

Romeo And Juliet

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

PROLOGUE

ORIGINAL TEXT

Enter **CHORUS**

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-crossed lovers take their life,
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love
10 And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught 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.

Exit

MODERN TEXT

The **CHORUS** *enters.*

CHORUS

In the beautiful city of Verona, where our story takes place, a long-standing hatred between two families erupts into new violence, and citizens stain their hands with the blood of their fellow citizens. Two unlucky children of these enemy families become lovers and commit suicide. Their unfortunate deaths put an end to their parents' feud. For the next two hours, we will watch the story of their doomed love and their parents' anger, which nothing but the children's deaths could stop. If you listen to us patiently, we'll make up for everything we've left out in this prologue onstage.

The **CHORUS** *exits.*

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ACT 1, SCENE 1

*Enter **SAMPSON** and **GREGORY** of the house of Capulet, with swords and bucklers*

SAMPSON

Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.

GREGORY

No, for then we should be colliers.

SAMPSON

I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.

GREGORY

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.

SAMPSON

5 I strike quickly, being moved.

GREGORY

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMPSON

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY

To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand.
Therefore if thou art moved thou runn'st away.

SAMPSON

10 A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I will
take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

***SAMPSON** and **GREGORY**, servants of the Capulet family,
enter carrying swords and small shields.*

SAMPSON

Gregory, I swear, we can't let them humiliate us. We won't take their garbage.

GREGORY

(teasing SAMPSON) No, because then we'd be garbagemen.

SAMPSON

What I mean is, if they make us angry we'll pull out our swords.

GREGORY

Maybe you should focus on pulling yourself out of trouble, Sampson.

SAMPSON

I hit hard when I'm angry.

GREGORY

But it's hard to make you angry .

SAMPSON

One of those dogs from the Montague house can make me angry.

GREGORY

Angry enough to run away. You won't stand and fight.

SAMPSON

A dog from that house will make me angry enough to take a stand. If I pass one of them on the street, I'll take the side closer to the wall and let him walk in the gutter.

ORIGINAL TEXT

GREGORY

That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.

SAMPSON

'Tis true, and therefore women, being the weaker ves-sels,
15 are ever thrust to the wall. Therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.

GREGORY

The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

SAMPSON

'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant. When I
20 have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids. I will cut off their heads.

GREGORY

The heads of the maids?

SAMPSON

Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads. Take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY

25 They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMPSON

Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

GREGORY

'Tis well thou art not fish. If thou hadst, thou hadst been poor-john.

*Enter **ABRAM** and another **SERVINGMAN***

Draw thy tool! Here comes of the house of Montagues.

SAMPSON

30 My naked weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back thee.

MODERN TEXT

GREGORY

That means you're the weak one, because weaklings get pushed up against the wall.

SAMPSON

You're right. That's why girls get pushed up against walls—they're weak. So what I'll do is push the Montague men into the street and the Montague women up against the wall.

GREGORY

The fight is between our masters, and we men who work for them.

SAMPSON

It's all the same. I'll be a harsh master to them. After I fight the men, I'll be nice to the women—I'll cut off their heads.

GREGORY

Cut off their heads? You mean their maidenheads?

SAMPSON

Cut off their heads, take their maidenheads—whatever. Take my remark in whichever sense you like.

GREGORY

The women you rape are the ones who'll have to “sense” it.

SAMPSON

They'll feel me as long as I can keep an erection. Everybody knows I'm a nice piece of flesh.

GREGORY

It's a good thing you're not a piece of fish. You're dried and shriveled like salted fish.

***ABRAM** and another servant of the Montagues enter.*

Pull out your tool now. These guys are from the house of Montague.

SAMPSON

I have my naked sword out. Fight, I'll back you up.

GREGORY

How? Turn thy back and run?

SAMPSON

Fear me not.

GREGORY

No, marry. I fear thee.

SAMPSON

Let us take the law of our sides. Let them begin.

GREGORY

35 I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.

SAMPSON

Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it. (*bites his thumb*)

ABRAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON

40 (*aside to GREGORY*)

Is the law of our side if I say “ay”?

GREGORY

(*aside to SAMPSON*)

No.

SAMPSON

No, sir. I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.

GREGORY

45 Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM

Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

GREGORY

How will you back me up—by turning your back and running away?

SAMPSON

Don't worry about me.

GREGORY

No, really. I *am* worried about you!

SAMPSON

Let's not break the law by starting a fight. Let them start something.

GREGORY

I'll frown at them as they pass by, and they can react however they want.

SAMPSON

You mean however they dare. I'll bite my thumb at them.

That's an insult, and if they let me get away with it they'll be dishonored. (*SAMPSON bites his thumb*)

ABRAM

Hey, are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMPSON

I'm biting my thumb.

ABRAM

Are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMPSON

(*aside to GREGORY*) Is the law on our side if I say yes?

GREGORY

(*aside to SAMPSON*) No.

SAMPSON

(*to ABRAM*) No, sir, I'm not biting my thumb at you, but I am biting my thumb.

GREGORY

Are you trying to start a fight?

ABRAM

Start a fight? No, sir.

SAMPSON

But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAM

No better.

SAMPSON

Well, sir.

Enter BENVOLIO

GREGORY

50 *(aside to SAMPSON)* Say "better." Here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

SAMPSON

(to ABRAM) Yes, better, sir.

ABRAM

You lie.

SAMPSON

Draw, if you be men.—Gregory, remember thy washing blow.

They fight

BENVOLIO

(draws his sword) Part, fools!

55 Put up your swords. You know not what you do.

Enter TYBALT

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?

Turn thee, Benvolio. Look upon thy death.

SAMPSON

If you want to fight, I'm your man. My employer is as good as yours.

ABRAM

But he's not better than mine.

SAMPSON

Well then.

BENVOLIO enters.

GREGORY

(speaking so that only SAMPSON can hear) Say "better." Here comes one of my employer's relatives.

SAMPSON

(to ABRAM) Yes, "better," sir.

ABRAM

You lie.

SAMPSON

Pull out your swords, if you're men. Gregory, remember how to slash.

They fight.

BENVOLIO

(pulling out his sword) Break it up, you fools. Put your swords away. You don't know what you're doing.

TYBALT enters.

TYBALT

What? You've pulled out your sword to fight with these worthless servants? Turn around, Benvolio, and look at the man who's going to kill you.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,
Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT

60 What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word,
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.
Have at thee, coward!

*They fight Enter three or four **CITIZENS**, with clubs or partisans*

CITIZENS

Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!
Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

*Enter old **CAPULET** in his gown, and his wife, **LADY CAPULET***

CAPULET

65 What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword?

*Enter old **MONTAGUE** and his wife, **LADY MONTAGUE***

CAPULET

My sword, I say! Old Montague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

MONTAGUE

Thou villain Capulet! Hold me not. Let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

70 Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

BENVOLIO

I'm only trying to keep the peace. Either put away your sword
or use it to help me stop this fight.

TYBALT

What? You take out your sword and then talk about peace? I
hate the word peace like I hate hell, all Montagues, and you.
Let's go at it, coward!

***BENVOLIO** and **TYBALT** fight. Three or four **CITIZENS** of
the watch enter with clubs and spears.*

CITIZENS

Use your clubs and spears! Hit them! Beat them down! Down
with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

***CAPULET** enters in his gown, together with his wife, **LADY
CAPULET.***

CAPULET

What's this noise? Give me my long sword! Come on!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, you need a crutch—why are you asking for a sword?

