

JULIET VS. THE MULTIVERSE  
(Sample)

by  
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**Description:**

When a heartbroken Juliet steals the Loom of Fate, a celestial storyteller must chase her through the multiverse to try to restore the tragic narrative of *Romeo and Juliet*.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Chorus (ageless) – A woman responsible for telling the story of *Romeo and Juliet* in its infinite variety across the multiverse

Juliet (17) – A young woman searching for a happy ending

Nurse (25–90) – Juliet's caretaker

Romeo (17) – A handsome young man destined to fall in star-crossed love and end tragically

Paris (19) – The other guy

## SETTING

A selection of the infinite Veronas of the *Romeo and Juliet* story

"Death is inevitable. Living a life we can be proud of is something we can control."  
-Claire Wineland

### **Notes:**

The play is designed to be performed with very few sets and props, using just five actors. For example, while a director and set designer could choose to create a full-blown version of the multiverse complete with a detailed model of the Titanic onstage, it's also perfectly fine to represent the Titanic with just a captain's hat and the sound of a foghorn.

In the Underworld, Juliet's Voices (1, 2, and 3) are intended to be prerecorded by the same actress playing Juliet and echoing in conversation with her from different points around the stage.

**THE PROLOGUE – “400 YEARS IS ENOUGH, BUT EVERYTHING IS FINE.”**

Enter CHORUS. She is dressed in traditional Elizabethan garb. She holds a colorful loom in one hand. She holds a drink in the other.

CHORUS

Two households, both alike—

She realizes that she’s still holding the drink. She puts it down, shoving it out of sight. Tries to recover.

CHORUS

(more than a little tipsy)

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-

The Chorus hiccups.

CHORUS

Oh no. Oh shoot, no, I messed it up. Let me, let me do that again.

The Chorus closes her eyes, takes a deep breath. Breathe in. Breathe out. She opens her eyes, serene. Majestic. Now she’s properly ready to do this.

CHORUS

Two house-

The Chorus hiccups. She sighs. Looks out at the audience.

CHORUS

Why’re you all spinning? Stop spinning. It’s very rude to spin when somebody’s-

The Chorus hiccups again. She goes back to collect her drink and sits down with it on the front of the stage.

CHORUS

It’s the anniversary today. 400 years since the first successful performance. Sometimes people think you should start counting from the very first performance, but that’s – the first performance of *Romeo and Juliet* did *not* go well. The audience threw things.

And not just soft things like tomatoes, we're talking – *things*. One guy filled up his coin-purse with rocks. Someone else threw a live chicken. Another threw his chair. That last one wasn't very imaginative, but it was effective.

400 years. That's a long time. That's momentous. And I wanted to do something to celebrate, but, well, there's no one to celebrate with so–

She holds up her drink. Toasts the audience with it.

#### CHORUS

I'm sorry, I'm usually so much more professional than this. To be honest with you, I didn't know I was going to be doing this tonight. I thought, well, I thought I had the night off. But nope! Here we all are, about to do this whole thing again. With the swords and the poison and the... the tights. Ugh.

Sorry, no, I don't– it's a good story. It is. It's just, this is the third time this week that I've told this version. Not including the ones with the car chases or the competing fruit vendors or the animated one where they're all hamsters, just this one. *Romeo and Juliet: Everyone's Wearing Tights*. And everybody says 'doth' a lot. I'm not complaining. Okay, no, yes, I am complaining, but I'm, I'm grateful. I mean, I have a job. There's a lot of stories that no one wants to hear anymore. When's the last time you went to go see a production of *Pericles*, right? Meanwhile, I'm responsible for one of the greatest love stories ever told. I'm very lucky, I know that!

I just... well, it's always the same. Doesn't matter if I'm telling a version where they're all Sneetches living in feuding pillow forts or this one. Two children meet. They fall in love. And then their families or their gangs or their study groups don't like each other, so the story ends in a tragedy. Again and again and again. And I sit at the back, unnoticed by everyone, weaving out the tale, watching it all happen. Well, weaving when I get to have opposable thumbs. I'm supposed to fit into the story, so sometimes I'm me and sometimes I'm... a singing chipmunk. Or an armchair that the wizard sits on. You get it.

She notices the loom. Holds it up as a show-and-tell prop.

#### CHORUS

See? This here's my life's work. 400 years. It's very-  
(hiccup)

-who needs friends when you have a magical loom, am I right? And this strand here-

She plucks a particular thread on the loom.

