

PL-30  
35¢



*William Shakespeare*

**ROMEO & JULIET**  
**MACBETH \* HAMLET**  
**JULIUS CAESAR**

*Four Tragedies*



The  
Pocket  
Library



*Romeo and Juliet*

*Julius Caesar*

*Hamlet*

*Macbeth*

THE POCKET LIBRARY

## FOUR GREAT TRAGEDIES BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

POCKET LIBRARY edition published 1955

4th printing.....February, 1957

•

This Book is one of a Distinguished Series

*The Pocket Library*

offering to the reader outstanding literary landmarks of all time and all languages in an inexpensive, well-designed format.

•

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From SHAKESPEARE by Mark Van Doren by permission of the publishers, Henry Holt and Company, Inc., and George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. Copyright, 1939, by Mark Van Doren.

From SHAKESPEARIAN SYNOPSES by J. Walker McSpadden by permission of the publishers, Thomas Y. Crowell and Company. Copyright, 1902, 1923, by Thomas Y. Crowell and Company. Copyright, 1930, by J. Walker McSpadden.



L

Published by Pocket Books, Inc. • 630 Fifth Avenue • New York, N. Y.

---

*Copyright, 1948, by Pocket Books, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A.*



Like most playwrights, Shakespeare aimed at success. He tried to write hits. But his stage

triumphs have lived on while those of other men were soon forgotten. This is because Shakespeare was able to give form to the eternal problems at the heart of man's nature. Thus Hamlet is many men, and to each generation he brings new significance. In his character we see the everlasting conflict between good and evil that each of us must face. Hamlet, then, is far more than a man who kills his stepfather for revenge. Each of us can think of him as the mirror in which is registered his own naked soul.

**FOUR GREAT TRAGEDIES**

by

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**



**Cambridge Text and Glossaries**

*Complete and Unabridged*

**Edited by**

**WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT**

**Introductions by**

**MARK VAN DOREN**

**Synopses by**

**J. WALKER MCSPADDEN**

**Illustrations by**

**LOUIS L. GLANZMAN**

**Designed by**

**MAXWELL MARKE**



## *Table of Contents*

| <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>                       | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction, by Mark Van Doren               | 3           |
| The Story of the Play, by J. Walker McSpadden | 13          |
| The Play                                      | 18          |
| Glossary                                      | 425         |

### *Julius Caesar*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction, by Mark Van Doren               | 111 |
| The Story of the Play, by J. Walker McSpadden | 120 |
| The Play                                      | 124 |
| Glossary                                      | 433 |

### *Hamlet*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction, by Mark Van Doren               | 201 |
| The Story of the Play, by J. Walker McSpadden | 213 |
| The Play                                      | 218 |
| Glossary                                      | 442 |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Macbeth</i>                                | <i>Page</i> |
| Introduction, by Mark Van Doren               | 333         |
| The Story of the Play, by J. Walker McSpadden | 347         |
| The Play                                      | 352         |
| Glossary                                      | 461         |

*Romeo and Juliet*





INTRODUCTION TO  
*Romeo and Juliet*

BY  
MARK VAN DOREN

WHEN Juliet learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt she cries out that he is a beautiful tyrant, a fiend angelical, a dove-feathered raven, a wolfish lamb, a damned saint, an honorable villain. This echoes Romeo's outcry upon the occasion of Tybalt's first brawl in the streets of Verona: brawling love, loving hate, heavy lightness, serious vanity, chaos of forms, feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health, still-waking sleep—Romeo had feasted his tongue upon such opposites, much in the manner of Lucrece when wanton modesty, lifeless life, and cold fire were the only terms that could express her mind's disorder. Of Romeo's lines, says Dr. Johnson, "neither the sense nor the occasion is very evident. He is not yet in love with an enemy, and to love one and hate another is no such uncommon state as can deserve all this toil of antithesis." And of the pathetic strains in *Romeo and Juliet* generally Dr. Johnson adds that they "are always polluted with some unexpected depravations. His persons, however distressed, have a conceit left them in their misery, a miserable conceit."