***MONTAGUE** enters with his sword drawn, together with his
wife, **LADY MONTAGUE.***

CAPULET

I want my sword. Old Montague is here, and he's waving his
sword around just to make me mad.

MONTAGUE

Capulet, you villain! (*his wife holds him back*) Don't stop me.
Let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

You're not taking one step toward an enemy.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

Enter PRINCE ESCALUS, with his train

PRINCE

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
Profaners of this neighbor-stained steel!—
Will they not hear?—What, ho! You men, you beasts,
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
75 With purple fountains issuing from your veins,
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,
And hear the sentence of your movèd prince.
Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
80 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave-beseeming ornaments,
To wield old partisans in hands as old,
85 Cankered with peace, to part your cankered hate.
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time, all the rest depart away.
You, Capulet, shall go along with me,
90 And, Montague, come you this afternoon
To know our farther pleasure in this case,
To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

*Exeunt all but MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and
BENVOLIO*

MONTAGUE

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?
95 Speak, nephew. Were you by when it began?

PRINCE ESCALUS *enters with his escort.*

PRINCE

(shouting at the rioters) You rebels! Enemies of the peace!
Men who turn their weapons against their own neighbors—
They won't listen to me?—You there! You men, you beasts, who
satisfy your anger with fountains of each others' blood! I'll have
you tortured if you don't put down your swords and listen to
your angry prince. *(MONTAGUE, CAPULET, and their
followers throw down their weapons)* Three times now riots
have broken out in this city, all because of a casual word from
you, old Capulet and Montague. Three times the peace has
been disturbed in our streets, and Verona's old citizens have
had to take off their dress clothes and pick up rusty old spears
to part you. If you ever cause a disturbance on our streets
again, you'll pay for it with your lives. Everyone else, go away
for now. *(to CAPULET)* You, Capulet, come with me. *(to
MONTAGUE)* Montague, this afternoon come to old Free-
town, the court where I deliver judgments, and I'll tell you
what else I want from you. As for the rest of you, I'll say this
once more: go away or be put to death.

*Everyone exits except MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and
BENVOLIO.*

MONTAGUE

Who started this old fight up again? Speak, nephew. Were you
here when it started?

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

BENVOLIO

Here were the servants of your adversary,
And yours, close fighting ere I did approach.
I drew to part them. In the instant came
The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,
100 Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,
He swung about his head and cut the winds,
Who, nothing hurt withal, hissed him in scorn.
While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,
Came more and more and fought on part and part,
105 Till the Prince came, who parted either part.

LADY MONTAGUE

Oh, where is Romeo? Saw you him today?
Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

BENVOLIO

Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun
Peered forth the golden window of the east,
110 A troubled mind drove me to walk abroad,
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
That westward rooteth from this city side,
So early walking did I see your son.
Towards him I made, but he was 'ware of me
115 And stole into the covert of the wood.
I, measuring his affections by my own,
Which then most sought where most might not be found,
Being one too many by my weary self,
Pursued my humor not pursuing his,
120 And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me.

MONTAGUE

Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
125 Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,

BENVOLIO

Your servants were fighting your enemy's servants before I got here. I drew my sword to part them. Right then, that hothead Tybalt showed up with his sword ready. He taunted me and waved his sword around, making the air hiss. As we were trading blows, more and more people showed up to join the fight, until the Prince came and broke everyone up.

LADY MONTAGUE

Oh, where's Romeo? Have you seen him today? I'm glad he wasn't here for this fight.

BENVOLIO

Madam, I had a lot on my mind an hour before dawn this morning, so I went for a walk. Underneath the Sycamore grove that grows on the west side of the city, I saw your son taking an early-morning walk. I headed toward him, but he saw me coming and hid in the woods. I thought he must be feeling the same way I was—wanting to be alone and tired of his own company. I figured he was avoiding me, and I was perfectly happy to leave him alone and keep to myself.

MONTAGUE

He's been seen there many mornings, crying tears that add drops to the morning dew and making a cloudy day cloudier with his sighs. But as soon as the sun rises in the east, my sad son comes home to escape the light.

And private in his chamber pens
himself,

130

Shuts up his windows, locks fair
daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial
night.
Black and portentous must this
humor prove
Unless good counsel may the
cause remove.

BENVOLIO

My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

MONTAGUE

I neither know it nor can learn of him.

BENVOLIO

135 Have you importuned him by any means?

MONTAGUE

Both by myself and many other friends.
But he, his own affections' counselor,
Is to himself—I will not say how true,
But to himself so secret and so close,
140 So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious worm,
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air,
Or dedicate his beauty to the same.
Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow.
145 We would as willingly give cure as know.

Enter **ROMEO**

BENVOLIO

See, where he comes. So please you, step aside.
I'll know his grievance or be much denied.

MONTAGUE

I would thou wert so happy by thy stay

He locks himself up alone in his bedroom, shuts his windows
to keep out the beautiful daylight, and makes himself an
artificial night. This mood of his is going to bring bad news,
unless someone smart can fix what's bothering him.

BENVOLIO

My noble uncle, do you know why he acts this way?

MONTAGUE

I don't know, and he won't tell me.

BENVOLIO

Have you done everything you could to make him tell you the
reason?

MONTAGUE

I've tried, and many of our friends have tried to make him talk,
but he keeps his thoughts to himself. He doesn't want any
friend but himself, and though I don't know whether he's a
good friend to himself, he certainly keeps his own secrets. He's
like a flower bud that won't open itself up to the world because
it's been poisoned from within by parasites. If we could only
find out why he's sad, we'd be as eager to help him as we were
to learn the reason for his sadness.

ROMEO enters.

BENVOLIO

Look—here he comes. If you don't mind, please step aside.
He'll either have to tell me what's wrong or else tell me no over
and over.

MONTAGUE

I hope you're lucky enough to hear the true story by sticking

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

To hear true shrift.—Come, madam, let's away.

Exeunt MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE

BENVOLIO

150 Good morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO

But new struck nine.

ROMEO

Ay me! Sad hours seem long.

Was that my father that went hence so fast?

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO

Not having that which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO

155 In love?

ROMEO

Out.

BENVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favor, where I am in love.

BENVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,

160 Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

ROMEO

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,

Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!

Where shall we dine?—O me! What fray was here?

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.

165 Here's much to do with hate but more with love.

Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,

O anything of nothing first created!

O heavy lightness, serious vanity,

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

around. *(to his wife)* Come, madam, let's go.

MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE exit.

BENVOLIO

Good morning, cousin.

ROMEO

Is it that early in the day?

BENVOLIO

It's only just now nine o'clock.

ROMEO

Oh my, time goes by slowly when you're sad. Was that my father who left here in such a hurry?

BENVOLIO

It was. What's making you so sad and your hours so long?

ROMEO

I don't have the thing that makes time fly.

BENVOLIO

You're in love?

ROMEO

Out.

BENVOLIO

Out of love?

ROMEO

I love someone. She doesn't love me.

BENVOLIO

It's sad. Love looks like a nice thing, but it's actually very rough when you experience it.

ROMEO

What's sad is that love is supposed to be blind, but it can still make you do whatever it wants. So, where should we eat?

(seeing blood) Oh my! What fight happened here? No, don't tell me—I know all about it. This fight has a lot to do with hatred, but it has more to do with love. O brawling love! O

loving hate! Love that comes from nothing! Sad happiness!

