS soon filter in as Mercutio wraps Romeo &
 Juliet in a big BEAR HUG. Benvolio strums a MANDOLIN. Friar
 and the Brotherhood bop to the heavenly tune...

PULLING BACK from the happiness, we RISE HIGH INTO THE DOME,

DISSOLVING TO:

A MOUNTAIN COTTAGE

Dusted in snow, smoke rises from the humble dwelling...

INT. MOUNTAIN COTTAGE - TEMPLE GROUNDS - NIGHT

Romeo throws kindling into the hearth, fire growing...
 Juliet enters in a bodiced petticoat -- ready for bed.

The newlyweds exchange looks: Juliet is clearly nervous. Romeo tries to playfully extinguish the tension --

ROMEO
Good evening, my wife.

JULIET
A good evening to you, my husband.

ROMEO
My father always said: the key to a happy marriage is separate beds --

-- Juliet eyes Romeo's makeshift bedding of animal pelts: his effort is appreciated. The bed all hers, she gets in.

On opposite ends of the room, they lie in silence, just the sound of wet wood crackling. Juliet speaks up, anxious:

JULIET
Knowing my father, he scours every inch of Verona looking for me...

ROMEO
For now, the darkness will hide us.
Good night, Juliet...

Juliet finds comfort in the thought, nestling to slumber...

And as Romeo closes his eyes, dancing shadows of fire become:

ROMEO'S DREAM

A hanging woman. Neck NOOSED. As Romeo approaches, her limp head TURNS... yet it is no longer Rosaline... but Juliet...

JULIET
Ro-me-o...

INT. MOUNTAIN COTTAGE - TEMPLE GROUNDS - NIGHT

Romeo jolts awake, panicked, sweating -- surprised to find: Juliet on the ground beside him, nestled beneath the pelts...

JULIET
... It was warmer by the fire.

Juliet looks to her new husband... Romeo to his wife. A silent exchange amidst blue moonlight and pale flame... And in this moment -- they make love...

CUT TO:

TWO MEADOWLARKS

chirping on the windowsill...

INT. MOUNTAIN COTTAGE - TEMPLE GROUNDS - DAWN

Pale skin wrapped in furry pelts, Romeo & Juliet awaken to the sounds of these delicate songbirds...

ROMEO
Meadowlarks... Dawn must be near.

Juliet turns from Romeo's chest, the sunrise causing concern:

JULIET
I worry for the light of day. Even
as man & wife, we are still Capulet
& Montague.

ROMEO
A wise and beautiful woman once
asked me: *What's in a name?*

She smiles, comforted... Just then, there's --

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

Romeo bolts up, grabbing his sword. Robed in furs, he CREAKS the door open to find:

FRIAR LAURENCE
Morning, my son. Have you and your
bride consummated the act...?

Friar raises his brow as Juliet approaches, barely robed...

ROMEO
I know we're close, Friar, but you
have some serious boundary issues.

[illegible]

FRIAR LAURENCE
I ask not for you, but for Verona.
Today you will ride for the city,
delivering news of your marriage.
And Verona will finally be united!

Romeo & Juliet share a look of concern:

ROMEO
Friar, you have such unwavering
faith, but what do we do about the
French? *The impending invasion --*

FRIAR LAURENCE
-- *What about the French, he says!*
With this union now complete, we
have God himself to take care of
the French...

As Romeo and Juliet swap hopeful glances, we --

CUT TO:

A LEANING TOWER

Familiar columns of white, surrounded by an ARMY CAMP...

HIGH ABOVE this impressive cluster of tents, troops, and battalions... the FRENCH FLAG flutters in morning breeze...

EXT. LEANING TOWER OF PISA - PISA, ITALY - MORNING

Three HORSES soon gallop through waking activity: Paris & his royal escorts entering the camp. Riding past FRENCH TROOPS and rowdy PIKEMEN, they approach a massive TENT...

CLOSE BEHIND, Escalus follows, unnoticed in allied armor.

INT. ARMY TENT - TOWER OF PISA - MOMENTS LATER

Peeling a flap, Paris enters the lavish, torch-lit space...

In the center: a MAN bathes, steam rising from his clawfooted bathtub as -- CLINK -- he tosses SNAIL SHELLS into a basin.

With his smooth face, curled pageboy hair, and piercing eyes, we recognize this regal man: KING CHARLES VIII of France...

KING CHARLES

Bienvenue, cousin. If I could only illustrate the pain it is to find proper snails in this intolerable country...

CLINK goes another shell. Digging his pinky into a fresh one, Charles SLURPS the slithery escargot.

PRINCE PARIS

Certainly a *French-occupation* makes it almost tolerable, your majesty.

With a smug smile, Charles reaches for a towel, drying off...

EXT. ARMY CAMP - TOWER OF PISA - MOMENTS LATER

Now dressed in battle regalia, Charles & Paris walk the camp:

KING CHARLES

What news do you bring from Verona?

PRINCE PARIS

Vows of matrimony with Capulet's heir are proving... *complicated*. But, worry not: their weakness is less elusive. I wager we can sack Verona without such a union...

ON THE OUTSKIRTS, Escalus walks the camp -- blending in amongst the morning bustle, listening to them strategize...

KING CHARLES

(slowly removing a glove)
Cousin... I've found there are three kinds of minds. One: understands things on their own. The next: discerns things from others. The third: *fails at both*. I'm afraid you fall into the third category --

CRACK! -- King Charles brutally BACKHANDS his cousin... Paris whimpers, lip now split, blood smeared across his chin.

KING CHARLES

I've charged you with one simple task: *absorb a noble title in Verona!* And I will not invade without assurances!

Surrounding TROOPS pause mid-meal, observing this lashing unfold. Among them -- *Escalus* -- now aware of France's greater plan. *His mind turns...*

Calming, Charles grabs a HOT IRON from the blazing campfire -- embers sparking into the breeze...

KING CHARLES

When an archer's target is too distant -- *what do they do?* They aim higher. That is what I need from you: to aim higher. And once you've helped me take Verona, we will take all of Venice. I will dispatch forces, but you must marry this Capulet by the time I arrive. And if you fail me again, cousin -- *know that I've never let my family stand in the way of my country.*

As Charles lifts the hot iron inches from Paris's face, *the stakes couldn't be more clear*. And Paris is terrified:

PARIS

I assure you... no one in Verona will stand in your way either.

CUT TO:

A SOARING AERIAL

Tracing switchbacks, Romeo, Juliet, Ben, and Merc walk horses down the mountain. In the distance: the city of Verona...

EXT. INFERNO PASS - MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - DAY

BENVOLIO

Married or not, entering Capulet
territory with Juliet in-tow: *bad*
idea. When it's cold like so, our
enemy is moved to be cold-blooded.

MERCUTIO

(playful, tipsy)

As soon moved to be moody, and as
soon moody be moved...

Mercutio flashes a FLASK. Benvolio just rolls his eyes.

MERCUTIO

What? It's a time for celebration!

Paces ahead, Romeo & Juliet are more introspective:

ROMEO

What do you think of all this...?

JULIET

Our trust must stay with the Friar.

(beat)

For sometimes drastic deeds are all
that may light our darkest hours.

Yet this statement already proves untrue. AHEAD: a razor thin
SUSPENSION BRIDGE

spans a deep chasm. On the opposite side, awaiting them:

TYBALT, SAMPSON, AND GREGORY

MERCUTIO

(joyous mood vanishing)

Well, well, well...

BENVOLIO

So much for vows of peace.

Tybalt spots Juliet -- yelling from across the bridge:

TYBALT

Romeo! There is only one thing I
can call you -- and that is a
villain! Now hand her over!

Romeo keeps his cool while Juliet thinks of options:

JULIET

They will kill you if I don't go.
And if you kill them... any chance
we have at peace is lost.

ROMEO

Then we must tell them of our vows.

JULIET

Tybalt will refuse to believe. We must break such news to my father. But if I go with them now, I can tell him -- *safely* -- then we can be united. It's the only way... *Promise me it will be the only way.*

With a hesitant nod: *Romeo promises.* As the lovers step onto the bridge, Mercutio stews, vengeful glare fixed on Tybalt...

EXT. SUSPENSION BRIDGE - INFERNO PASS - MOMENTS LATER

Romeo & Juliet trek across the bridge... two specs dwarfed by the epic canyon. Beneath their feet: a thousand foot drop. Halfway across, they share one last look...

ROMEO

I promise you: in due time the light will not bring such darkness.

With a loving smile, Juliet turns and walks away, reaching the other side.

Distraught, Romeo can only watch as Sampson & Gregory mount horses -- with Juliet in tow -- and GALLOP into the forest.

Romeo begins to turn, but then stops, realizing: Tybalt does not flee... he just stands, waiting on the other side.

ROMEO

We handed her over, be on your way!

TYBALT

This does not excuse the pain you've dealt my family! Draw your sword, villainous Montague!

Tybalt inches onto the bridge, HAND ON SWORD. Romeo gestures back to Benvolio & Mercutio: *I have this under control...*

ROMEO

Trust me when I say: one thing I am not -- is a villain to you! Nor shall any Montague ever be again...

TYBALT

That is all you are! All you will ever be! Now I demand restitution!

Suddenly, from behind -- Mercutio steps onto the bridge:

MERCUTIO

Restitution! Such fancy words!