*Romeo and Juliet*, in other words, is still a youthful play; its author, no less than its hero and heroine, is furiously literary. He has written at last a tragedy which is crowded with life, and which will become one of the best-known stories in the world; but it is crowded at the same time with clevernesses, it keeps the odor of ink. Images of poison and the grave are common throughout the dialogue, and they fit the fable. The frame of the author's mind is equally fitted, how-

ever, by a literary imagery. There is much about words, books, and reading; as indeed there is in *Hamlet*, but with a difference. The servant who delivers Capulet's invitations to the feast cannot distinguish the names on his list, and must have Romeo's help (I, ii). Lady Capulet commands Juliet to

Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face  
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen; . . .  
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a cover. [I, iii]

Romeo's first kiss to Juliet, she remarks, is given "by the book" (I, v). Love can suggest to Romeo (II, ii) the way of schoolboys with their books. Mercutio with his last breath accuses Tybalt of fighting by "the book of arithmetic" (III, i). Juliet, continuing in her rage against Romeo because he has killed her cousin, demands to know:

Was ever book containing such vile matter  
So fairly bound? [III, ii]

And words seem to be tangible things. Romeo wishes his name were written down so that he could tear it (II, ii); when the Nurse tells him how Juliet has cried out upon his name it is to him

As if that name,  
Shot from the deadly level of a gun,  
Did murder her. [III, iii]

And the lovers take eloquent turns (III, ii, iii) at playing variations on "that word 'banished,'" which can "mangle" them and is indeed but "death mis-term'd."

Even the wit of Romeo and his friends—or, as Dr. Johnson puts it, "the airy sprightliness" of their "juvenile elegance"—has a somewhat printed sound. When Romeo, going to the ball, wants to say that the burden of his passion for Rosaline weighs him down and makes him less wanton than his friends he resorts once again to the literary idiom:

For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase. [I, iv]

Not that the wit of these young gentlemen is poor. It is Shakespeare's best thus far, and it is as brisk as early morning;

the playful youths are very knowing and proud, and speak always—until the sudden moment when lightness goes out of the play like a lamp—as if there were no language but that of sunrise and spring wind.

Lightness goes out suddenly with the death of Mercutio. Yet everything is sudden in this play. Its speed is as great as that of *Macbeth*, though it carries no such weight of tragedy. The impatience of the lovers for each other and the brevity of their love are answered everywhere: by Juliet's complaint at the unwieldly slowness with which the Nurse returns from Romeo, by Capulet's testiness as he rushes the preparations for the wedding, by the celerity of the catastrophe once its fuse has been laid.

It is a tragedy in which the catastrophe is everything and so must be both sudden and surprising. Death is not anticipated by as much as anticipates the ends of Shakespeare's major tragedies: that is to say, by all that has been said or done. A few premonitions are planted. The Prologue warns us that the lovers are star-cross'd, misadventur'd, and death-mark'd. Romeo's mind misgives him as he arrives at Capulet's feast, and he imagines

Some consequence yet hanging in the stars. [I, iv]

Juliet's couplet when she learns her lover's name,

My only love sprung from my only hate!  
Too early seen unknown, and known too late! [I, v]

and her experience of second sight as Romeo descends from her chamber:

O God, I have an ill-divining soul!  
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,  
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb [III, v]

are there to light the way towards a woeful conclusion. And Friar Laurence's moral is clearly underlined:

These violent delights have violent ends,  
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,  
Which as they kiss consume. [II, vi]

But such things are significantly few, and they are external to

the principal tragic effect, which is that of a lightning flash against the night.