## CHORUS

-this strand is the story I'm telling you all tonight. That I, that I will be telling you all tonight, once I figure out how to stand up again. This here is the tights strand. Blegh. But I'm very good at it. 400 years of practice. Take that Mr. Gladstone! Here watch me—

She picks up the loom and starts weaving.

## CHORUS

See? I may be drunk and not able to stand up, I might be facing an audience that refuses to stop spinning, but I weave with my third eye. I'm supposed to have already woven this before we started, but – eh. I'll just do it fast, super fast, like a speedy little weaving rabbit and then-

The Chorus snags the strand as she's weaving.

## CHORUS

Crap.

## LADY CAPULET

(from offstage)

Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me.

## CHORUS

That's not supposed to happen yet.

The NURSE enters. She doesn't notice the Chorus.

## NURSE

Now, by my maidenhead at twelve year old,  
I bade her come.—What, lamb! What, lady bird!

## CHORUS

Four hundred years and I never dropped a stitch. Never.

## NURSE

God forbid. Where's this girl? What, Juliet!

## CHORUS

It's fine, it's fine, I can fix this.

The Chorus weaves. The Nurse leaves.

PARIS enters. He doesn't notice the Chorus.

## CHORUS

Oh God, now what's *he* doing here?  
 Go away! Shoo! Off with you!  
 (to audience)  
 And why won't you all stop spinning?

## PARIS

Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt's  
 death,  
 And therefore I have little talk of love,  
 For Venus smiles not in a house of tears.

The Chorus weaves on the loom again.

JULIET enters and lays down 'dead' in the tomb. Paris  
 pulls out a flower and starts scattering its petals over her.

## PARIS

Sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew  
 (O woe, thy canopy is dust and stones!)

## CHORUS

This is at the end of the story.  
 How did we get to the end already?  
 We haven't done the beginning or middle  
 yet.  
 I feel like I'm about to throw up.

## PARIS

Which with sweet water nightly I will  
 dew,  
 Or, wanting that, with tears distilled by  
 moans.  
 The obsequies that I for thee will keep  
 Nightly shall be to strew thy grave and—

The Chorus weaves again. Paris leaves.

ROMEO enters. He also doesn't notice the Chorus. He  
 sees Juliet lying 'dead'. He kisses her sweetly on the lips.  
 Holds up a vial dramatically.

## ROMEO

Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavory guide!  
 Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on  
 The dashing rocks they seasick weary bark!  
 Here's to my love.

He drinks from the vial.

## CHORUS

This is ridiculous.  
 You're not supposed to die yet, you idiot!

## ROMEO

O true apothecary.  
 Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I  
 die.

The Chorus weaves once more. And Juliet awakens.

**SCENE ONE – “JULIET, THE WIDOW”**

A continuation – Romeo and Juliet’s tomb. Romeo lies dead next to Juliet.

Juliet sees Romeo lying next to her and she holds his hand. Kisses his forehead. Sobs hearty grief-stricken tears.

JULIET

What’s here? A cup closed in my true love’s hand?  
Poison, I see, have been his timeless end.–  
O churl, drunk all, and left no friendly drop  
To help me after! I will kiss thy lips.  
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,  
To make me die with a restorative.

Juliet kisses Romeo on the lips, crying.

FIRST WATCH

(from offstage)

Lead, boy. Which way?

Juliet glances up, hearing the First Watch... and notices the Chorus weaving on her loom.

JULIET

Who art thou?

The Chorus sneaks a look out of the corner of her eye at Juliet, puzzled. *Who is she talking to?* The Chorus decides to just ignore it and keep weaving.

JULIET

Wherefore dost thou lurk within my husband’s tomb?

The Chorus looks up and realizes that Juliet is staring right at her. She looks around to see if anyone is behind her. There’s not.

Hunh. So this isn’t what’s supposed to happen.

CHORUS

Do you mean... me?

JULIET

Aye, thee! Thou art one of those wretched beggars,  
Come to plunder his wealth. Touch him not!  
I shall not suffer thee to lay a hand upon him.

CHORUS

I'm not going to steal anything.

Juliet pulls out the dagger and holds it up threateningly.

JULIET

Thy impiety shall cost thee dearly, foul rogue!

CHORUS

Okay first, who are you calling foul? I am *much* cleaner than any of you, bathing practices in the 16th century were poorly lacking, I often have to use nose-plugs when I'm telling this version. Second, again, I am not here to steal anything from anyone, so you can put down the dagger.

Juliet lowers the dagger slightly, confused.