SHINK! -- Tybalt draws his sword -- inching closer to Romeo.
SHINK! -- Mercutio draws his, yelling past Romeo:

MERCUTIO
 Come on Tybalt, let's see your
 fancy swordplay! Your *PASSADO!*

ROMEO
 MERCUTIO! THROW DOWN YOUR SWORD!

MERCUTIO
 I shall... Straight through his
 heart!

With that, Mercutio & Tybalt CHARGE! Stuck between them,
 Romeo is bookended by blades as a 3-WAY SWORDFIGHT erupts:

ROMEO

blocks Mercutio's SWORD from behind -- as -- *SHINK!* --

TYBALT

attacks from ahead, SLICING air -- but Romeo spins -- *CHING!*
 defending, working both men. Behind him, steel cuts air as --

MERCUTIO

thrashes past Romeo -- CONNECTING with Tybalt's blade --

ROMEO

spins around again -- *SHINK!* -- swords LOCKED with Mercutio --

ROMEO
 Mercutio, STOP! He is my FAMILY!

-- On these words, Mercutio's face CONTORTS in pain -- his
 sword going LIMP... Romeo looks down to see --

TYBALT'S BLADE

buried in Mercutio's RIBS.

Mercutio STUMBLES, caught by Romeo -- stunned. Tybalt turns
 tail, FLEEING, leaving Romeo to cradle his dying friend...

EXT. INFERNO PASS - MOMENTS LATER

THUD! Mercutio collapses to land, Benvolio rushing in,
 panicked by the sight of shredded flesh...

MERCUTIO
 It's a scratch... *Just a scratch...*

Romeo LOCKS EYES with Mercutio... his cousin, his friend.
Knowing it will be the last time.

MERCUTIO

*Why did you come between us, Romeo?
A plague on both your houses...
(last breaths of air)
A plague... on both your houses...*

Mercutio dies in Romeo's arms. Soon, SCREAMS echo the canyon:

ROMEO

TYBALT! Enough with mercy, call me
villain as you did before!

But Tybalt has other plans. Across the bridge, he works knife
against rope, CUTTING --

THE BRIDGE'S SUPPORT CABLES

Romeo jumps to action -- mounting his horse as -- *CLUNK-CLUNK*
-- deafening hooves RACE across the unstable bridge...

SHH-SHH-SHH -- Tybalt SAWS braids of rope -- *POP!* -- strands
begin to UNCOIL -- the bridge now hanging by a THREAD...

Romeo races faster -- hooves hammering dusty planks -- and
just as -- *POP-POP-POP* -- the final STRAND gives away --

ROMEO LEAPS

The limp bridge SWINGING to a thunderous CRASH against the
mountain face as -- *C-CLUNK* -- Romeo barely sticks a landing.

INT. SYCAMORE FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

TREES BLUR as Romeo RACES after Tybalt through the dense
forest. From his satchel, he unsheathes his CROSSBOW --

SHHP! -- an ARROW grazes Tybalt, PLUNGING into bark. Faster
now, Tybalt weaves trees as -- *SHHP!* -- another near miss --

EXT. VALLEY OF VERONA - MOMENTS LATER

Damp mud EXPLODES as the horses RACE through the valley --

ROMEO

kicks his steed, crossbow steadied -- AIMED -- as --

TYBALT

looks over his shoulder, the relentless Romeo gaining, when --
SHHP! -- an arrow GRAZES his neck -- a bloody GASH pooling --

CRANING UP... tree coverage is a thing of the past... just
pure grass now -- their horses blazing a trail towards:

EXT. CITY OF VERONA - MOMENTS LATER

WHIPPING REINS, a bleeding Tybalt GALLOPS into a packed MARKETPLACE: spice tents, food stalls, bartering PEASANTS...

Romeo, close behind, steadies his LAST ARROW -- aiming --

SHHP!

It cuts a LINE OF ROPE, collapsing a MARKET STAND in Tybalt's path -- *BOOM!* -- an explosion of seeds and grain as Tybalt is THROWN from his horse -- scraping across the pavement --

HOOVES skid dirt, as Romeo dismounts -- *SHUNK!* -- unfurling his telescoping sword, he CALLS to his scurrying enemy:

ROMEO
Tybalt! Tybalt!

Glimpse Tybalt -- battered and bruised -- surfacing from the leveled market stand. Desperate, limping, he dodges vendors, carriages, looking back: horrified by the armed Romeo...

EXT. CANALS - CITY OF VERONA - CONTINUOUS

Reaching the water's edge, Tybalt spots his escape...

A PASSING GONDOLA

He LEAPS aboard, but Romeo SPLASHES behind, hopping onto a neighboring boat, two vessels navigating the dense traffic...

As Tybalt BOUNDS from boat-to-boat -- Romeo GAINS -- lilypadding the trail of longboats -- finally landing on:

TYBALT'S GONDOLA

Screaming PASSENGERS leap from the boat. On the bow: Tybalt's hit a dead end. Panting, finished. He turns, facing...

... Romeo, who aims his sword, vengeance palpable:

ROMEO
Mercutio's soul floats above,
waiting to drag you to hell!

Holding his shredded neck, Tybalt gurgles with laughter:

TYBALT
I remember this rage of yours,
Montague. It was alive that day we
met in battle. *I also remember*
Rosaline. She begged me for her
life, Romeo. *Hanging there... neck*
noosed. And like a dying fish...
she savored every last breath.

Romeo struggles to absorb: Rosaline died by Tybalt's hands?

And when it finally SINKS IN -- FSHHH -- Romeo's sword SLICES air. Fast. Precise. A high-pitched ECHO left RINGING...

Tybalt just stares, motionless, stunned: *did Romeo connect?*

And then: an ANSWER -- as his head TOPPLES from his body...

LANDING with dead weight at Romeo's feet. And with a slight breeze -- his body follows, TUMBLING limp into the canal.

Romeo stares -- satisfied -- blue water now flowing red...

CUT TO:

A WOVEN BASKET

Carefully carried by CAPULET FOOTMEN...

INT. THRONE ROOM - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

Behind a column, Juliet's handmaiden, Maria, watches from afar as the footmen approach...

Lord & Lady Capulet await on their thrones, eyeing the peculiar basket as it's placed before them:

LADY CAPULET
With Juliet safely home, I haven't
the stomach for anymore surprises --

-- She THRUSTS aside the burlap cover, revealing...

TYBALT'S HEAD

Horrific expression frozen mid-death.

In this moment, no corner of the castle is immune to Lady Capulet's SCREAMS...

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

As Lord Capulet organizes TROOPS, his wife FORCES HER WAY IN:

LADY CAPULET
(hysterical)
If you are honorable, avenge this
Capulet death! The house of
Montague shall pay! Romeo killed
Tybalt! Now Romeo must die!

Lord Capulet stews. *Knows she's right.* Nodding to Sampson, HUNDREDS OF TROOPS begin to MOBILIZE. *And so it begins...*

INT. MAIN HALL - CASTLE MONTAGUE - NIGHT

Romeo stares at MERCUTIO'S CORPSE, lying on a STONE ALTAR, surrounded by Montague servants, subjects, soldiers...

Angered and broken, Lord Montague lowers a TORCH, IGNITING the body. Flames ERUPT violently for all to see...

LORD MONTAGUE
This aggression will not stand!
We will storm Capulet walls and
destroy them once and for all!

MONTAGUE SOLDIERS break into ravenous CHEER. But Romeo stays silent. And as the room quiets, he finally speaks:

ROMEO
I won't allow it.

Silhouetted in burning flame, Lord Montague clocks his gaze:

LORD MONTAGUE
You won't allow it...?

ROMEO
You can't attack Capulet -- for I
am now married to their daughter.

BEAT. Benvolio's head sinks: *this is a complete disaster...*

Lord Montague storms from the altar, unsheathing a SWORD to Romeo's chest... but Romeo doesn't flinch:

ROMEO
If you kill Capulet... you kill me.

LORD MONTAGUE
One of your own is dead by Capulet
hands! *And now this?! Siding with*
mortal enemies?! I should kill you!

Lady Montague watches, deep emotion puncturing her frosty exterior, lips quivering with agony...

LORD MONTAGUE
Wretched son, I am now deaf to your
pleas! No tears, nor excuses shall
wash away your sins!

Relaxing his sword, Lord Montague turns his back on his son:

LORD MONTAGUE
Romeo is to leave Verona at once!
And if he returns, he shall be hung
by the neck until dead! This man is
no longer a son of Montague!

Romeo looks to his mother. She is gutted. Powerless...

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE MONTAGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Montague SOLDIERS line a long HALLWAY stretching to the castle gates. Stoic stares fall on Romeo -- once their leader in battle, now their sworn enemy...

But Romeo stays strong, walking through this corridor of armor... At the end: Benvolio waits with his horse...

ROMEO
Wait for my word. And until it
comes... watch over Juliet for me.

As Romeo mounts up, Benvolio gives a solemn nod: *he will...*

EXT. MOUNTAINS OF VERONA - NIGHT

Castle Montague looming behind him, Romeo GALLOPS away, just a spec in the icy moonlight...

CUT TO:

LADY MONTAGUE

watching from a balcony. Her son riding into the darkness.