Night is the medium through which the play is felt and in which the lovers are most at home—night, together with certain fires that blaze in its depths for contrast and romance. *Romeo and Juliet* maintains a brilliant shutter-movement of black and white, of cloud and lightning, of midnight and morning. We first hear of Romeo as one who cherishes the torch of his love for Rosaline in “an artificial night” of his own making; he pens himself in his chamber, “locks fair daylight out,” and is for having the world “black and portentous” (I, i). If day is life, as Friar Laurence says it is, then life is for Romeo the enemy of love, which can exist in its purity only by itself, in the little death of a private darkness. Hidden in that darkness it can shine for the knowing lover with a brightness unknown to comets, stars, and suns. When he first sees Juliet he exclaims:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear. [I, v]

“Blind is his love and best befits the dark,” jests Benvolio (II, i) as he searches with Mercutio for Romeo in Capulet's garden; but Benvolio does not understand the power that illuminates his friend's progress. In the next scene, standing with Romeo under the balcony, we reach the lighted goal.

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. . . .  
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.  
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?  
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,  
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven  
Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing and think it were not night.

Juliet and love are Romeo's life, and there is no light but they. Juliet may be disquieted by the thought of so much haste:

It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,  
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be  
Ere one can say it lightens.



But Romeo can only cry, "O blessed, blessed night!" There follows a scene in which Friar Laurence salutes and blesses the morning. Yet his voice does not obliterate our memory of many good-nights the lovers had called to each other, and it is soon (III, v) Juliet's turn to bless the night that she and Romeo have had with each other. She cannot admit that day is coming. Dawn is some mistake, "some meteor." Day, if it is indeed here, will be as death. And when the Nurse convinces her that darkness is done she sighs:

Then, window, let day in, and let life out.

For her too love has become the only light; something that shines with its own strength and from its own source, and needs night that it may be known. "O comfort-killing Night, image of hell!" Lucrece had wailed. But night is comfort here, and day—when kinsmen fight, when unwelcome weddings are celebrated, when families wake up to find their daughters dead—is the image of distress. "O day! O day! O day! O hateful day!" howls the Nurse when she finds Juliet stretched out on her bed. She means a particular day, but she has described all days for the death-mark'd lovers. It is perhaps their tragedy that they have been moved to detest day, life, and sun.

At any rate their career derives its brilliance from the contrast we are made to feel between their notion of day and night and the normal thought about such things. Normality is their foe, as it is at last their nemesis; the artificial night of Juliet's feigned death becomes the long night of common death in which no private planets shine. The word normality carries here no moral meaning. It has to do merely with notions about love and life; the lovers' notion being pathetically distinguished from those of other persons who are not in love and so consider themselves realistic or practical. One of the reasons for the fame of *Romeo and Juliet* is that it has so completely and clearly isolated the experience of romantic love. It has let such love speak for itself; and not alone in the celebrated wooing scenes, where the hero and heroine express themselves with a piercing directness, but indirectly also, and possibly with still greater power, in the whole play in so far

as the whole play is built to be their foil. Their deep interest for us lies in their being alone in a world which does not understand them; and Shakespeare has devoted much attention to that world.

Its inhabitants talk only of love. The play is saturated with the subject. Yet there is always a wide difference between what the protagonists intend by the term and what is intended by others. The beginning dialogue by Sampson and Gregory, servants, is pornographic on the low level of puns about maidenheads, of horse-humor and hired-man wit. Mercutio will be more indecent (II, i, iv) on the higher level of a gentleman's cynicism. Mercutio does not believe in love, as perhaps the servants clumsily do; he believes only in sex, and his excellent mind has sharpened the distinction to a very dirty point. He drives hard against the sentiment that has softened his friend and rendered him unfit for the society of young men who really know the world. When Romeo with an effort matches one of his witticisms he is delighted:

Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo, now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature. [II, iv]

He thinks that Romeo has returned to the world of artful wit, by which he means cynical wit; he does not know that Romeo is still "dead" and "fishified," and that he himself will soon be mortally wounded under the arm of his friend—who, because love has stupefied him, will be capable of speaking the inane line, "I thought all for the best" (III, i). Romeo so far remembers the code of his class as to admit for a moment that love has made him "effeminate." Mercutio would have applauded this, but he has been carried out to become worms' meat and Romeo will have the rest of the play to himself as far as his friends and contemporaries are concerned. There will be no one about him henceforth who can crack sentences like whips or set the hound of his fancy on the magic scent of Queen Mab.

