

SAMPLE: ROMEO & JULIET: CHOOSE YOUR OWN ENDING

By Ann and Shawn Fraistat

*Tragicomedy, Multimedia Stage Play*

What if Romeo had stayed helplessly in love with Rosaline instead of Juliet? Or if Mercutio and Tybalt hadn't died... but had gotten together instead? In this Shakespearean take on the "Choose Your Own Ending" model, the audience casts votes throughout the performance to determine which course true love will take; ultimately deciding whether everybody lives or everybody dies. With eight dramatically different possible endings, this isn't the tale of star-crossed lovers that you read in high school. An irreverent, madcap reimagining of Shakespeare's most beloved romance.

Originally produced by the Impressionable Players at the Capital Fringe Festival in 2010. R&J has since been published by Playscripts and been performed across the United States and Canada, including productions at FringeNYC in 2011 and at Frostburg State University in 2015.

*From a track where the audience has selected Rosaline as Romeo's love interest. Rosaline has heard Romeo's entreaties and is left with conflicted feelings. Juliet, instead of meeting Romeo, found Benvolio at the Capulets' party instead:*

**Act II (R), Scene 3**

*Within CAPULET's mansion. ROSALINE is onstage. JULIET enters.*

JULIET

Good morrow, coz!

ROSALINE

Good morrow, happy Juliet.

JULIET

Why how now? Dost thou speak in the sick tune?

ROSALINE

I am out of all other tune, methinks. By my troth, I am exceeding ill.

JULIET

O no, poor coz! Hast thou a fever then?

ROSALINE

Ay, a fever of most inconvenient sort!  
My heart misgives what once I thought was sport!

JULIET

A couplet! Roz, thou art in love!

ROSALINE

In love?! No, Juliet, not love, not I!  
Surely one couplet doth not signify!

JULIET

Maybe not one, but cousin, that was two.  
A third would prove thy guilt past any doubt.

ROSALINE

There will be no third. I'm not in love.  
See? I make no rhyme. (*Spotting something out the window*) Hey, look, a dove!  
DAMMIT! Okay, so maybe I like this guy...

JULIET

I am so glad to hear it, coz! Wilt thou

Forego the convent to become his bride?

ROSALINE

Whoa, slow thy roll, thou lusty wench! I hardly know him, and cannot trust him! For although he seemeth like a good man, and a kind man, and a handsome man, and a...  
(*Catching self*) Well, still he be a man, and I trust no creature of those parts! Those...  
fascinating parts... (*Catching self again*) Besides, he is Romeo and Romeo a Montague!

JULIET

What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. At any rate,  
I shall be married to his coz not half  
An hour from now, and so I scorn this feud.

ROSALINE

Say that last part again?

JULIET

I scorn this feud.

ROSALINE

The part before?

JULIET

I'm getting married to a stranger.

ROSALINE

What?!

JULIET

We met, we wooed and made exchange of vow,  
All this last night! So we shall marry now!

ROSALINE

By Cupid, thou wastest not time! How canst thou marry so quickly? Canst thou be so  
sure of thy love and thy suitor's love for thee?

JULIET

I see no reason why I should not.

ROSALINE

Juliet, thou art young. Thou dost not see the fickleness of men. My Romeo may speak  
oath after oath of undying love, but I am wiser in my years, and I know that trust is  
naught but folly. A man may say one thing, but he will never mean it.

JULIET

Why not? How dost thou know this to be true?

ROSALINE

I just do.

JULIET

Is this about that time that thou didst love  
Filippo, and he didst feign to love thee back  
And led thee on and stomped thy heart to bits,  
And then you locked yourself up in your room  
And swore that you would never love again?

ROSALINE

It is not entirely unrelated to that incident.

JULIET

But that was just one man! What if the two  
Prove not alike? What if this Romeo  
Means all that he doth say? Wilt thou shun him  
Before thou givest him a chance with thee?  
I think thy chastity is but a ploy  
To keep theyself from getting hurt again.  
Thou wilt be made a nun only because  
Thou art afraid of men! There, I said it.

ROSALINE

Afraid of men? I will show thee! I shall give this Romeo a chance to prove himself an  
honest man. I shall conceal me what I am and appear before him in a man's weeds. From  
this disguise will I question him on the subject of women and unearth those sentiments,  
which he, being a man, must possess, but would hide from me! Ay, he will prove false.  
And then thou shalt see that I spoke true!

JULIET

Mayhap. But if I am the one correct?

ROSALINE

Then there's a one in four chance I'll kill myself.

JULIET

One in four?

ROSALINE

One in four.

*(NURSE enters.)*

NURSE

O, Juliet! Are you ready yet? It's time for your poorly thought-out wedding! I have no idea why you're marrying this one! You know not how to choose a man! His man rump is half the man rump that Paris's is!

JULIET

I know, you said! But, remember, I love him.

NURSE

O, pssshh! Love! Dump the chump and get a better rump!

JULIET

Stop talking about rumps!

NURSE

Never!

*(JULIET and NURSE exit.)*

ROSALINE

Great.  
And now must I design my male disguise,  
The better to reveal Romeo's lies.  
...Damn these couplets!