Her face is a statue, but tears collect. And with a final sip of laudanum -- she closes her eyes -- and TAKES A STEP...

... GOWN FLUTTERING through the air -- she PLUMMETS from the tower -- gracefully falling to her death.

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

Eyes of equal despair. Juliet. Gazing out her balcony to the expansive city of Verona: *out there somewhere... is Romeo.*

But her gaze is soon broken by Maria, BURSTING into the bedchamber, panicked, stuttering nonsense --

MARIA
-- He's -- been killed! Saw it --
with my own eyes! Pale -- as ash!

JULIET
Romeo...?!?!?

MARIA
*No, Tybalt! Tybalt lies dead at
hands of that vile Montague!*

Juliet is quickly relieved. Maria now even more confused:

MARIA

M'lady, I may not be the sharpest spindle... but did you just mourn the sound of Romeo's death?

Caught red-handed. Juliet takes Maria by the arm, desperate:

JULIET

I need you to listen, Maria...
I need you to understand over all disbelief. During my absence, I was never in danger with Romeo... *nor will I ever be* -- for our houses are now one, by the grace of God.

Eyeing the MONTAGUE WOLF on Juliet's RING FINGER -- Maria's hand COVERS a dropped jaw. Juliet pulls away, walking towards her balcony window, tears welling, an utter wreck:

JULIET

I was meant to tell my father tonight -- but now with Tybalt's blood on Romeo's hands... *how can I?* If only the Friar was here, he'd know what to do!

Maria sees Juliet's pain, shares it, taking her hand:

MARIA

M'lady, there's a good chance Lord Capulet may never understand. Nor her Ladyship, for that matter. But I had a husband once... a father to the child I lost. The poor man died of a broken heart soon after. So even if Romeo is a Montague, you must cherish him while he's here. Now tell me: *who is this Friar you speak of?* We must act fast...

Juliet looks up to Maria, HOPE now shining through her tears.

EXT. CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

Atop a horse, Maria GALLOPS from the castle. As she does...

PRINCE PARIS

returns, entering the gates, flanked by his ESCORTS...

INT. MAIN HALL - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Lord & Lady Capulet bow to Paris as he enters -- but the warmth is not shared. By the look of it, his journey was rough: clothes soaked with rain, dried blood still crusted on his face.

LADY CAPULET
*My god, your highness -- what ever
 happened? --*

Paris raises a forceful hand, silencing her:

PRINCE PARIS
*What happened...? I have now made
 this vile trip for the second time.
 Trotting through the filth of
 Verona, tolerating your bourgeois
 customs... all to grace your
 daughter with my throne. So what
happens now? I demand answers. Not
 in a day, or a fortnight -- but
now. So... do I have a Capulet
 bride? Or do you lack such control
 over a petulant girl that your
 entire province will fall?*

Lady Capulet is shocked by this disgusting display:

LADY CAPULET
*We've had a tragedy on our hands!
 And you dare come into our home --*

-- With a simple gesture, Lord Capulet quiets his wife.

LORD CAPULET
*Tonight my wife shall visit Juliet.
 She will tell her of your love...
 And come tomorrow... you are to be
 married. I cannot make desperate
 promises of Juliet's affections --
 but believe me when I say: *she will*
*do exactly as I say.**

Lord Capulet bows to Paris, who now grins, satisfied:

PARIS
*My lord, if only tonight were
 tomorrow...*

INT. GREENHOUSE CAVE - WATERFALL TEMPLE - NIGHT

LARVA writhes in a dish. Friar Laurence reaches in, feeding
 his hungry FALCON -- but freezes at the sound of *FOOTSTEPS...*

... Looking up, RIBBONS OF DUST fall with each STEP...
 Panicked, Friar grabs a WOODEN MALLET from his worktable.

INT. WATERFALL TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

Mallet in hand, Friar searches the darkened temple... soon
 flinching at a SOUND:

ROMEO (O.S.)
You were wrong, Friar...

Friar clocks to find... Romeo -- seated on a pew -- stewing:

ROMEO
 You said our marriage would wash
 away the sins of my father -- but
 it has only brought more bloodshed.

FRIAR LAURENCE
 Death may have knocked on our
 door... but it has not yet shut it.

Suddenly -- the church doors BURST OPEN. Romeo spins -- SWORD
 READIED -- but as the fog PARTS... he sees it's only:

MARIA
 Are you Friar Laurence?

FRIAR LAURENCE
And who the hell would you be?

Maria displays something in her hand: JULIET'S RING.

MARIA
 I bring word from Lady Juliet --

EXT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

From her balcony, Juliet looks to the courtyard: hundreds of
 Capulet TROOPS stand on-guard. The castle now her prison...

JULIET
*The same window that once let in
 the day, let not life slip away...*

Hearing someone on approach, Juliet quickly snaps out of it --

-- BOOM! -- Lady Capulet storms through the doors with usual
 frenzy, soon struck by Juliet's somber mood:

LADY CAPULET
 I know you mourn cousin Tybalt, but
 tears will only bring more sorrow.

Lady Capulet takes her daughter's hands. Juliet playing coy:

JULIET
Great loss deserves great weeping.

LADY CAPULET
 Worry not -- Capulet men search for
 his killer as we speak. And when
 this Romeo joins Tybalt in death,
 you can dry those tired eyes...

This development hits Juliet hard. And to make matters worse:
Lord Capulet ENTERS -- drink in hand -- clearly tipsy:

LORD CAPULET
Have you told her the joyous news?!

Juliet is confused, looking to her cheerful parents:

LADY CAPULET
I was just getting to that...
Juliet, come tomorrow morning...
the noble Paris will make you his
joyful bride!

BEAT. Juliet is horrified:

JULIET
Tomorrow...? This seems so...
strangely rushed --

LORD CAPULET
-- *It is not rushed!* I have been
more than patient, Juliet. And I am
no longer asking. I am insisting.

JULIET
Well then... I refuse! *I refuse!*

LORD CAPULET
You refuse. You wretched,
whimpering fool. *You refuse?!*

CRACK! -- Lord Capulet STRIKES Juliet across the face.
Hitting the ground, she cowers from her belligerent father...

HANDMAIDENS rush to Juliet's aid, but Lord Capulets SWATS
them -- and his wife -- away...

LORD CAPULET
While you're under my roof, I will
marry you to whomever I wish! And
if you do not like my roof -- you
can beg and starve in the streets!
Now you may not be *thankful* -- but
come tomorrow you will marry Paris.
And if you won't go on your own,
then I'll drag you there myself!

Lord Capulet finally relents... stumbling from the room...
leaving Juliet distraught, clawing at her mother's feet:

JULIET
Please, I beg you! Just delay this
marriage a week! A day! And if you
will not, then make my bridal bed
in the tomb where Tybalt lies dead!

LADY CAPULET
 Child, do as you please. From this
 day forth... I am through worrying
 about you...

As Lady Capulet leaves, Juliet breaks down: all hope lost...

INT. WATERFALL TEMPLE - NIGHT

Romeo, Friar Laurence, and Maria huddle, strategizing...

MARIA
 I'm afraid time is not on our side.
 Prince Paris has returned to Verona
 -- *probably to marry Juliet*. And
 Lord Capulet has sent out search
 parties -- *probably to kill Romeo*.

ROMEO
 This just keeps getting better.

FRIAR LAURENCE
 Stay hopeful... Tonight, I will
 visit Juliet. Meanwhile, it is not
 safe for you in Verona. You must
 ride for Mantua and await my word --

-- Suddenly, a SOUND RUMBLES from outside... Our group PANS
 their gaze for the noise -- *TH-THUMP... TH-THUMP...*

THROUGH THE WINDOW: Capulet Guards are on approach. DOZENS.

FRIAR LAURENCE
She's been followed... Romeo, take
 her down to the Monastery. You will
 be safe there. *Go! Now!*

Romeo jolts up, readying his sword as -- *GONG-GONG* -- Friar
 tugs a rope, the STEEPLE BELL ringing, reverberating down...

... THROUGH LAYERS OF BEDROCK, where --

INT. HERMETIC MONASTERY - TEMPLE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

-- an ALARM SOUNDS! The Brotherhood SPRINGS to action,
 grabbing swords, staffs, spears. A well-oiled machine.

Suddenly they HEAR something, aiming all weapons at:

THE SECRET STAIRWELL DOOR

As it CREAKS open, Romeo & Maria are now face-to-face with a
 forest of DEADLY SPEARS. Seeing it's only Romeo, they relax:

THE BROTHERHOOD
L'uomo da Roma! Protect Romeo!

The Brotherhood clicks into swift FORMATION, ready to fight.

EXT. WATERFALL TEMPLE - THAT MOMENT

Sampson's troops SURROUND the temple, FLAMING ARROWS primed.

SAMPSON

Come out! Or we will burn you out!

Just as they asked, the temple door CREAKS open, revealing:

FRIAR LAURENCE

Do you come to confess, gentlemen?

Sampson & troops let out a guttural LAUGH.

SAMPSON

This is your last chance, old man... where is Romeo?! --

THE BROTHERHOOD (O.S.)

-- *He's with us...*

The troops PAN to find: a hundred swarming Friars AND...