Serious foolishness! Beautiful things muddled together into an ugly mess! Love is heavy and light, bright and dark, hot and

cold, sick and healthy, asleep and awake—it's everything except

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

170 Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love feel I, that feel no love in this./ Dost thou not laugh?

BENVOLIO

No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO

Good heart, at what?

BENVOLIO

175 At thy good heart's oppression.

ROMEO

Why, such is love's transgression.

Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,

Which thou wilt propagate, to have it pressed

With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown

180 Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;

Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;

Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.

What is it else? A madness most discreet,

185 A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

Farewell, my coz.

BENVOLIO

Soft! I will go along.

And if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

ROMEO

Tut, I have lost myself. I am not here.

This is not Romeo. He's some other where.

BENVOLIO

190 Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.

ROMEO

What, shall I groan and tell thee?

BENVOLIO

Groan! Why, no. But sadly, tell me who.

what it is! This is the love I feel, though no one loves me back.
Are you laughing?

BENVOLIO

No, cousin, I'm crying.

ROMEO

Good man, why are you crying?

BENVOLIO

I'm crying because of how sad you are.

ROMEO

Yes, this is what love does. My sadness sits heavy in my chest, and you want to add your own sadness to mine so there's even more. I have too much sadness already, and now you're going to make me sadder by feeling sorry for you. Here's what love is: a smoke made out of lovers' sighs. When the smoke clears, love is a fire burning in your lover's eyes. If you frustrate love, you get an ocean made out of lovers' tears. What else is love? It's a wise form of madness. It's a sweet lozenge that you choke on.
Goodbye, cousin.

BENVOLIO

Wait. I'll come with you. If you leave me like this, you're doing me wrong.

ROMEO

I'm not myself. I'm not here. This isn't Romeo—he's somewhere else.

BENVOLIO

Tell me seriously, who is the one you love?

ROMEO

Seriously? You mean I should groan and tell you?

BENVOLIO

Groan? No. But tell me seriously who it is.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ROMEO

A sick man in sadness makes his will,
A word ill urged to one that is so ill.

195 In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

BENVOLIO

I aimed so near when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO

A right good markman! And she's fair I love.

BENVOLIO

A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.

ROMEO

Well, in that hit you miss. She'll not be hit

200 With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit.

And, in strong proof of chastity well armed
From love's weak childish bow, she lives uncharmed.

She will not stay the siege of loving terms,

Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes,

205 Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.

Oh, she is rich in beauty, only poor

That when she dies, with beauty dies her store.

BENVOLIO

Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

ROMEO

She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste,

210 For beauty, starved with her severity,

Cuts beauty off from all posterity.

She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair,

To merit bliss by making me despair.

She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow

215 Do I live dead that live to tell it now.

BENVOLIO

Be ruled by me. Forget to think of her.

ROMEO

O, teach me how I should forget to think!

ROMEO

You wouldn't tell a sick man he "seriously" has to make his will—it would just make him worse. Seriously, cousin, I love a woman.

BENVOLIO

I guessed that already when I guessed you were in love.

ROMEO

Then you were right on target. The woman I love is beautiful.

BENVOLIO

A beautiful target is the one that gets hit the fastest.

ROMEO

Well, you're not on target there. She refuses to be hit by Cupid's arrow. She's as clever as Diana, and shielded by the armor of chastity. She can't be touched by the weak and childish arrows of love. She won't listen to words of love, or let you look at her with loving eyes, or open her lap to receive gifts of gold. She's rich in beauty, but she's also poor, because when she dies her beauty will be destroyed with her.

BENVOLIO

So she's made a vow to be a virgin forever?

ROMEO

Yes she has, and by keeping celibate, she wastes her beauty. If you starve yourself of sex you can't ever have children, and so your beauty is lost to future generations. She's too beautiful and too wise to deserve heaven's blessing by making me despair. She's sworn off love, and that promise has left me alive but dead, living only to talk about it now.

BENVOLIO

Take my advice. Don't think about her.

ROMEO

Teach me to forget to think!

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

BENVOLIO

By giving liberty unto thine eyes.
Examine other beauties.

ROMEO

'Tis the way

220 To call hers exquisite, in question more.

These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,
Being black, puts us in mind they hide the fair.
He that is stricken blind cannot forget
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost.

225 Show me a mistress that is passing fair;

What doth her beauty serve but as a note
Where I may read who passed that passing fair?
Farewell. Thou canst not teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO

I'll pay that doctrine or else die in debt.

Exeunt

BENVOLIO

Do it by letting your eyes wander freely. Look at other beautiful girls.

ROMEO

That will only make me think more about how beautiful *she* is. Beautiful women like to wear black masks over their faces—those black masks only make us think about how beautiful they are underneath. A man who goes blind can't forget the precious eyesight he lost. Show me a really beautiful girl. Her beauty is like a note telling me where I can see someone even more beautiful. Goodbye. You can't teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO

I'll show you how to forget, or else I'll die owing you that lesson.

They exit.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Enter CAPULET, County PARIS, and PETER, a servant

CAPULET

But Montague is bound as well as I,
In penalty alike. And 'tis not hard, I think,
For men so old as we to keep the peace.

PARIS

Of honorable reckoning are you both.
5 And pity 'tis you lived at odds so long.
But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?

CAPULET

But saying o'er what I have said before.
My child is yet a stranger in the world.
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.
10 Let two more summers wither in their pride
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

PARIS

Younger than she are happy mothers made.

CAPULET

And too soon marred are those so early made.
Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she.
15 She's the hopeful lady of my earth.
But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart.
My will to her consent is but a part.
An she agreed within her scope of choice,
Lies my consent and fair according voice.
20 This night I hold an old accustomed feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest
Such as I love. And you among the store,
One more, most welcome, makes my number more.
At my poor house look to behold this night
25 Earth-treading stars that make dark heaven light.

CAPULET enters with County PARIS, followed by PETER, a servant.

CAPULET

(continuing a conversation) But Montague has sworn an oath just like I have, and he's under the same penalty. I don't think it will be hard for men as old as we are to keep the peace.

PARIS

You both have honorable reputations, and it's too bad you've been enemies for so long. But what do you say to my request?

CAPULET

I can only repeat what I've said before. My daughter is still very young. She's not even fourteen years old. Let's wait two more summers before we start thinking she's ready to get married.

PARIS

Girls younger than she often marry and become happy mothers.

CAPULET

Girls who marry so young grow up too soon. But go ahead and charm her, gentle Paris; make her love you. My permission is only part of her decision. If she agrees to marry you, my blessing and fair words will confirm her choice. Tonight I'm having a feast that we've celebrated for many years. I've invited many of my closest friends, and I'd like to welcome you and add you to the guest list. At my humble house tonight, you can expect to see dazzling stars that walk on the ground and light the sky from below.

Such comfort as do lusty young men feel
When well-appareled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads. Even such delight
Among fresh fennel buds shall you this night
30 Inherit at my house. Hear all, all see,
And like her most whose merit most shall be—
Which on more view of many, mine, being one,
May stand in number, though in reckoning none,
Come, go with me.

35 *(to PETER, giving him a paper)*

Go, sirrah, trudge about
Through fair Verona. Find those persons out
Whose names are written there, and to them say
My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.

Exeunt CAPULET and PARIS

PETER

Find them out whose names are written here? It is written,
40 that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard and the
tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil and the painter
with his nets. But I am sent to find those persons whose
names are here writ, and can never find what names the
writing person hath here writ. I must to the learned in good time!

