

DANIEL: Okaaaay, well! The clock is ticking, Adult Puppet Guy is glaring at me from the wings, and so without further, further ado, we are proud to present *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*!

[*Blackout. A pretentious, heavy-metal version of 'Greensleeves' crashes through the sound system. At its conclusion, lights come up to reveal JESS, in Shakespearean attire and high-top sneakers, holding the large Complete Works book. He opens it and begins reading.*]

JESS: "All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts."

How many parts exactly must one man play? Shakespeare's *dramatis personae* numbers one thousand, two hundred and twenty-two roles—thirty-six in *Romeo and Juliet* alone! *Way* too many. Friar Lawrence? Fine. Tybalt? Sure. But Mercutio? Lady Capulet? Unsightly fat on the Bard's otherwise muscular body of work.

[*Enter ADAM and DANIEL, also in Elizabethan garb and sneakers, limbering up as if preparing to run a marathon. As JESS speaks, he moves the book and bookstand far stage right.*]

Let us therefore begin our shrinkage of Shakespeare's massive canon by rendering the blubber of his greatest romantic tragedy down to the bare essentials of the smooth, supple, teenage romance of *Romeo and Juliet*. Prologue!

ADAM & DANIEL: [*Simultaneously, with exaggerated gestures.*]

"Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,
Whose misadventured, piteous o'erthrows
Do, with their death, bury their parents' strife."

[*ADAM and DANIEL bow, flourish, and exit.*]

JESS: Act One, Scene One:

Behold two men in search of imbroglio:
The Capulet, Sampson; the Montague, Benvolio.

[Enter ADAM as BENVOLIO and DANIEL as SAMPSON, striking aggressive poses.]

Verona's fragile peace shall be undone,
And tragedy begin—with the biting of a thumb.

[JESS exits.]

A/BEN: [*Singing.*] O, I like to rise when the sun she rises, early in the morning.

D/SAM: [*Singing simultaneously.*] O, a sailor's life is the life for me, how I love to sail o'er the bounding sea . . .

[*They see each other.*]

A/BEN: [*Aside.*] Ooo, it's him. I'm gonna kill him, beat him up, and kill him again.

D/SAM: [*Aside, simultaneously.*] Ooo, it's him. I hate his guts. I hate his family, hate his dog, hate 'em all.

[*They smile and bow to each other. As they cross to opposite sides of the stage, SAMPSON bites his thumb at BENVOLIO, who trips SAMPSON in return.*]

A/BEN: “Do you bite your thumb at me, sir?”

D/SAM: No sir, I do but bite my thumb.

A/BEN: Do you bite your thumb at *me*, sir?

D/SAM: No sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I do bite my thumb. Do you quarrel, sir?

A/BEN: Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

D/SAM: But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

A/BEN: No better.

D/SAM: Yes. Better.

A/BEN: You lie!”

D/SAM: Down with the Montagues!

A/BEN: Up yours, Capulet!

[They fly at each other. Massive fight scene, with intentionally lame fight choreography. JESS enters as the PRINCE.]

J/PRINCE: "Rebellious subjects!"

A/BENVOLIO and D/SAMPSON: *[Simultaneously.]* Oh no, it's the Prince. *[They kneel.]*

[DANIEL and ADAM silently mimic the PRINCE as he speaks, and poke at each other whenever they get the chance.]

J/PRINCE: "Enemies to the peace. On pain of torture,
Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground,
And hear the sentence of your moved prince."

D/SAMPSON: *[Mocks him, then:]* Buzz-kill.

J/PRINCE: "You, Capulet, shall go along with me.
Benvolio, come you this afternoon
To know our farther pleasure in this case."

A/BENVOLIO: *[To SAMPSON.]* Brown-nose!

D/SAMPSON: *[To BENVOLIO.]* Ass-hat!

J/PRINCE: Language!

[J/PRINCE and D/SAMPSON exit.]

A/BEN: "O where is Romeo? Saw you him today?
Right glad I am he was not at this fray.
But see, he comes!"

[DANIEL makes a grand entrance as ROMEO, wearing a 'Romeo' wig and carrying a rose in his teeth. The effect is intended to be extremely romantic. It's not.]

Good morrow, coz.

D/ROMEO: Is the day so young?

A/BEN: But new struck nine.

D/ROMEO: Ay, me. Sad hours seem long.