DEADLY SPEARS

cutting air as -- *SHOOK-SHOOK-SHOOK* -- the Capulets are brutally IMPALED, breaking rank, loosing their GRIPS on:

FLAMING ARROWS

A HELLSTORM OF FIRE now ARCS for the temple -- and with a BOMB OF FLAMES -- *WHOOOSH!* -- the temple is engulfed.

Seeing this, Friar Laurence jumps into action. Weaving the carnage, he CRACKS men with his mallet, entering the burning

WATERFALL TEMPLE

Passing pews, he scurries for the confession booth just as the doors BURST OPEN -- a Guard enters, bow AIMED -- *FWIP!* -- the ARROW flies through the air -- Friar TURNS...

FLAMING DEATH

inches from his face -- and just as it's about to HIT -- he

PULLS A WOODEN LEVER

opening a TRAP DOOR -- *F-TOOM* -- tumbling to safety into the:

GREENHOUSE CAVE

Scanning his worktable, he finds what he came for: his FALCON. But then SOMETHING ELSE catches his eye...

THE BOTTLE OF SOMNUS

Grabbing both... he races for a rocky TUNNEL -- *But wait...*

A SEISMIC RUMBLE SHAKES FROM ABOVE

The temple now COLLAPSING in a fiery INFERNO...

IN THE MONASTERY

the destruction above SHAKES THE ROOM. Romeo & Maria LISTEN as -- *CRACK-CRACK-CRACK* -- the domed rock is now hot as a kiln... and as a seismic fracture SPIDERWEBS -- *BOOM!* --

THE CEILING CAVES IN,

burning masses of Guards & Friars falling to their deaths

FROM THE TEMPLE ABOVE.

All that remains: a flaming SINKHOLE. The Monastery exposed.

INT. HERMETIC MONASTERY - TEMPLE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Capulet men SWARM, firing down ARROWS as -- *SHOOP-SHOOP-SHOOP* -- Friars FIRE SPEARS. Both sides EVISCERATED by projectiles.

As Romeo leads Maria through the carnage, they're spotted by:

A YOUNG FRIAR

Run, Romeo! The waterfall! Run! --

-- Until he's SILENCED by -- *SHINK!* -- a flaming arrow in the chest. Collapsing, his dying eyes focus on SOMETHING: the ANCIENT BOOK burning in the rubble. *A hopeless image...*

IN THE SECRET STAIRWELL

Capulet Guards GAIN... Romeo & Maria CLIMBING STEPS FOR

THE GREENHOUSE CAVE

Entering the damp room, they finally see it: the WATERFALL. But as they SPRINT for the rushing tide... a Capulet guard ENTERS -- drawing back his bow -- and just as he RELEASES --

Romeo & Maria JUMP through the WALL OF WATER. Gone...

EXT. COVE - WATERFALL - NIGHT

GASP! Romeo & Maria surface in a calm cove. Safe, alive... But as they look high above, they see it:

THE TEMPLE GROUNDS ABLAZE

A solemn image of death and destruction...

ROMEO
 (crossing himself)
 Farewell Friar...

Prayer concluded, Romeo fixes his gaze on the dancing flames,
 vengeance RETURNING...

CUT TO:

A FRENCH CORPORAL

riding through the Pisa army camp, approaching:

INT. KING CHARLES'S TENT - ARMY CAMP - NIGHT

King Charles pauses mid-meal, greeting the corporal, who
 delivers: a SCROLL. Charles slices it open, reading...

KING CHARLES
Putain de merde, cousine idiote...
He actually did it...
 (looking to the Corporal)
 Have my reserves arrived?

FRENCH CORPORAL
 Miles away, your highness...

OUTSIDE THE TENT

we find... Constable Escalus, ears against canvas -- he's
 heard everything. Panicked, he BOLTS OFF, headed for:

THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA

Desperately climbing its spiraling stairwell, he soon exits
 onto the rooftop -- leveled to the core by what he sees...

THE FULL FRENCH ARMY

30,000 strong. CATAPULTS, SIEGE ENGINES, and the deadly
 PIKEMEN leading the charge. A battalion of marching death.

CUT TO:

A FAMILIAR FALCON

Soaring high above the lights of Verona... trailing a HOODED
 FIGURE, who RIDES for Castle Capulet...

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

Falcon perched on shoulder, the hooded figure slinks into
 Juliet's room. Unhooding, Friar Laurence is revealed --
 muddled, battered, but determined. He searches the room:

FRIAR LAURENCE
 Juliet? I come with a plan --

PRINCE PARIS (O.S.)
 -- *And what plan would that be?*

The Friar turns to find: Prince Paris flanked by his Bodyguard and Priest. Juliet at their side... unsettled:

JULIET
 The Friar was simply coming to
 bless me before I marry tomorrow.

Friar looks to Paris, playing along:

FRIAR LAURENCE
*A pleasure, your majesty. But as
 tradition requires, we must ask you
 to leave us alone...*

PRINCE PARIS
*Of course. God forbid we should
 prevent sacred devotion. Let me
 just bid adieu to my lovely bride --
 then we shall be on our way...*

Paris turns his back on the Friar, inching Juliet behind...

A DRESSING PARTITION

Hidden from view, he caresses Juliet's face:

PRINCE PARIS
 Poor soul. Your face has suffered
 too many tears.... but remember:
 come tomorrow, it will be my face
 as well --

-- Juliet's disgust turns to fear when she feels something
 PRESS against her ribs: a SMALL DAGGER gripped by Paris --

Juliet understands the threat, *nodding with dread...*

PRINCE PARIS
*I'm glad we agree. Until tomorrow,
 I leave you with this holy kiss...*

He kisses her forcefully, tongue slithering into her mouth.

Finished, Paris appears from behind the partition, bowing to the Friar with an innocent smile...

EXT. JULIET'S TOWER - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Passing Capulet Guards, Paris marches from the castle, giving a nod to his Bodyguard:

PRINCE PARIS
 Keep an eye on her...

Like a trained dog, he stays back, watchful eyes CRANING TO:

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Juliet sobs, pleading to Friar Laurence:

JULIET

Father, this mess is beyond hope!
Beyond cure! An army of troops
surrounds the kingdom. I have no
way out... and Romeo has no way in!

FRIAR LAURENCE

I question my own faith in these
times. And thus, perhaps in *science*
hope still remains. So if you
choose to place your faith in me...
know that you must wrestle with
death... in the name of love...

From his tunic, Friar produces the BOTTLE OF SOMNUS, pouring
murky DROPS into...

A GLASS VIAL

Juliet eyes the swirling liquid. Senses its power...

Friar moves to a desk, grabbing a QUILL, beginning to write a
LETTER. As he speaks, we see similar words are SCRIBBLED...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Tonight, make sure that you are
alone in your chamber. And before
bed, drink this down... Cold sleep
will run through your veins. Your
body will lay stiff... *And in this
borrowed likeness of death...* your
family will mourn, place you in a
casket, and carry you to the
catacombs. When you wake, we will
sneak you from the castle gates and
reunite you with Romeo.

Friar rolls his LETTER, knotting it to his falcon's leg:

FRIAR LAURENCE

Meanwhile, my trusted friend will
carry our plan to Romeo. So, if you
can bear the strength to knock on
death's door, *this* -- and only this
-- will finally grant you life...

Juliet grips the vial, her eyes resolute:

JULIET

Love shall give me the only
strength I need...

Friar nods, moving for the open balcony... and with their hope reignited -- he releases the falcon. It GLIDES over:

THE CASTLE COURTYARD

Flapping between towers, soaring high above troops... a plan in motion... an image of hope... until --

SHUNK!

An ARROW IMPALES the bird. With spastic flutters, it FALLS to the ground in a *THUD* of dust... And soon --

-- Two armored feet step in, strong hands untying the SCROLL. And as eyes squint the ink, we see who intercepted it:

PARIS'S BODYGUARD... now aware of their plan.

As a haunting CHOIR rises... a foreboding MONTAGE UNFOLDS:

JULIET

stands in her room as HANDMAIDENS descend upon her...

FEET STOMP

as the MONTAGUE ARMY descends from the mountains with their finished tools of battle: Romeo's WAR MACHINES...

A CORSET

is fitted around Juliet, TIGHTENED with a TUG...

ROCKS CLATTER

as Benvolio makes hairpin turns down Inferno Pass, LEAPING over GAPS in the rock...

AN ORNATE WEDDING GOWN

wraps around Juliet, as she stares emptily into space...

POLL-AXES

slam the ground with every step, the FRENCH ARMY marching in perfect unison. From a hilltop, Charles watches, satisfied...

PERFECT WHITE GLOVES

slide over Juliet's hands. Her icy stare doesn't waver...

ESCALUS'S HORSE

blasts through a shallow stream. He checks his six. A look of dread. He knows what's coming...

POWDER

dusts Juliet's cheeks. Warm skin turning ghost white...

HOOVES THUMP

the earth as Romeo -- Maria clutching his waist -- WHIPS his horse's reigns -- GALLOPING for the city...

And as the CHOIR VOICES reach a CRESCENDO, we SLAM TO utter SILENCE, revealing...

JULIET

fully dressed, staring at her REFLECTION in a mirror...