JULIET

If not to thieve from my Romeo—

CHORUS

You could just say 'Romeo', it's very clear who you're talking about.

JULIET

—then wherefore art thou here?  
Art thou some hired mourner? Or perchance  
Sent by Friar Lawrence? If so, thou canst plainly see,  
Thou art too late.

CHORUS

If I say yes I was sent by Friar Lawrence, will you put down the dagger?

Juliet drops the dagger and collapses in a heap, sobbing.

The Chorus isn't sure what she should do, so finally she places down the loom and settles on awkwardly patting the girl's head.

CHORUS

There there. It's going to be... alright.



JULIET

My lord is dead. How can aught be well?

CHORUS

Oh, no, it absolutely won't, that's just something I've heard people say when other people are crying. Usually it seems to make them stop.

Juliet looks up at the Chorus, less frenzied and more curious than before. She gulps down her tears.

JULIET

Who art thou? And wherefore dost thou weave?

CHORUS

I really can't say. That's against the rules.

JULIET

What rules?

CHORUS

Never mind, ignore that, the point isn't whether there are or are not rules, the point is that – pay me no heed, just go back to what you were doing. Pretend I'm not here.

JULIET

Yet here thou art.

CHORUS

Yes, no, I know that, I'm saying pretend that I'm not. I think you had just said that Romeo has warm lips and then the First Watch out in the corridor said

(imitates a deep voice)

“Lead, boy, which way” and now you say...?

Juliet just stares at the Chorus, completely perplexed.

CHORUS

(prompting)

...yea... noise... then I'll...-

JULIET

What?

CHORUS

Oh for pity's sake. You say, “Yea, noise, then I'll be brief” and then you pick up the dagger...

The Chorus motions for Juliet to pick up the dagger.  
Juliet doesn't move.

CHORUS

You *pick up* the dagger...

The Chorus picks up the dagger.

CHORUS

You pick it up like so, and then say-  
(dramatically, holding the dagger to her own  
chest)  
“Oh, happy dagger, this is thy sheath.”

The Chorus hands the dagger to Juliet, who accepts it  
limply.

CHORUS

You try it.

JULIET

(bewildered)  
‘Oh, happy dagger, this is thy sheath.’

CHORUS

...sure. And then you say-  
(dramatically)  
“There rust, and let me die.”

JULIET

(unconvincingly)  
‘There rust, and let me die’?

CHORUS

That'll do. And then you stab yourself.

JULIET

What?

CHORUS

You- you stab.

She makes a stabbing motion.

JULIET

Art thou some malevolent spirit? A witch, mayhap?

CHORUS

Rude, that was very rude, but I'll allow it because of the extenuating circumstances. No, I am not a malevolent spirit or a witch, and I don't much like what you're insinuating.

Juliet starts to cry again. Unlike the melodramatic sobbing of earlier, these are tears of confusion and panic that she tries to hide from view.

CHORUS

Ugh. This is usually so much easier when everyone's eyes glide over me.

JULIET

'Usually'?

CHORUS

Never mind, it's not important. I think this might be all my fault. I dropped a stitch. Four hundred years, and I've never dropped a stitch.

JULIET

I understand thee not. Romeo is dead forsooth,  
For thou 'dropped a stitch'?

CHORUS

Of course not, that would be ridiculous. Romeo is dead because he's fated to die. Just like *you're* supposed to be dead by now, *by the way*. No, it's my fault that you can see me.

JULIET

Art thou Death itself?

CHORUS

First a rogue, then a witch, now this. Really?

(then)

No. I am not 'Death itself' any more than I am a ghost or any of the other marvelous insults you keep attacking me with.

JULIET

No insult was meant.

CHORUS

I know, dear. That's what makes it all so very insulting.

The Chorus picks up her loom once more.

CHORUS

Are you sure there's no way I can convince you to pretend I'm not here and to just do what you're supposed to?

JULIET

What is't I am to do?

CHORUS

Kill yourself. We've already been over this, really, it's like you don't listen at all.

JULIET

...no.

CHORUS

Damn. Well, there's nothing for it then. If I can't fix this with reason, I'll simply have to fix it with the loom. I've never actually tried to get out a knot before. I don't know what will happen. I don't like that.

(one last try)

Would it help at all if I asked nicely? Would you kill yourself *please*?

JULIET

No.

CHORUS

But I said please.

Juliet shakes her head.

The Chorus sighs, then starts to pull at the threads of the loom, untying and unknotting.

And then the world comes undone at the seams.