Enter BENVOLIO and ROMEO

BENVOLIO

45 Tut man, one fire burns out another's burning.
One pain is lessened by another's anguish.
Turn giddy, and be helped by backward turning.
One desperate grief cures with another's languish.
Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
50 And the rank poison of the old will die.

You'll be delighted by young women as fresh as spring flowers.
Look at anyone you like, and choose whatever woman seems
best to you. Once you see a lot of girls, you might not think my
daughter's the best anymore. Come along with me.

(to PETER, handing him a paper) Go, little fellow, walk all
around Verona. Find the people on this list and tell them
they're welcome at my house tonight.

CAPULET and PARIS *exit.*

PETER

Find the people whose names are on this list? It is written that
shoemakers and tailors should play with each others' tools,
that fisherman should play with paints, and painters should
play with with fishing nets. But I've been sent to find the
people whose names are written on this list, and I can't read!
I'll never find them on my own. I've got to find somebody who
knows how to read to help me. But here come some people,
right in the nick of time.

BENVOLIO and ROMEO *enter*

BENVOLIO

(to ROMEO) Come on, man. You can put out one fire by
starting another. A new pain will make the one you already
have seem less. If you make yourself dizzy, you can cure
yourself by spinning back around in the opposite direction. A
new grief will put the old one out of your mind. Make yourself
lovesick by gazing at some new girl, and your old lovesickness
will be cured.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ROMEO

Your plantain leaf is excellent for that.

BENVOLIO

For what, I pray thee?

ROMEO

For your broken shin.

BENVOLIO

Why Romeo, art thou mad?

ROMEO

55 Not mad, but bound more than a madman is,
Shut up in prison, kept without my food,
Whipped and tormented and—Good e'en, good fellow.

PETER

God 'i' good e'en. I pray, sir, can you read?

ROMEO

Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.

PETER

60 Perhaps you have learned it without book. But I
pray, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO

Ay, if I know the letters and the language.

PETER

Ye say honestly. Rest you merry.

ROMEO

Stay, fellow. I can read. (*he reads the letter*)

65 “Seigneur Martino and his wife and daughters;
County Anselme and his beauteous sisters;
The lady widow of Vitruvio;
Seigneur Placentio and his lovely nieces;
Mercutio and his brother Valentine;
70 Mine uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters;
My fair niece Rosaline and Livia;

Seigneur Valentio and his cousin
Tybalt;

ROMEO

The plantain leaf is excellent for that.

BENVOLIO

For what, Romeo?

ROMEO

For when you cut your shin.

BENVOLIO

What? Romeo, are you crazy?

ROMEO

I'm not crazy, but I'm tied up tighter than a mental patient in a
straitjacket. I'm locked up in a prison and deprived of food. I'm
whipped and tortured—(*to PETER*) Good evening, good fellow.

PETER

May God give you a good evening. Excuse me, sir, do you know
how to read?

ROMEO

I can read my own fortune in my misery.

PETER

Perhaps you've learned from life and not from books. But
please tell me, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO

Yes, if I know the language and the letters.

PETER

I see. Well, that's an honest answer . Have a nice day.

ROMEO

Stay, fellow. I can read. (*he reads the letter*)

“Signor Martino and his wife and daughters,
Count Anselme and his beautiful sisters,
Vitruvio's widow,
Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces,
Mercutio and his brother Valentine,
My uncle Capulet and his wife and daughters,
My fair niece Rosaline and Livia,

Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt,
Lucio and the lively Helena.”

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

Lucio and the lively Helena.”
A fair assembly. Whither should
they come?

PETER

75 Up.

ROMEO

Whither? To supper?

PETER

To our house.

ROMEO

Whose house?

PETER

My master's.

ROMEO

80 Indeed, I should have asked thee that before.

PETER

Now I'll tell you without asking. My master is the great rich
Capulet, and if you be not of the house of Montagues, I pray
come and crush a cup of wine. Rest you merry!

Exit PETER

BENVOLIO

At this same ancient feast of Capulet's

85 Sups the fair Rosaline whom thou so loves

With all the admired beauties of Verona.

Go thither, and with unattainted eye

Compare her face with some that I shall show,

And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.

ROMEO

90 When the devout religion of mine eye

Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires,

And these, who, often drowned, could never die,

Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars!

One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun

95 Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun.

That's a nice group of people. Where are they supposed to
come?

PETER

Up.

ROMEO

Where? To supper?

PETER

To our house.

ROMEO

Whose house?

PETER

My master's house.

ROMEO

Indeed, I should have asked you before who he was.

PETER

Now I'll tell you so you don't have to ask. My master is the
great and rich Capulet, and if you don't belong to the house of
Montague, please come and drink a cup of wine. Have a nice
day!

PETER exits.

BENVOLIO

The beautiful Rosaline whom you love so much will be at

Capulet's traditional feast, along with every beautiful woman in

Verona. Go there and compare her objectively to some other

girls I'll show you. The woman who you think is as beautiful as

a swan is going to look as ugly as a crow to you.

ROMEO

If my eyes ever lie to me like that, let my tears turn into flames
and burn them for being such obvious liars! A woman more
beautiful than the one I love? The sun itself has never seen
anyone as beautiful since the world began.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

BENVOLIO

Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by,
Herself poised with herself in either eye.
But in that crystal scales let there be weighed
Your lady's love against some other maid
100 That I will show you shining at the feast,
And she shall scant show well that now shows best.

ROMEO

I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,
But to rejoice in splendor of mine own.

Exeunt

BENVOLIO

Come on, you first decided she was beautiful when no one else was around. There was no one to compare her to except herself. But let your eyes compare her to another beautiful woman who I'll show you at this feast, and you won't think she's the best anymore.

ROMEO

I'll go with you. Not because I think you'll show me anything better, but so I can see the woman I love.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Enter **LADY CAPULET** and **NURSE**

LADY CAPULET

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

NURSE

Now, by my maidenhead at twelve year old
I bade her come. What, lamb! What, ladybird!
God forbid! Where's this girl? What, Juliet!

Enter **JULIET**

JULIET

5 How now, who calls?

NURSE

Your mother.

JULIET

Madam, I am here. What is your will?

LADY CAPULET

This is the matter.—Nurse, give leave awhile,
We must talk in secret.—Nurse, come back again.

10 I have remembered me. Thou's hear our counsel.

Thou know'st my daughter's of a pretty age.

NURSE

Faith, I can tell her age unto an hour.

LADY CAPULET

She's not fourteen.

NURSE

I'll lay fourteen of my teeth—and yet, to my teen be it
15 spoken, I have but four—she is not fourteen. How long is it
now to Lammastide?

LADY CAPULET

A fortnight and odd days.

LADY CAPULET and the **NURSE** *enter*.

LADY CAPULET

Nurse, where's my daughter? Tell her to come to me.

NURSE

I swear to you by my virginity at age twelve, I already told her
to come. Come on! Where is she? What is she doing? What,
Juliet!

JULIET *enters*.

JULIET

What is it? Who's calling me?

NURSE

Your mother.

JULIET

Madam, I'm here. What do you want?

LADY CAPULET

I'll tell you what's the matter—Nurse, leave us alone for a little
while. We must talk privately—Nurse, come back here. I just
remembered, you can listen to our secrets. You know how
young my daughter is.

NURSE

Yes, I know her age down to the hour.

LADY CAPULET

She's not even fourteen.

NURSE

I'd bet fourteen of my own teeth—but, I'm sorry to say, I only
have four teeth—she's not fourteen. How long is it until
Lammastide?