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - NIGHT

... Lady Capulet admires the image, tears of pride welling:

LADY CAPULET

Heaven knows if there is anyone
more beautiful than you. Oh, how
far you've come. I still remember
when you were just a little girl,
wishing to play with the boys --

JULIET

(forcing a fake smile)
Mother... please let me be tonight.
I have many grateful prayers to
say... for a blessing such as this.

Lady Capulet is overtaken, wrapping Juliet in a hug:

LADY CAPULET

Tomorrow is the most important day
of your life. May you sleep sounder
than the departed.

JULIET

I will, mother.

Behind her back, Juliet clutches...

THE VIAL OF SOMNUS

As Lady Capulet leaves, Juliet raises the VIAL. Removes its cork. Eyes the vicious liquid inside. A deep breath, then --

JULIET

Romeo... I drink to thee.

-- she DOWNS the liquid. For a moment, nothing. Then...

JULIET GASPS

The vial SLIPPING from her hands, SHATTERING to marble.
STAGGERING across the room, Juliet COLLAPSES onto her bed.
Choking. Contorting. Body SEIZING. Eyes ROLLING back...

And then we HEAR Juliet's HEARTBEAT slow, almost to a stop:

BEAT..... Beat..... beat..... Then --

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - THE NEXT MORNING

-- a SHOCK OF MUSIC blasts our ears: a MINSTREL BAND
practicing the wedding march. A cacophony of drums & horns...

SERVANTS swarm the courtyard: carrying flowers, caged doves,
wine barrels, suckling pig. Amid the bustle...

BENVOLIO

slinks amongst the CROWD -- cloaked in a hood -- unnoticed.
He glances to the castle walls.... perched atop them:

A HUNDRED PIKEMEN

stand watch -- POLL-AXES ready -- an occupation force...
A grave look washes over Benvolio, when:

LADY CAPULET (O.S.)
No, no, no! This is all wrong!

The band STOPS. Lady Capulet stomps in, frazzled, impatient:

LADY CAPULET
It should sound more regal...
momentous... lasting. Begin again.
(music resuming...)
... Now where is my Juliet?

INT. DRESSING CHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

TAILORS and STYLISTS prepare Prince Paris. Cuffs are hemmed.
Hair curled. The Prince admires himself in a hand-mirror as
Lord Capulet enters, passing PIKEMEN with an uneasy glare...

PRINCE PARIS
Lord Capulet. To what do I owe
this... disruption?

LORD CAPULET
Your highness, I have come to
remind you of our agreement.

PRINCE PARIS
And what about our agreement
concerns you?

LORD CAPULET
 (motioning to the Pikemen)
They do.

Paris moves close, putting an arm around him, creepily friendly:

PRINCE PARIS
 My Lord... I assure you they are
 merely here for our protection.
 Certainly we both agree... *the*
wedding must go on.

INT. PRIEST'S CHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - DAY

Paris's Priest prays, murmuring incomprehensible gibberish at the foot of a CROSS, when --

THE BODYGUARD ENTERS,

eager to speak... but the Priest holds up his LEPROUS HAND, finishing his prayer. Now done, he CLOCKS to the sight of...

THE FRIAR'S SCROLL.

CUT TO:

CURTAINS

thrusting open, sun shooting into the darkened bedchamber --

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

LADY CAPULET
 (sing-songy)
 -- Madam, daughter, bride! Have you
 nothing to say on your wedding day?

She stops, noticing Juliet splayed across the bed, still clothed in her WEDDING DRESS. As Lady Capulet approaches:

LADY CAPULET
 How much beauty sleep does one --

-- *CRUNCH!* -- she looks down: BROKEN GLASS -- then sees it:

JULIET'S LIFELESS FACE...

CUT TO:

DEAFENING SCREAMS

echoing across the courtyard, sending a pack Doves fluttering into the cloudless sky...

INT. JULIET'S BEDCHAMBER - CASTLE CAPULET - DAY

Lady Capulet WEEPS amongst a crowd of handmaidens.

Lord Capulet stands over Juliet's body, feeling for a PULSE... Nothing... Air on her LIPS... Nothing... He then clocks to something curious on the ground:

THE BROKEN VIAL

Turning it over in his hand, its last DROPS drip out:

LORD CAPULET
Poison. Our beautiful flower,
plucked by her own hand...

His eyes glass over as the guilt weighs on him. In a state of pure shock, he addresses the room with eerie calmness:

LORD CAPULET
All that was prepared for the
wedding will now be used for a
funeral. Celebration hymns will
become funeral marches. Bridal
flowers will now drape her sweet
corpse. Our child will be buried...
and so will our joys.

Just then... Prince Paris enters, flanked by Pikemen,
FREEZING at the sight of --

A LIFELESS JULIET

Paris is shocked. Perhaps even saddened. Then slowly... he
begins to tremble -- teeth clenched -- eyes filled with rage:

PRINCE PARIS
Have I waited so long for this day,
only to find this?!

LORD CAPULET
Dishonor my daughter with another
word and I will run you through!

Lord Capulet draws his SWORD. The Pikemen ready their AXES.
But just then, Paris's Priest & Bodyguard RUSH IN:

PRIEST
Your majesty! --

-- The Priest flashes Paris a knowing look.

Paris nods, signaling his men to back off. He then turns to
Lord & Lady Capulet, offering an apologetic BOW:

PRINCE PARIS

Lord & Madam... I am only torn
apart by the passing of your
beloved daughter. I thought
selfishly. It is not just I whom am
deprived of her radiance, but the
world itself...

Damn, he's good. Swiftly, Paris exits with his advisors...

CUT TO:

HANDWRITTEN WORDS

scrawled on parchment. The Friar's message...

INT. MARBLE HALLS - CASTLE CAPULET - MINUTES LATER

In a darkened corner, Paris finishes reading the scroll:

PRINCE PARIS

Juliet lives? Clever, clever
girl... Dare I ask how one combats
a *betrayal* such as this?

PRIEST

With another...

CUT TO:

GOLDEN HARPS

strummed in unison as we FLOAT DOWN from ornate STAINED GLASS
to an OPEN COFFIN on the church's altar. Inside...

JULIET'S BODY

is laid to rest on a BED OF FLOWERS... We PUSH IN on Juliet's
face... once so vibrant... now pale as a ghost.

INT. CATHEDRAL - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

In the shadows of the balcony, Friar Laurence observes rows
of CAPULETS paying respect: Sampson & Gregory, Lord Capulet
stifling tears... Lady Capulet SOBBING with pain... And soon:

PRINCE PARIS

Slowly climbing the steps, he leans over the coffin... at the
sheer sight of Juliet, his lips tremble:

PRINCE PARIS

To think you favored death over my
hand. Dear Juliet, forgive me...

Tears drop from his eyes as he softly rests his head on her
chest. Lord & Lady Capulet look on, touched...

But soon, we understand what Paris is up to -- ear to Juliet's chest -- he LISTENS: for a moment... *Nothing...* Another moment... *Still nothing...* Then finally...

A SINGLE HEARTBEAT

Paris's lips curl into a slimy grin...

EXT. RIVERBANK - SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

Benvolio SLOWS his horse. Dismounting, he leads the restless animal to the shoreline:

BENVOLIO
Easy boy... easy...

As the horse drinks, so does Benvolio... but as he rises --
-- *SHING!* -- he finds a blade to his throat.

A VOICE (O.S.)
So much as a squeak and I will
spill your throat into the river.

Hands up, Benvolio points to his cloak. On it, a WOLF EMBLEM.
The assailant sees it, dropping the blade:

ROMEO
Benvolio!

The cousins BEAR HUG with hearty slaps on the back.

BENVOLIO
I feared the worst.

ROMEO
I don't blame you. Worst fears tend
to come true these days.

Benvolio notices Maria.

ROMEO
This is Maria, Juliet's handmaiden.

Taking her hand, Benvolio plants a chivalrous kiss.

BENVOLIO
Benvolio, of the House of Montague.

ROMEO
Cousin, ride with us for Castle
Capulet. Help me retrieve Juliet.
Help me retrieve my wife.

Inspired, Romeo steps for his horse... but Benvolio is weary:

BENVOLIO
 It may be too late...
 (off Romeo's confusion)
 I come from the castle. The city is
 occupied. Pikemen line the walls. A
 hundred strong, swarming the
 grounds. They are there to
 ensure... the wedding goes through.

ROMEO
 A... wedding?
 (intense, temper boiling)
Prince Paris. We must go. Now.

But Benvolio's words stops him in his tracks:

BENVOLIO
 Your father already marches our
 army for the castle walls... Every
 man, every boy of fighting age...
 with your machines in tow...

Benvolio nods. Romeo is discouraged, torn...

ROMEO
 And does he know of the Pikemen?

BENVOLIO
 No.

ROMEO
 My father is bold... but no
 tactician. He'll only throw men at
 the castle. Countless Montagues
 will die. And if they break
 through, they'll slaughter the
 Capulets... along with my bride. No
 matter how it ends... there will be
 no one left when the French arrive.
This wedding must be stopped.
 (beat)
 Benvolio, ride with Maria for
 Castle Capulet. Do what you can.
 I will warn my father...

Romeo HUGS Benvolio tight, quickly mounting his horse:

MARIA
 Romeo.... will you not be a man?
 Come now, save the one you love!

ROMEO
 And leave my people to die? Then
 what kind of man would I be...
 (WHIPPING the reins)
 YAH!!!

