

THE PROLOGUE

The Prologue

Os.d. *Chorus*: In early English drama the Chorus, played by a single actor, was used to explain and comment on the action.

- 1 *households*: families.
dignity: nobility.
- 2 *lay*: set.
- 3 *grudge*: quarrel.
mutiny: violence.
- 4 *civil*: belonging to fellow-citizens.
- 5 *From forth*: bred from.
- 6 *star-cross'd*: ill-fated.
- 7 *misadventur'd*: unfortunate.
overthrows: disasters.
- 8 *Doth*: do; an old plural form still sometimes found in Elizabethan English.
- 9 *passage*: course.
death-mark'd: doomed to death.
- 11 *but . . . end*: only the deaths of their children.
remove: stop.
- 12 *two hours' traffic*: business lasting for two hours.
- 14 *What . . . miss*: what is omitted in this Prologue (which, in form, is a perfect sonnet).

Enter Chorus

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.
5 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
10 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which but their children's end nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

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