LADY CAPULET

Two weeks and a few odd days.

NURSE

Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.
20 Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls!—
Were of an age. Well, Susan is with God.
She was too good for me. But, as I said,
On Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.
That shall she. Marry, I remember it well.
25 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,
And she was weaned—I never shall forget it—
Of all the days of the year, upon that day.
For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
Sitting in the sun under the dovehouse wall.
30 My lord and you were then at Mantua.—
Nay, I do bear a brain.—But, as I said,
When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
Of my dug and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
To see it tetchy and fall out with the dug!
35 “Shake!” quoth the dovehouse. 'Twas no need, I trow,
To bid me trudge.
And since that time it is eleven years,
For then she could stand alone. Nay, by the rood,
She could have run and waddled all about,
40 For even the day before, she broke her brow.
And then my husband—God be with his soul!
He 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,
45 Wilt thou not, Jule?” and, by my holy dame,
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.
50 And, pretty fool, it stinted and said “ay.”

LADY CAPULET

Enough of this. I pray thee, hold thy peace.

NURSE

Whether it's even or odd, of all the days in the year, on the
night of Lammas Eve, she'll be fourteen. She and Susan—God
rest her and all Christian souls—were born on the same day.
Well, Susan died and is with God. She was too good for me. But
like I said, on the night of Lammas Eve, she will be fourteen.
Yes, she will. Indeed, I remember it well. It's been eleven years
since the earthquake. She stopped nursing from my breast on
that very day. I'll never forget it. I had put bitter wormwood on
my breast as I was sitting in the sun, under the wall of the
dovehouse. You and your husband were in Mantua. Boy, do I
have some memory! But like I said, when she tasted the bitter
wormwood on my nipple, the pretty little babe got irritated and
started to quarrel with my breast. Then the dovehouse shook
with the earthquake. There was no need to tell me to get out of
there. That was eleven years ago. By then she could stand up all
by herself. No, I swear, by that time she could run and waddle
all around. I remember because she had cut her forehead just
the day before. My husband—God rest his soul, he was a happy
man—picked up the child. “Oh,” he said, “Did you fall on your
face? You'll fall backward when you grow smarter. Won't you,
Jule.” And I swear, the poor pretty thing stopped crying and
said, “Yes.” Oh, to watch a joke come true! I bet if I live a
thousand years, I'll never forget it. “Won't you, Jule,” he said.
And the pretty fool stopped crying and said, “Yes.”

LADY CAPULET

Enough of this. Please be quiet.

NURSE

Yes, madam. Yet I cannot choose but laugh
To think it should leave crying and say “ay.”

And yet, I warrant, it had upon its brow

55 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.”

JULIET

60 And stint thou too, I pray thee, Nurse, say I.

NURSE

Peace, I have done. God mark thee to his grace!

Thou wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nursed.

An I might live to see thee married once,

I have my wish.

LADY CAPULET

65 Marry, that “marry” is the very theme

I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet,

How stands your disposition to be married?

JULIET

It is an honor that I dream not of.

NURSE

An honor! Were not I thine only nurse,

70 I would say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat.

LADY CAPULET

Well, think of marriage now. Younger than you

Here in Verona, ladies of esteem

Are made already mothers. By my count,

I was your mother much upon these years

75 That you are now a maid. Thus then in brief:

The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.

NURSE

A man, young lady! Lady, such a man

As all the world. Why, he's a man of wax.

NURSE

Yes, madam. But I can't help laughing to think that the baby
stopped crying and said, “Yes.” I swear, she had a bump on her
forehead as big as a rooster's testicle. It was a painful bruise,
and she was crying bitterly. “Yes,” said my husband, “Did you
fall on your face? You'll fall backward when you grow up, won't
you, Jule?” And she stopped crying and said, “Yes.”

JULIET

Now you stop too, Nurse, please.

NURSE

Peace. I'm done talking. May God choose you to receive his
grace. You were the prettiest baby I ever nursed. If I live to see
you get married someday, all my wishes will come true.

LADY CAPULET

Well, marriage is exactly what we have to discuss. Tell me, my
daughter Juliet, what is your attitude about getting married?

JULIET

It is an honor that I do not dream of.

NURSE

“An honor?” If I weren't your only nurse, I'd say you had
sucked wisdom from the breast that fed you.

LADY CAPULET

Well, start thinking about marriage now. Here in Verona there
are girls younger than you—girls from noble families—who
have already become mothers. By my count, I was already your
mother at just about your age, while you remain a virgin. Well
then, I'll say this quickly: the valiant Paris wants you as his
bride.

NURSE

What a man, young lady. He's as great a man as any in the
whole world. He's as perfect as if he were sculpted from wax.

LADY

CAPULET

Verona's summer hath not such a flower.

NURSE

80 Nay, he's a flower. In faith, a very flower.

LADY CAPULET

What say you? Can you love the gentleman?

This night you shall behold him at our feast.

Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face

And find delight writ there with beauty's pen.

85 Examine every married lineament

And see how one another lends content,

And what obscured in this fair volume lies

Find written in the margin of his eyes.

This precious book of love, this unbound lover,

90 To beautify him only lacks a cover.

The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride

For fair without the fair within to hide.

That book in many's eyes doth share the glory

That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.

95 So shall you share all that he doth possess

By having him, making yourself no less.

NURSE

No less? Nay, bigger. Women grow by men.

LADY CAPULET

Speak briefly. Can you like of Paris, love?

JULIET

I'll look to like if looking liking move.

100 But no more deep will I endart mine eye

Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

Enter **PETER**

LADY CAPULET

Summertime in Verona has no flower as fine as him.

NURSE

No, he's a fine flower, truly, a flower.

LADY CAPULET

(*to JULIET*) What do you say? Can you love this gentleman?

Tonight you'll see him at our feast. Study Paris's face and find

pleasure in his beauty. Examine every line of his features and

see how they work together to make him handsome. If you are

confused, just look into his eyes. This man is single, and he

lacks only a bride to make him perfect and complete. As is

right, fish live in the sea, and it's wrong for a beauty like you to

hide from a handsome man like him. Many people think he's

handsome, and whoever becomes his bride will be just as

admired. You would share all that he possesses, and by having

him, you would lose nothing.

NURSE

Lose nothing? In fact, you'd get bigger. Men make women

bigger by getting them pregnant.

LADY CAPULET

(*to JULIET*) Give us a quick answer. Can you accept Paris's

love?

JULIET

I'll look at him and try to like him, at least if what I see is

likable. But I won't let myself fall for him any more than your

permission allows.

PETER *enters.*

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

PETER

Madam, the guests are come, supper served up, you called,
my young lady asked for, the Nurse cursed in the pantry,
and every thing in extremity. I must hence to wait. I beseech
105 you, follow straight.

LADY CAPULET

We follow thee.—Juliet, the county stays.

NURSE

Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

Exeunt

PETER

Madam, the guests are here, dinner is served, people are
calling for you, people have asked for Juliet, and in the pantry,
people are cursing the Nurse. Everything's out of control. I
must go and serve the guests. Please, follow straight after me.

LADY CAPULET

We'll follow you.

Juliet, the count is waiting for you.

NURSE

Go, girl, look for a man who'll give you happy nights at the end
of happy days.

They all exit.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Enter **ROMEO, MERCUTIO, BENVOLIO**, with five or six other **MASKERS** and **TORCHBEARERS**

ROMEO

What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse?
Or shall we on without apology?