Benvolio & Maria watch as Romeo GALLOPS away...

CUT TO:

THE MONTAGUE ARMY MARCHING

Lord Montague in the lead, dwarfed by lumbering WAR MACHINES.

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

But suddenly, SHOUTS are heard -- the party tensing, drawing swords... but as the crowd PARTS:

ROMEO APPEARS

As he trots before his army, he sees his sketches realized:
An UBER-CATAPULT... A GIANT CROSSBOW... a BATTERING TANK...

... And as he finally reaches his father:

ROMEO
I see you've taken some of my
suggestions...

LORD MONTAGUE
(cold)
Why have you returned to Verona?

ROMEO
To reason with you, father. To
beseech you to look beyond your own
sword, beyond your own future.

LORD MONTAGUE
Our future is why I fight! To end
this war before it begins.

ROMEO
This war has already begun!
(off the crowd's silence)
King Charles's army occupies
Verona. When you reach the city,
you'll find more than Capulet
warriors... you'll find trained
assassins in far greater numbers.

MURMURS throughout the party. Nervous chatter...

ROMEO
Father... we have lived our entire
lives by a twisted story, passed
down by ancestors we cannot even
remember. A river of blood unjustly
spilled in our family's name! We
have fought for nothing... and
there is no honor in that!

LORD MONTAGUE
Lies! Remove him at once!

Montague warriors SEIZE Romeo, but he BREAKS FREE, intense:

ROMEO
It is not a lie! I swear it on my
mother's soul.

SHING! Lord Montague draws his sword -- pointing it at Romeo:

LORD MONTAGUE
Your mother's dead! Because of you!

This leaves Romeo floored. Speechless. He turns to the ARMY.
Grave looks from familiar faces: friends, family. *It's true.*

LORD MONTAGUE
You disobey my banishment. Insult
me in front of my troops. Does your
loathing run that deeply, son?

Lord Montague readies himself as -- SHINNNNNG -- Romeo slowly
DRAWS his blade. But then --

ROMEO
No...

-- he TOSSES it to the ground. Then takes a knee, head bowed:

ROMEO
... my love does.

Lord Montague looks to his own sword. With shock. With guilt.
Trembling, he drops it as well.

The crowd looks on. Each man touched by the display.
Approaching Romeo -- he pulls him up -- and EMBRACES his son:

LORD MONTAGUE
What would you have me do, son?

ROMEO
Let me lead you.

Releasing him, Lord Montague nods. Romeo CLIMBS his battering
tank, now addressing the entire army, VOICE BOOMING:

ROMEO
I am Romeo of the House of
Montague... husband to Juliet of
the House of Capulet. Beyond those
castle walls, a foreign tyrant
seeks to marry my wife. If he does,
he will have a blood-claim on our
land... and on your freedom. King
Charles does not see us as Capulet
(MORE)

ROMEO (CONT'D)
 or Montague... he sees us as his
 subjects. Farmers to grow his food.
 Warriors to fight for his whims.
 Slaves... to be ruled.

The men SHOUT. Riled up. Inspired:

MONTAGUE SOLDIER
 We will defend your honor, Romeo!

ROMEO
 I can defend my own honor. I ask
 you... to defend your own. Not as
 Montagues, but as men of the
 peninsula. Men of Verona! Do not
 march for the city to destroy it...
 (locking eyes with his father)
 ... but to save it!

The army bursts into a CHEER, SLAMMING their spears. THUMPING
 their shields. A CHANT RISES...

MONTAGUE ARMY
 RO-ME-O! RO-ME-O! RO-ME-O!

Romeo mounts his horse:

ROMEO
 IF IT WEARS METAL... KILL IT!

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - CASTLE CAPULET - DAY

As Benvolio & Maria GALLOP up, Pikemen guards CROSS their
 AXES. Their horse REARS, SNORTS, tension building... until:

Maria reveals the IBEX EMBLEM on her cloak....

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

TROTting INSIDE, the pair swaps a look: *that was close...*
 But their levity is soon snuffed. Rounding a corner, they see

JULIET'S OPEN CASKET

carried down the cathedral steps...

Amidst a gathered crowd, Maria SOBS against a stunned
 Benvolio. And in this shocking moment, only one thing is
 certain: *they're too late...*

CRANING UP

reveals: Friar Laurence -- sneaking along castle walls --
 eyes on the FUNERAL PROCESSION as it winds its way...

EXT. CEMETERY - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

... towards the castle's opulent TOMB: an arresting assemblage of marble & gold framing a thick OAK DOOR.

Friar watches: *his plan in motion*. But soon spots a WRINKLE:

BENVOLIO & MARIA

distraught, eyes tracking the noble family Capulet -- along with Paris -- leading the procession, already winding down...

AN ORNATE STAIRCASE

Passing carved MARBLE BUSTS and mounted WAR BLADES, we FOLLOW Juliet's casket as it's carried into:

INT. THE TOMB OF CAPULETS - CONTINUOUS

TORCHES flicker, illuminating REGAL HEADSTONES, STRIKING STATUES... and beyond them: a 360° oil-painted MURAL.

As Juliet's casket is laid upon a marble DAIS, a CAPULET BISHOP begins reading the LAST RITES...

CUT TO:

THREE PIKEMAN GUARDS

scouting the dense, wooded forest...

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

PEERING through thick trunks, they spot...

THE MARCHING MONTAGUE ARMY

The Pikemen rush to grab their HORNS, as --

THWICK-THWICK!

two Pikeman DROP. The last one blows a BELLOW just before --

THWICK!

-- he's cut CUT DOWN by an arrow. Yet the damage is done:

THE HORN'S ECHO

has reached another Pikemen UNIT, playing a card game on a tree stump. They SPRING UP, BLOWING their HORNS, the sound

REACHING THE CASTLE GROUNDS

Benvolio & Maria freeze at the ALARM -- but before they can react -- they're GRABBED -- SPUN AROUND by a familiar face:

FRIAR LAURENCE
 Juliet... she's alive.

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - THAT MOMENT

As the alarm ECHOES through the tomb, the procession PANICS:

BODYGUARD
 The castle is under attack, m'lord!

PARIS processes -- a split second decision -- *now or never* --
 clocking to his Priest, a NOD seals their fate --

SLICE!

Paris's Priest SLASHES the Bishop's throat -- his Bodyguard
 KILLING pallbearers as Pikemen SEIZE Lord & Lady Capulet.

LORD CAPULET
 What is the meaning of this?!

PRINCE PARIS
 (an evil smirk)
The wedding must go on...

EXT. CEMETERY - CASTLE CAPULET - MOMENTS LATER

Lord & Lady Capulet are DRAGGED topside, THROWN out of the
 tomb. And with a THUNK, it's LOCKED from the inside.

LORD CAPULET
 Guards! Take arms!

Capulet Gaurds UNSHEATHE their weapons... but in a blink

POLL-AXES

are drawn -- Pikemen SURROUNDING. The city is theirs...

CUT TO:

THE CASTLE WALLS

Pikemen ARCHERS fanning out, taking position...

EXT. DRAW BRIDGE - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

... as countless more POUR OUT of the DRAW BRIDGE, creating a
 mighty PHALANX around the castle -- a perfectly formed

SHIELD OF POLL-AXES

Ready, they wait... and wait... until... they FEEL it --

THE EARTH VIBRATING

from some kind of seismic quake -- and then... with a ROAR --

THE MONTAGUE ARMY

bursts from trees. Romeo on horseback, leading the charge.

The Pikemen ready their axes to absorb the RECKLESS BLITZ, but at the last moment, Romeo SIGNALS --

ROMEO

UNO!

-- The CHARGING Montague army suddenly PARTS, revealing...

THE UBER-CATAPULT

A lever is THROWN -- ropes TWIST -- wooden gears SPINNING as

A CLUSTER OF BOULDERS

are launched into the air, DROPPING LIKE BOMBS...

PIKEMAN ARCHERS

dive away as the walls are EXPLODED by STONE CANNONBALLS. Rocky shrapnel RICOCHETING across the castle.

THE MONTAGUE ARMY

charges... horses & men RACING at FULL SPEED...

THE PIKEMEN

hold steady, AXES OUT, a splintering WALL OF DEATH...

AS BOTH SIDES COLLIDE

Blood SPLATTERS THE LENS -- Montagues are SLASHED down by axes -- but they continue their ASSAULT -- CIRCLING the Pikemen -- FUNNELING them like dogs herding sheep.

ROMEO

hacks through the carnage -- and as he sees his Montague troops FALLING around him -- he gives the NEXT SIGNAL:

ROMEO

DUE!!!

Every Montague HITS THE DECK, bellies on the GROUND. As the Pikemen look AHEAD -- another MACHINE is revealed...

THE GIANT CROSSBOW

launches MASSIVE ARROWS -- whizzing over Montague heads, for

THE PIKEMEN,

who are SKEWERED like kabobs -- half their numbers FALLING from the vicious barrage...

ROMEO

surfaces to find... a HORN sounding from the castle walls...

THE ARCHERS

have regrouped -- arrows are LIT -- strings PULLED -- twine TIGHTENING -- and then it happens...

ROMEO

gives his FINAL SIGNAL:

ROMEO

TRE!!!