*Exeunt.*

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*From a track where the audience has selected Juliet as Romeo's love interest. When Romeo kills Tybalt and the audience votes for him to lie to Juliet and cover his tracks, Benvolio decides to take the story into his own hands.*

## **Act IV (JLA), Scene 2**

*Capulet's orchard. BENVOLIO enters.*

BENVOLIO

O, is it madness that did guide me hither?  
To leap o'er Capulet's high walls in hopes  
That I might speak to lady Juliet,  
So heartlessly deluded by her love?  
I fear this course unwise, with danger rife,

For what may very well become of me  
Perchance her kinsman find me here?  
But peace, Benvolio! Steel thyself—  
O, steady must thy ample valor prove!  
Thy cause is one of righteous principle,  
And thou must lend it all of thy resolve!

*(JULIET enters, above at her window.)*

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and the east is lookin'  
hot! O Juliet, Juliet! Wherefore art thou Juliet? Deny thy husband and crush his dreams,  
or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll do it for you.

JULIET

Ay me... Alack... Alas... >>

BENVOLIO

<< Juliet! O fairest lady Juliet!

*(JULIET screams.)*

*(JULIET screams and whips out an even  
larger weapon than the one she threatened  
ROMEO with before.)*

Sweet Jesus, don't kill me!

JULIET

Though like my lord, thou stalk'st my balcony  
In dark of night, thy voice is somehow strange.  
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

BENVOLIO

Well, not the first, but certainly the latter.  
I am Benvolio, kinsman to him  
The faithless, lying dog that is your husband.

JULIET

Benvolio, what canst thou mean by this?

BENVOLIO

Truly, he lied to thee, sweet Juliet.  
'Twas Romeo that slew thy cousin, Tybalt.

JULIET

O God! Did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?

BENVOLIO

It did, it did; alas the day, it did!  
In vain did I attempt to halt their brawl,  
But woe indeed, 'twas far too late!  
And to compound his crimes, he lies to thee,  
The wretch, to hide this from thy view!

JULIET

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!  
Am I, his wife, so readily betrayed?

BENVOLIO

There is no trust, no faith, no honesty  
In men, all cheats, all crooks, dissemblers all!  
...Except for me, of course.

JULIET

Except for thee?

BENVOLIO

Ay, good lady, did not I seek thee out  
To tell the truth when no one else would dare?

JULIET

Ay, this I must admit. But how I rue  
These awful happenings! Shall I be wed  
To that douchebag, the County Paris,  
If I refuse to flee with Romeo?  
Unless...

BENVOLIO

Unless...?

JULIET

Valiant sir, please step into my sight.

BENVOLIO

Most gladly. (*He climbs up to balcony.*) Is this to thy satisfaction?

JULIET

Good enough for me!  
Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!  
For I ne'er saw true beauty— >>

JULIET & BENVOLIO  
*(Unison)*

<< Till this night.

JULIET  
*(Gasping)*

Unison! That proves it!

JULIET & BENVOLIO  
*(Unison)*

We are soulmates.

BENVOLIO  
*(Gasping)*

O, double unison! We must be wed  
Tomorrow morn! There is no time to waste!

JULIET

Alack, my love, I am already wed;  
There is no way to break those holy vows!

BENVOLIO

Unless...

JULIET

Unless...?

BENVOLIO & JULIET  
*(Unison)*

WE HAVE SEX FIRST! JINX!

JULIET

You owe me a soda!

BENVOLIO

You owe me some sex!

*(BENVOLIO and JULIET high-five and exit  
into bedroom. Times passes. ROMEO  
enters.)*

ROMEO

At last, 'tis late enough to dare elope  
And flee loathsome Verona's pris'nous walls,  
That enwrap us like the lustful county's arms.  
O my poor, gentle wife! I do hope she

Is not awaiting me too anxiously.  
Forsooth, I would have sooner come  
Were not her safety paramount concern.

*(Above, JULIET and BENVOLIO re-enter,  
kissing and carrying on. JULIET has a  
knapsack with her. She and BENVOLIO are  
about to elope. They do not see ROMEO.)*

Ah, my lady! Ah, my love! Soon shall we  
Be together, and true love shall light us  
On our way to Mantua! Happy day! *(ROMEO sees BENVOLIO.)*  
Benvolio? What art thou doing here?

BENVOLIO

Romeo! O, I was just, um, I was...

ROMEO

In the middle of the night?

BENVOLIO

Well, you see...

ROMEO

*(Dawning comprehension)*

With thy shirt on inside out?!

BENVOLIO

Heh heh...

*(Long moment of silence.)*

He who snoozeth loseth?

*(With a cry, ROMEO draws his sword.)*

Cousin, be reasonable!

ROMEO

I will kill thee! I will *murder* thee!

JULIET

Hast thou not murdered enough people already?!

ROMEO

Thou didst tell her?!

BENVOLIO

With thy best interest at heart! I swear, 'twas all for your sake! Well, at least, up until the sex. That, less so.

ROMEO

Benvolio, thou art a dead man!

*(ROMEO chases BENVOLIO offstage.)*

JULIET

*(Calling after)*

Wait! Stop, Benvolio! Hold, Romeo!  
O, someone must elope with me or else  
I shall have yet another husband Thursday!  
Goddammit, that would make it three this week!  
Alack, they're gone! I spy no remedy  
Except to hasten to the clever friar.  
These Gordian knots he must untangle,  
For they are quite beyond my desp'rate power!

*Exeunt.*