BENVOLIO

The date is out of such prolixity.
We'll have no Cupid hoodwinked with a scarf,
5 Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath,
Scaring the ladies like a crowkeeper,
Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke
After the prompter for our entrance.
But let them measure us by what they will.
10 We'll measure them a measure and be gone.

ROMEO

Give me a torch. I am not for this ambling.
Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

MERCUTIO

Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.

ROMEO

Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes
15 With nimble soles. I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

MERCUTIO

You are a lover. Borrow Cupid's wings
And soar with them above a common bound.

ROMEO

I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
20 To soar with his light feathers, and so bound,
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe.
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

ROMEO, MERCUTIO, and BENVOLIO enter dressed as maskers, along with five or six other **MASKERS**, carrying a drum and torches.

ROMEO

What will we say is our excuse for being here? Or should we enter without apologizing?

BENVOLIO

It's out of fashion to give lengthy explanations like that. We're not going to introduce our dance by having someone dress up as Cupid, blindfolded and carrying a toy bow to frighten the ladies like a scarecrow. Nor are we going to recite a memorized speech to introduce ourselves. Let them judge us however they please. We'll give them a dance and then hit the road.

ROMEO

Give me a torch. I don't want to dance. I feel sad, so let me be the one who carries the light.

MERCUTIO

No, noble Romeo, you've got to dance.

ROMEO

Not me, believe me. You're wearing dancing shoes with nimble soles. My soul is made out of lead, and it's so heavy it keeps me stuck on the ground so I can't move.

MERCUTIO

You're a lover. Take Cupid's wings and fly higher than the average man.

ROMEO

His arrow has pierced me too deeply, so I can't fly high with his cheerful feathers. Because this wound keeps me down, I can't leap any higher than my dull sadness. I sink under the heavy weight of love.

MERCUTIO

And to sink in it, should you burthen love—
Too great oppression for a tender thing.

ROMEO

25 Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.

MERCUTIO

If love be rough with you, be rough with love.
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.—
Give me a case to put my visage in!

30 A visor for a visor.—What care I
What curious eye doth cote deformities?
Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.

BENVOLIO

Come, knock and enter. And no sooner in
But every man betake him to his legs.

ROMEO

35 A torch for me. Let wantons light of heart
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels.
For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase,
I'll be a candle holder, and look on.
The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.

MERCUTIO

40 Tut, dun's the mouse, the constable's own word.
If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire,
Or—save your reverence—love, wherein thou stick'st
Up to the ears. Come, we burn daylight, ho!

ROMEO

Nay, that's not so.

MERCUTIO

I mean, sir, in delay.

45 We waste our lights in vain, like lights by day.
Take our good meaning, for our judgment sits
Five times in that ere once in our fine wits.

MERCUTIO

If you sink, you're dragging love down. It's not right to drag
down something as tender as love.

ROMEO

Is love really tender? I think it's too rough, too rude, too rowdy,
and it pricks like a thorn.

MERCUTIO

If love plays rough with you, play rough with love . If you prick
love when it pricks you, you'll beat love down. Give me a mask
to put my face in. A mask to put over my other mask. What do I
care if some curious person sees my flaws? Let this mask, with
its black eyebrows, blush for me. *(they put on masks)*

BENVOLIO

Come on, let's knock and go in. The minute we get in let's all
start dancing.

ROMEO

I'll take a torch. Let playful people with light hearts dance.
There's an old saying that applies to me: you can't lose if you
don't play the game. I'll just hold a torch and watch you guys. It
looks like a lot of fun, but I'll sit this one out.

MERCUTIO

Hey, you're being a stick in the mud, as cautious as a
policemen on night patrol. If you're a stick in the mud, we'll
pull you out of the mud—I mean out of love, if you'll excuse me
for being so rude—where you're stuck up to your ears. Come
on, we're wasting precious daylight. Let's go!

ROMEO

No we're not—it's night.

MERCUTIO

I mean, we're wasting the light of our torches by delaying,
which is like wasting the sunshine during the day. Use your
common sense to figure out what I mean, instead of trying to
be clever or trusting your five senses.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ROMEO

And we mean well in going to this mask,
But 'tis no wit to go.

MERCUTIO

Why, may one ask?

ROMEO

50 I dreamt a dream tonight.

MERCUTIO

And so did I.

ROMEO

Well, what was yours?

MERCUTIO

That dreamers often lie.

ROMEO

In bed asleep while they do dream things true.

MERCUTIO

Oh, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you.

BENVOLIO

Queen Mab, what's she

MERCUTIO

55 She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes

In shape no bigger than an agate stone

On the forefinger of an alderman,

Drawn with a team of little atomi

Over men's noses as they lie asleep.

60 Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs,

The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,

Her traces of the smallest spider's web,

Her collars of the moonshine's watery beams,

Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,

65 Her wagoner a small gray-coated gnat,

Not half so big as a round little worm

Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid.

ROMEO

We mean well by going to this masquerade ball, but it's not smart of us to go.

MERCUTIO

Why, may I ask?

ROMEO

I had a dream last night.

MERCUTIO

So did I.

ROMEO

Well, what was your dream?

MERCUTIO

My dream told me that dreamers often lie.

ROMEO

They lie in bed while they dream about the truth.

MERCUTIO

Oh, then I see you've been with Queen Mab.

BENVOLIO

Who's Queen Mab?

MERCUTIO

She's the fairies' midwife. She's no bigger than the stone on a city councilman's ring. She rides around in a wagon drawn by

tiny little atoms, and she rides over men's noses as they lie sleeping. The spokes of her wagon are made of spiders' legs.

The cover of her wagon is made of grasshoppers' wings. The harnesses are made of the smallest spiderwebs. The collars are

made out of moonbeams. Her whip is a thread attached to a cricket's bone. Her wagon driver is a tiny bug in a gray coat;

he's not half the size of a little round worm that comes from the finger of a lazy young girl.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

Her chariot is an empty hazelnut

Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
75 Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
On courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight;
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
80 O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.
Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose,
And then dreams he of smelling out a suit.
85 And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as he lies asleep,
Then he dreams of another benefice.
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
90 Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep, and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
95 That plaits the manes of horses in the night
And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes.
This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,
That presses them and learns them first to bear,
95 Making them women of good carriage.
This is she—

ROMEO

Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace!

Thou talk'st of nothing.

MERCUTIO

True, I talk of dreams,

Her chariot is a hazelnut shell. It was made by a carpenter squirrel or an old grubworm; they've made wagons for the fairies as long as anyone can remember. In this royal wagon, she rides every night through the brains of lovers and makes them dream about love. She rides over courtiers' knees, and they dream about curtsying. She rides over lawyers' fingers, and right away, they dream about their fees. She rides over ladies' lips, and they immediately dream of kisses. Queen Mab often puts blisters on their lips because their breath smells like candy, which makes her mad. Sometimes she rides over a courtier's lips, and he dreams of making money off of someone. Sometimes she tickles a priest's nose with a tithe-pig's tail, and he dreams of a large donation. Sometimes she rides over a soldier's neck, and he dreams of cutting the throats of foreign enemies, of breaking down walls, of ambushes, of Spanish swords, and of enormous cups of liquor. And then, drums beat in his ear and he wakes up. He's frightened, so he says a couple of prayers and goes back to sleep. She is the same Mab who tangles the hair in horses' manes at night and makes the tangles hard in the dirty hairs, which bring bad luck if they're untangled. Mab is the old hag who gives false sex dreams to virgins and teaches them how to hold a lover and bear a child. She's the one—

ROMEO

Enough, enough! Mercutio, be quiet. You're talking nonsense.