Montagues HEAVE, pushing the last machine onto the bridge...

THE BATTERING TANK

Romeo & his army DIVE beneath it just as -- BAP-BAP-BAP --

FLAMING ARROWS

pepper the protective SHELL.

ROMEO

NOW!!!!

Montagues -- Lord Capulet included -- ROLL the tank for the CASTLE GATES

RAMMING the doors over-and-over -- WHAM!... WHAM!... WHAM!...

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - THAT MOMENT

Paris's Priest REMOVES HIS HOOD, finally revealing his wretched face in entirety, decomposed by boils and lesions...

His hand on a BIBLE, he blesses Paris beside Juliet's body:

PRIEST

Do you, Prince Paris, take this woman --

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - CASTLE CAPULET - THAT MOMENT

-- WHAM!!! -- the gates FALL -- Montagues streaming in -- Romeo leading the charge -- the BATTLE spilling into...

THE COURTYARD

Servants SCREAM. Pikemen SCRAMBLE. A frenzied madhouse.

LORD CAPULET

climbs a rampart, seeing the troops, finally understanding:

LORD CAPULET
Montagues...

Capulet Guards TAKE UP ARMS. As a SWORD is placed in Lord Capulet's hand, he looks to the blade in a dreamlike trance... then back to his men, intense:

LORD CAPULET
Today... we end this.

ACROSS THE FRAY

running for cover, Benvolio, Maria, and Friar spot...

ROMEO

weaving the madness, searching for:

ROMEO
Juliet!!! Juliet!!!

He GRABS a passing a CAPULET SERVANT, panicked, desperate:

ROMEO
Where is she?! Where is Juliet?!?!

Amid screams, the servant POINTS across the grounds, to...

THE TOMB DOOR

Romeo SPRINTS OFF -- SLASHING Pikemen in his path -- as

BENVOLIO, MARIA, AND FRIAR

sprint for Romeo -- SCREAMING -- almost within earshot, when

THE CAPULET ARMY

blindsides the Montagues -- SWINGING their swords -- hatred re-ignited -- a CAPULET-MONTAGUE BATTLE ROYALE!

EXT. CEMETERY - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

Romeo reaches the tomb entrance, moving forward with haste...

WINDING DOWN THE STAIRS,

he readies his SWORD. Eyes focused. Vengeance alive...

CUT TO:

JULIET'S UNMOVING LIPS

kissed by Prince Paris -- a sick, slobbering display...

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Satisfied, he looks to his Priest, ceremony nearly finished:

PRIEST

Now, in the name of the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Spirit --

ROMEO (O.S.)

Get your hands off my wife.

All eyes clock to the stairs... shocked to find:

ROMEO

Bloody. Battered. Eyes on fire. When out of nowhere --

PARIS'S BODYGUARD

streaks in, SWORD RAISED. Romeo DUCKS the SLASH -- SPARKS
flying as steel SLAMS marble. Springing to a stand -- Romeo
lands a LEAPING WHACK on the Bodyguard's blade -- CLANGGG!

PRINCE PARIS

For God's sake, finish it!

Nervous, the Priest composes himself:

PRIEST

By all that is holy... under the
eyes of God --

CLANG! CLANG! CLANG! Romeo doesn't stop -- HACKING again and
again -- until the bodyguard CRUMPLES into a SHREDDED MESS.

Romeo clocks to the ceremony. WINDS UP. HURLS his SWORD as...

PRIEST

... I now pronounce you man and --

-- THUNK!

The blade LANDS in the Priest's chest like a javelin.
He GAGS. BLOOD spilling from his scarred lips, dripping onto
pages of his bible... as he SLUMPS to death.

PARIS

rises, drawing his sword as Romeo takes the Bodyguard's blade, readying it. The two men CIRCLE each other:

PRINCE PARIS

You truly have no shame, Montague.
First, you kill her cousin... then
come seeking more Capulet blood.
How noble of you...

ROMEO

A noble man would know better than
to come between a desperate husband
and his wife. And since this is a
lesson you've yet to learn, it will
be my pleasure to teach you.

Romeo STRIKES -- the men trade BLOWS -- CLANG-CLANG! -- their swords a STREAKING METALLIC BLUR...

EXT. BATTLEFIELDS - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

We WIND THROUGH the devastation in a single, unbroken SHOT:

FIRES BURN

engulfing horrified women and children...

LORD MONTAGUE

guts a Capulet guard...

LORD CAPULET

beheads a Montague warrior...

BOTH ARMIES

battle the remnants of the Pikemen...

CATAPULTED STONES

rain down -- ARROWS flicking through the air...

BENVOLIO

protects Maria, FENDING off Montague & Capulet alike...
as we finally land on...

FRIAR LAURENCE

watching the mayhem -- GUILT upon his face: *he has FAILED...*

CUT TO:

CLANG-CLANG!

Blades MEET as Romeo & Paris's DUEL traverses the tomb --

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - CONTINUOUS

-- PAINTINGS are slashed in half. STATUES used as cover.

Romeo FIGHTS with passion... but is soon caught off-guard as
PARIS

unsheathes his KNIFE -- BLITZING with a FLURRY of close JABS
-- and with a SLICE -- Romeo BLEEDS -- STUMBLING back...

CUT TO:

HOOVES THUMPING EARTH

a familiar face RIDING into view... CONSTABLE ESCALUS --

EXT. BATTLEFIELDS - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

-- surveying the carnage: dead Pikemen... smoke billowing
from inside the castle walls... *nothing but death.*

WHIPPING REINS, he GALLOPS for the castle... where

LORD MONTAGUE

screams, PLUNGING his sword through a Pikeman's breast plate.
RIPPING it loose, he turns, as across the battlefield...

LORD CAPULET

emerges from the smoke. The Lords' gazes LAND on EACH
OTHER... a lifetime of hatred behind their eyes...

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - THAT MOMENT

Romeo CATCHES HIMSELF against a statue, barely keeping grip
on his sword. Paris saunters forward, laughing:

PRINCE PARIS

Oh, mighty Romeo... why do you
still fight? I refuse to believe
one girl could inspire such action.
Is it wealth? Power? Is it fame?
Immortality?

(truly aggravated now)
Why?! Why do you still fight?

Romeo glares at Paris... then, matter-of-factly...

ROMEO

... Love.

Paris rolls his eyes, a disgusted chuckle --

PRINCE PARIS
Romeo and Juliet? In time, no one
 will remember your names.

Paris PLANTS a forward FOOT, WINDING UP for the kill --

PRINCE PARIS
But they will remember mine.

-- as he LUNGES -- Romeo gets there first --

STRIKING PARIS'S FOOT INSTEAD

The Prince TIGHTENS, giving Romeo an opening --

SLASH!

Stumbling back, the Prince SLAMS against the mural wall --
 HANDS GRIPPED around his BLEEDING NECK -- unable to speak...

ROMEO
 I have killed many men. And how
 often are they happy right before
 they die? I've heard it's called...
 the light before death. Do you see
 such a light, Prince? Do you?

Paris GURGLES, and maybe, just maybe, he shakes his head: No.

Soon, the Prince's trembling STOPS... He SLIDES down the
 mural, BLOOD mixing with PAINT, finally SLUMPING... DEAD.

EXT. BATTLEGROUND - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

ESCALUS rides into the MAELSTROM... but before the havoc can
 register, he's TACKLED off his horse by the last surviving

PIKEMAN

Escalus SCRAMBLES up stone stairs, FENDING him OFF, ascending
 a RAMPART... while, below them...

LORD MONTAGUE & LORD CAPULET

lock SWORDS, inches from each other, then PART with a GROWL!

BLADES SWING AGAIN

CLANG! Two graybeards locked in a DEATH MATCH.

ACROSS THE WAY

Benvolio rushes Maria safely behind a stone wall, then
 gathers the Friar as they SPRINT for the TOMB...

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Romeo limps towards Juliet's body. Soul ripped to pieces.

Slumping onto the dais, he gently clasps his wife's hand, trembling as he pulls something from his pocket:

THE WOODEN RING

He gently places it back on her finger. *Where it belongs...*

ROMEO

Death may have taken the air from
your breath... but your beauty will
never be conquered. From this world-
wearied flesh, my eyes look to you
last. My arms take your last
embrace. And lips, the doors of
breath, seal with a righteous kiss,
my death... beside yours.

Romeo leans in and lays the softest KISS upon Juliet's lips.

He now RISES, brandishing his SPRING-LOADED DAGGER...
Stoic, he places the hilt against his HEART, finger hovering
over the SWITCH --

ROMEO

Come, bitter steel...
Come, unsavory guide...

Suddenly -- we hear an audible *GASP!* -- Romeo STARTLES at the
sound -- SPRINGING his dagger --

THNK!

In complete shock, he watches Juliet's eyes FLUTTER... OPEN.
His disbelief soon overtaken by joy, until... he looks down:

BLOOD POURS

from his chest... the DAGGER buried in his HEART...

And as a *HAUNTING CHOIR* swells... we find ourselves...

HIGH IN THE BLUE SKY

Beautiful clouds DRIFTING by. *Maybe we're in Heaven?* THEN:

A BOULDER ENTERS FRAME

lofted by the catapult -- we FOLLOW as it PLUMMETS from the
heavens --

SLAMMING INTO A TOWER

and as STONES FALL... we FOLLOW them too -- RAINING down upon

THE MOAT'S DAM

As stone CRUMBLES -- the dam EXPLODES -- water RUSHING...