The older generation is another matter. Romeo and Juliet will have them with them to the end, and will be sadly misunderstood by them. The Capulets hold still another view of



love. Their interest is in "good" marriages, in sensible choices. They are match-makers, and believe they know best how their daughter should be put to bed. This also is cynicism, though it be without pornography; at least the young heart of Juliet sees it so. Her father finds her sighs and tears merely ridiculous: "Evermore show'ring?" She is "a wretched puling fool, a whining mammet," a silly girl who does not know what is good for her. Capulet is Shakespeare's first portrait in a long gallery of fussy, tetchy, stubborn, unteachable old men: the Duke of York in *Richard II*, Polonius, Lafeu, Menenius. He is tart-tongued, breathy, wordy, pungent, and speaks with a naturalness unknown in Shakespeare's plays before this, a naturalness consisting in a perfect harmony between his phrasing and its rhythm:

How how, how how, chop-logic! What is this?  
"Proud," and "I thank you," and "I thank you not;"  
And yet "not proud." Mistress minion, you,  
Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no pouds,  
But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,  
To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church,  
Or I will drag thee on a hurdle thither. [III, v]

We hear his voice in everything he says, as when for instance the Nurse has told him to go to bed lest he be sick tomorrow from so much worry about the wedding, and he argues:

No, not a whit! What! I have watch'd ere now  
All night for lesser cause, and ne'er been sick. [IV, iv]

His speaking role has great reality, along with an abrasive force which takes the temper out of Juliet's tongue.

The Nurse, a member of the same generation, and in Juliet's crisis as much her enemy as either parent is, for she too urges the marriage with Paris (III, v), adds to practicality a certain prurient interest in love-business, the details of which she mumbles toothlessly, reminiscently, with the indecency of age. Her famous speech concerning Juliet's age (I, iii), which still exceeds the speeches of Capulet in the virtue of dramatic naturalness, runs on so long in spite of Lady Capulet's attempts to stop it because she has become fascinated with the memory of her husband's broad jest:

## ROMEO AND JULIET

NURSE.

And since that time it is eleven years;  
 For then she could stand high-lone; nay, by the  
     rood,  
 She could have run and waddled all about;  
 For even the day before, she broke her brow;  
 And then my husband—God be with his soul  
 'A was a merry man—took up the child.  
 "Yea," quoth he, "dost thou fall upon thy face?  
 Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit;  
 Wilt thou not, Jule?" and, by my holidame,  
 The pretty wretch left crying and said, "Ay."  
 To see, now, how a jest shall come about!  
 I warrant, an I should live a thousand years,  
 I never should forget it. "Wilt thou not, Jule?"  
     quoth he;

LADY CAPULET.

NURSE.

And, pretty fool, it stinted and said, "Ay."  
 Enough of this; I pray thee, hold thy peace.  
 Yes, madam; yet I cannot choose but laugh,  
 To think it should leave crying and say, "Ay."  
 And yet, I warrant, it had upon it brow  
 A bump as big as a young cockerel's stone;  
 A perilous knock; and it cried bitterly.  
 "Yea," quoth my husband, "fall'st upon thy face?  
 Thou wilt fall backward when thou comest to age;  
 Wilt thou not, Jule?" It stinted and said, "Ay."

The Nurse's delight in the reminiscence is among other things lickerish, which the delight of Romeo and Juliet in their love never is, any more than it is prudent like the Capulets, or pornographic like Mercutio. Their delight is solemn, their behavior holy, and nothing is more natural than that in their first dialogue (1, v) there should be talk of palmers, pilgrims, saints, and prayers.

It is of course another kind of holiness than that which appears in Friar Laurence, who nevertheless takes his own part in the endless conversation which the play weaves about the theme of love. The imagery of his first speech is by no accident erotic:

I must up-fill this osier cage of ours  
 With baleful weeds and precious-juiced flowers.  
 The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;  
 What is her burying grave, that is her womb;