MERCUTIO

True. I'm talking about dreams, which are the products of a

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
100 Which is as thin of substance as the air
And more inconstant than the wind, who woos
Even now the frozen bosom of the north,
And, being angered, puffs away from thence,
Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.

brain that's doing nothing. Dreams are nothing but silly imagination, as thin as air, and less predictable than the wind, which sometimes blows on the frozen north and then gets angry and blows south.

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BENVOLIO

105 This wind you talk of, blows us from ourselves.
Supper is done, and we shall come too late.

ROMEO

I fear too early, for my mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
110 With this night's revels, and expire the term
Of a despisèd life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
But he that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail. On, lusty gentlemen.

BENVOLIO

115 Strike, drum.

March about the stage and exeunt

BENVOLIO

The wind you're talking about is blowing us off our course.
Dinner is over, and we're going to get there too late.

ROMEO

I'm worried we'll get there too early. I have a feeling this party tonight will be the start of something bad, something that will end with my own death. But whoever's in charge of where my life's going can steer me wherever they want. Onward, lover boys!

BENVOLIO

Beat the drum.

They march about the stage and exit.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

ACT 1, SCENE 5

PETER and other **SERVINGMEN** come forth with napkins

PETER

Where's Potpan, that he helps not to take away? He shift a trencher? He scrape a trencher!

FIRST SERVINGMAN

When good manners shall lie all in one or two men's hands, and they unwashed too, 'tis a foul thing.

PETER

- 5 Away with the joint-stools, remove the court-cupboard, look to the plate. Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane, and, as thou loves me, let the porter let in Susan Grindstone and Nell.—Antony and Potpan!

SECOND SERVINGMAN

Ay, boy, ready.

PETER

- 10 You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for, in the great chamber.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

We cannot be here and there too. Cheerly, boys. Be brisk oawhile, and the longer liver take all.

Exeunt PETER and SERVINGMEN

Enter CAPULET with CAPULET'S COUSIN, TYBALT, LADY CAPULET, JULIET, and others of the house, meeting ROMEO, BENVOLIO, MERCUTIO, and other GUESTS and MASKERS

CAPULET

Welcome, gentlemen! Ladies that have their toes

- 15 Ah, my mistresses! Which of you all

Unplagued with corns will walk a bout with you.—

Will now deny to dance? She that makes dainty,

She, I'll swear, hath corns. Am I come near ye now?—

Welcome, gentlemen! I have seen the day

- 20 That I have worn a visor and could tell

PETER and other **SERVINGMEN** come forward with napkins.

PETER

Where's Potpan? Why isn't he helping us clear the table? He should be moving and scraping plates!

FIRST SERVINGMAN

When only one or two men have all the good manners, and even they are dirty, things are bad.

PETER

Take away the stools, the sideboards, and the plates. You, good friend, save me a piece of marzipan, and if you love me, have the porter let in Susan Grindstone and Nell. Antony and Potpan!

SECOND SERVINGMAN

Yes, boy, I'm ready.

PETER

They're looking for you in the great chamber.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

We can't be in two places at once, both here and there! Cheers, boys. Be quick for a while and let the one who lives the longest take everything.

PETER and the SERVINGMEN exit.

CAPULET enters with his COUSIN, TYBALT, LADY CAPULET, JULIET, and other members of the house. They meet ROMEO, BENVOLIO, MERCUTIO, and other guests and MASKERS

CAPULET

Welcome, gentlemen. The ladies who don't have corns on their toes will dance with you. Ha, my ladies, which of you will refuse to dance now? Whichever of you acts shy, I'll swear she has corns. Does that hit close to home? Welcome, gentlemen. There was a time when I could wear a mask over my eyes and charm a lady by whispering a story in her ear. That time is gone, gone, gone. You are welcome gentlemen. Come on,

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear
Such as would please. 'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone.—
You are welcome, gentlemen.—Come, musicians, play.
(music plays and they dance)

25 A hall, a hall, give room!—And foot it, girls.—
More light, you knaves! And turn the tables up,
And quench the fire. The room is grown too hot.—
Ah, sirrah, this unlooked-for sport comes well.—
Nay, sit, nay, sit, good cousin Capulet,
30 For you and I are past our dancing days.
How long is 't now since last yourself and I
Were in a mask?

CAPULETS' COUSIN

By'r Lady, thirty years.

CAPULET

What, man, 'tis not so much, 'tis not so much.
'Tis since the nuptials of Lucentio,
35 Come Pentecost as quickly as it will,
Some five and twenty years, and then we masked.

CAPULET'S COUSIN

'Tis more, 'tis more. His son is elder, sir.
His son is thirty.

CAPULET

Will you tell me that?
His son was but a ward two years ago.

ROMEO

40 *(to a SERVINGMAN)* What lady is that which doth enrich the
hand
Of yonder knight?

SERVINGMAN

I know not, sir.

ROMEO

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear,
45 Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.

musicians, play music. *(music plays and they dance, ROMEO stands apart)* Make room in the hall. Make room in the hall.
Shake a leg, girls. *(to SERVINGMEN)* More light, you rascals.
Flip over the tables and get them out of the way. And put the
fire out—it's getting too hot in here. *(to his COUSIN)* Ah, my
man, this unexpected fun feels good. No, sit down, sit down,
my good Capulet cousin. You and I are too old to dance.
(CAPULET and his COUSIN sit down) How long is it now
since you and I last wore masks at a party like this?

CAPULET'S COUSIN

I swear, it must be thirty years.

CAPULET

What, man? It's not that long, it's not that long. It's been since
Lucentio's wedding. Let the years fly by as fast as they like, it's
only been twenty-five years since we wore masks.

CAPULET'S COUSIN

It's been longer, it's been longer. Lucentio's son is older than
that, sir. He's thirty years old.

CAPULET

Are you really going to tell me that? His son was a minor only
two years ago.

ROMEO

(to a SERVINGMAN) Who is the girl on the arm of that lucky
knight over there?

SERVINGMAN

I don't know, sir.

ROMEO

Oh, she shows the torches how to burn bright! She stands out
against the darkness like a jeweled earring hanging against the
cheek of an African. Her beauty is too good for this world; she's
too beautiful to die and be buried. She outshines the other

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessèd my rude hand.
50 Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

TYBALT

This, by his voice, should be a Montague.—
(*to his PAGE*) Fetch me my rapier, boy.—
What, dares the slave
55 Come hither, covered with an antic face,
To flier and scorn at our solemnity?
Now, by the stock and honor of my kin,
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

CAPULET

Why, how now, kinsman? Wherefore storm you so?

TYBALT

60 Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,
A villain that is hither come in spite
To scorn at our solemnity this night.

CAPULET

Young Romeo is it?

TYBALT

'Tis he, that villain Romeo.

CAPULET

Content thee, gentle coz. Let him alone.
65 He bears him like a portly gentleman,
And, to say truth, Verona brags of him
To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.
I would not for the wealth of all the town
Here in my house do him disparagement.
70 Therefore be patient. Take no note of him.
It is my will, the which if thou respect,
Show a fair presence and put off these frowns,
An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast.

women like a white dove in the middle of a flock of crows.
When this dance is over, I'll see where she stands, and then I'll
touch her hand with my rough and ugly one. Did my heart ever
love anyone before this moment? My eyes were liars, then,
because I never saw true beauty before tonight.