UNDERGROUND,

flooding the TUNNELS -- a deadly TIDAL WAVE headed right for:

INT. BURIAL CHAMBER - TOMB - THAT MOMENT

Juliet COMES TO... groggy... confused to find...

ROMEO

collapsing into her arms. As she catches him, her face shows shock. Disbelief. But her attention is soon stolen by...

THE TIDAL WAVE

rushing into the chamber -- Juliet SCREAMS -- the tomb beginning to FILL like an hourglass. Panicked, she clocks back to:

ROMEO

who seizes, gasping. Juliet looks to his WOUND. Mortal.

JULIET

Romeo... What's happening?!

Eyes fixed on her, Romeo manages the tiniest laugh:

ROMEO

Everything.

Cradling Romeo's head, Juliet runs her fingers through his hair, tucking bloody strands behind his ears.

JULIET

Why did you come for me? Do you ever listen?

ROMEO

(a smile)

Occasionally...

Juliet manages a grin through her tears... but around them:

WATER IS RISING

The end is near. Romeo's eyes wander, landing on *something*:

ROMEO

(distant)

I see it...

JULIET
What, my love? What do you see?

ROMEO
The light...

His gaze wanders back to Juliet. A look of pure, utter love:

ROMEO
Don't let me go.

With that, Romeo's eyes lose focus -- his seizing slows --
and like a candle blown out...

ROMEO IS DEAD.

Juliet is devastated -- clocking around -- panicked -- as
WATER REACHES THEIR CHESTS...

She looks to the tomb's SPIRAL STAIRCASE: *an escape...* Then
back to ROMEO: *a choice...*

Her choice. And as STRINGS SOAR....

JULIET KISSES ROMEO TIGHT

Soon, their bodies are SWALLOWED by the WAVE...

NOW UNDERWATER

Swirling FLOWERS mix with the VIOLENT TIDE, but still --

-- Juliet GRIPS Romeo -- her lips upon his -- refusing to let
go -- and as water WRAPS THE PAIR IN DARKNESS, we...

CUT TO:

RUSHING WATER

erupting like a geyser -- *BOOM!* -- the TOMB DOORS BURST OPEN
-- knocking Benvolio & the Friar off their feet...

EXT. BATTLEFIELDS - CASTLE CAPULET - CONTINUOUS

As the roaring tide SPILLS onto open ground, it overtakes...

THE BATTLEFIELD

Noble Lords locked in combat... Swords meeting shields...
Limp bodies falling into shallow water... now dyed BLOOD-RED.

ESCALUS

pulls his sword from the Pikeman's gut, the man FALLING from
the ledge. Panting, he SCANS the scene below...

CAPULETS & MONTAGUES

desperately SLAUGHTERING each other... as they always have.

Escalus now knows: *he was too late... their nation is doomed.*

CUT TO:

CAPULET GUARDS

cranking A WHEEL. Metal GROANS as a RELEASE VALVE opens -- the water level DROPPING -- soon flowing away...

INT. TOMB - THAT MOMENT

Benvolio and Friar chase the RECEDING WATER, splashing into THE BURIAL CHAMBER

Their cautious steps soon HALTED. Freezing at the sight of...

TWO DEAD BODIES

Romeo & Juliet strewn across the wet marble floor...

CUT TO:

SMOKE

Drifting across the castle grounds in SLOW MOTION...

EXT. COURTYARD - CASTLE CAPULET - DAY

THE BATTLE RAGES on: relentless CLANGING of swords... SCREAMS of dying men echo through the air...

Then, slowly... from the thick fog...

FIGURES EMERGE

Benvolio... The Friar... And in their arms...

ROMEO & JULIET

The Lords take notice, blades breaking free, stumbling back, stunned expressions upon their faces as...

FRIAR & BENVOLIO APPROACH

Soon, the whole battlefield takes notice -- Capulet & Montague alike -- all men lowering their weapons. Everything falling to STUNNED SILENCE...

Reaching the center of the courtyard, the Friar looks around. All eyes on them... and Romeo & Juliet, in their arms:

FRIAR LAURENCE

People of Verona... let it be known
 today and all days forth: Romeo,
 who lies dead... was the husband of
 Juliet. And she... the faithful
 wife of Romeo. With my blessing,
 they wed in secret... and if any
 part of this tragedy is my fault,
 then let my life be sacrificed, for
I deserve it more than they!

From the ramparts, Escalus watches the surreal scene...

FRIAR LAURENCE

They took their own lives because
 their enemies gave them no other
 choice. And who were these enemies?
 They were you! They were Capulet!
 They were Montague!

Friar looks to the Lords, who hang their heads, ashamed...

FRIAR LAURENCE

Do you see what evil has come from
 your hate? But while your hatred
 may have killed your children... it
 has also given them eternal love.
 For in death, none of you can take
that away...

(a long beat)

If you ever loved them, let their
 deaths be not in vain.

The Lords' eyes find their lifeless children in the arms of
 these men, and then soon find... EACH OTHER.

Tense moments as they inch for...

THEIR SWORDS

The Lords lock eyes -- *SHING!* -- swords DRAWN, approaching.

EVERY MAN COILS ANEW, READY TO FIGHT. But then, incredibly --

-- the Lords simply EXCHANGE SWORDS -- IBEX & WOLF emblems
 changing hands. No words spoken... None are needed...

The Capulet & Montague ARMIES trade glances, lowering their
 weapons as well. *The battle is over...*

FROM THE RAMPART ABOVE

Escalus breaks into an exhausted smile. He shakes his head,
 relieved: *they might just have a chance.*

From his expression -- we FLOAT UP -- into the CLOUDS -- high above the SMOLDERING CASTLE...

DISSOLVING TO:

THE FRENCH ARMY

Fully assembled. Regiments MARCHING into place.

EXT. ARMY CAMP - VERONA COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

KING CHARLES exits his royal tent, yawning to a GENERAL:

KING CHARLES
A good morning for a hostile
takeover, don't you think?

Slapping the General on the back, he breathes deep, admiring the land. Green grass. Golden fields. Purple mountains.

He notices a ROSE growing at his feet, PLUCKING it from soil:

KING CHARLES
Such beautiful country...
I've heard they've come to call
it... V'italia.
(eyeing the rose)
A terrible name.

Just then, a SCOUT rides up. Out of breath. Ghost white:

SCOUT
Your highness...

KING CHARLES
What is it? Spit it out!

SENTRY
You must see for yourself.

EXT. VERONA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

His ARMY behind him, Charles GALLOPS up a STEEP HILL.
As he does, a THUNDEROUS ROAR grows louder and louder...

Reaching the top, the King's expression falls to DREAD...
CRANING UP, we reveal...

VERONA'S ARMY

Thousands strong. Finally united. Montague and Capulet side-by-side. All BELTING a ferocious BATTLE CRY!

Notice familiar faces: Sampson, Gregory, Lord Montague, Lord Capulet, Constable Escalus... even Boy Tanner... clutching his father's SICKLE. And behind them all...

WAR MACHINES

Romeo's inventions. Dozens of them. A force to be reckoned with. And finally, at the army's front...

BENVOLIO

carves his own WOODEN RING with a grin. Just then...

THUNDER CRASHES

Sky turning grey... and soon... RAIN BEGINS TO FALL.

KING CHARLES

looks on, now pale as ivory. PUSHING IN on his face, everything ramps to SLOW MOTION as...

THE ARMY OF VERONA CHARGES

and Friar's voice guides once last time:

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*That morning, some were to be
 pardoned, while others were to be
 punished. And a dark peace was soon
 to be settled, even with the sun
 too sad to show...*

FLYING UP from the battlefield, Verona grows smaller and smaller until our world again becomes...

A MAP

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*With the alliance complete, the
 republic of Verona repelled the
 invaders from the North...*

RAIN DROPS FALL on the map. As it SOAKS, paint thins as BORDERS disappear, the entire land becoming a SINGLE COLOR...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*A spark was lit... a spark of
 unity... a spark that would in time
 unite the peninsula under a single
 name...*

In beautiful cursive, LETTERS are scrawled upon the map...

ITALY

As we FLY BACK DOWN, the real world MATERIALIZES again as --

EXT. SYCAMORE FOREST - DAY

-- we GLIDE over treetops. RAIN still POURING...
Is this the past? The future? It doesn't matter...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*But this freedom came with a grave
cost...*

We FOLLOW a single RAINDROP... FALLING for the forest --
a dream-like descent -- into a clearing, where it lands on...

A STATUE

We circle around it. Half stone. Half marble. A visage of
Romeo & Juliet, wrapped in each other's arms.

MUSIC SOARS as we continue to FALL, deep into SOAKED EARTH...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*... A cost that will be remembered
forever...*

... Finding ourselves UNDERWATER...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
... In war, in life, in love...

... PUSHING THROUGH swirling FLOWER PETALS, revealing...

FRIAR LAURENCE (V.O.)
*For there will never be a story of
more woe... than that of Juliet...
and her Romeo.*

... Romeo & Juliet. Still locked in an eternal kiss.

Together. Forever.

FADE OUT.