TYBALT

I can tell by his voice that this man is a Montague. (*to his PAGE*) Get me my sword, boy.—What, does this peasant dare to come here with his face covered by a mask to sneer at and scorn our celebration? Now, by the honor of our family, I do not consider it a crime to kill him.

CAPULET

Why, what's going on here, nephew? Why are you acting so angry?

TYBALT

Uncle, this man is a Montague—our enemy. He's a scoundrel who's come here out of spite to mock our party.

CAPULET

Is it young Romeo?

TYBALT

That's him, that villain Romeo.

CAPULET

Calm down, gentle cousin. Leave him alone. He carries himself like a dignified gentleman, and, to tell you the truth, he has a reputation throughout Verona as a virtuous and well-behaved young man. I wouldn't insult him in my own house for all the wealth in this town. So calm down. Just ignore him. That's what I want, and if you respect my wishes, you'll look nice and stop frowning because that's not the way you should behave at a feast.

TYBALT

It fits when such a villain is a guest.

75 I'll not endure him.

CAPULET

He shall be endured.

What, goodman boy! I say, he shall. Go to.

Am I the master here, or you? Go to.

You'll not endure him! God shall mend my soul,

You'll make a mutiny among my guests.

80 You will set cock-a-hoop. You'll be the man!

TYBALT

Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.

CAPULET

Go to, go to.

You are a saucy boy. Is 't so, indeed?

This trick may chance to scathe you, I know what.

You must contrary me. Marry, 'tis time.—

85 Well said, my hearts!—You are a princox, go.

Be quiet, or—More light, more light!—For shame!

I'll make you quiet.—What, cheerly, my hearts!

Music plays again, and the guests dance

TYBALT

Patience perforce with willful choler meeting

Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.

90 I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall

Now seeming sweet, convert to bitterest gall.

Exit TYBALT

TYBALT

It's the right way to act when a villain like him shows up. I

won't tolerate him.

CAPULET

You *will* tolerate him. What, little man? I say you will. What the—Am I the boss here or you? What the—You won't tolerate him! God help me! You'll start a riot among my guests! There will be chaos! It will be your fault, you'll be the rabble-rouser!

TYBALT

But, uncle, we're being disrespected.

CAPULET

Go on, go on. You're an insolent little boy. Is that how it is, really? This stupidity will come back to bite you. I know what I'll do. You have to contradict me, do you? I'll teach you a lesson. *(to the GUESTS)* Well done, my dear guests! *(to TYBALT)* You're a punk, get away. Keep your mouth shut, or else— *(to SERVINGMEN)* more light, more light! *(to TYBALT)* You should be ashamed. 'll shut you up. *(to the guests)* Keep having fun, my dear friends!

The music plays again, and the guests dance

TYBALT

The combination of forced patience and pure rage is making my body tremble. I'll leave here now, but Romeo's prank, which seems so sweet to him now, will turn bitter to him later.

TYBALT *exits.*

ROMEO

(taking JULIET's hand) If I profane with my unworhiest hand

This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

95 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this,

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO

100 Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do.

They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

105 Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

Kisses her

Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged.

JULIET

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO

Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!

110 Give me my sin again.

They kiss again

ROMEO

(taking JULIET's hand) Your hand is like a holy place that my hand is unworthy to visit. If you're offended by the touch of my hand, my two lips are standing here like blushing pilgrims, ready to make things better with a kiss. *

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you don't give your hand enough credit. By holding my hand you show polite devotion. After all, pilgrims touch the hands of statues of saints. Holding one palm against another is like a kiss.

ROMEO

Don't saints and pilgrims have lips too?

JULIET

Yes, pilgrim—they have lips that they're supposed to pray with.

ROMEO

Well then, saint, let lips do what hands do. I'm praying for you to kiss me. Please grant my prayer so my faith doesn't turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints don't move, even when they grant prayers.

ROMEO

Then don't move while I act out my prayer.

He kisses her.

Now my sin has been taken from my lips by yours.

JULIET

Then do my lips now have the sin they took from yours?

ROMEO

Sin from my lips? You encourage crime with your sweetness.

Give me my sin back.

They kiss again

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

JULIET

You kiss by th' book.

NURSE

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

JULIET *moves away*

ROMEO

What is her mother?

NURSE

Marry, bachelor,

Her mother is the lady of the house,

And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous.

115 I nursed her daughter that you talked withal.

I tell you, he that can lay hold of her

Shall have the chinks.

ROMEO

(aside) Is she a Capulet?

O dear account! My life is my foe's debt.

BENVOLIO

(to ROMEO) Away, begone. The sport is at the best.

ROMEO

120 Ay, so I fear. The more is my unrest.

CAPULET

Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone.

We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.—

Is it e'en so? Why, then, I thank you all.

I thank you, honest gentlemen. Good night.—

125 More torches here!—Come on then, let's to bed.

Ah, sirrah, by my fay, it waxes late.

I'll to my rest.

All but JULIET and NURSE move to exit

JULIET

You kiss like you've studied how.

NURSE

Madam, your mother wants to talk to you.

JULIET *moves away*

ROMEO

Who is her mother?

NURSE

Indeed, young man, her mother is the lady of the house. She is

a good, wise, and virtuous lady. I nursed her daughter, whom

you were just talking to. Let me tell you, the man who marries

her will become very wealthy.

ROMEO

(to himself) Is she a Capulet? Oh, this is a heavy price to pay!

My life is in the hands of my enemy.

BENVOLIO

(to ROMEO) Come on, let's go. Right when things are the most fun is the best time to leave.

ROMEO

Yes, but I'm afraid I'm in more trouble than ever.

CAPULET

No gentlemen, don't get ready to go now. We have a little

dessert coming up. *(they whisper in his ear)* Is that really true?

Well, then, I thank you both. I thank you, honest gentlemen.

Good night. Bring more torches over here! Come on, let's all

get to bed. *(to his COUSIN)* Ah, my man, I swear, it's getting

late. I'm going to get some rest.

Everyone except JULIET and NURSE begins to exit.

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1

JULIET

Come hither, Nurse. What is yond gentleman?

NURSE

The son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET

130 What's he that now is going out of door?

NURSE

Marry, that, I think, be young Petruchio.

JULIET

What's he that follows here, that would not dance?

NURSE

I know not.

JULIET

Go ask his name.—If he be married.

135 My grave is like to be my wedding bed.

NURSE

His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of your great enemy.

JULIET

(aside) My only love sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

140 Prodigious birth of love it is to me,

That I must love a loathèd enemy.

NURSE

What's this? What's this?

JULIET

A rhyme I learned even now

Of one I danced withal.

One calls within "Juliet!"

NURSE

Anon, anon!

Come, let's away. The strangers all are gone.

Exeunt

JULIET

Come over here, nurse. Who is that gentleman?

NURSE

He is the son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET

Who's the one who's going out the door right now?

NURSE

Well, that one, I think, is young Petruchio.

JULIET

Who's the one following over there, the one who wouldn't dance?

NURSE

I don't know his name.

JULIET

Go ask. *(the nurse leaves)* If he's married, I think I'll die rather than marry anyone else.

NURSE

(returning) His name is Romeo. He's a Montague. He's the only son of your worst enemy.

JULIET

(to herself) The only man I love is the son of the only man I hate! I saw him too early without knowing who he was, and I found out who he was too late! Love is a monster for making me fall in love with my worst enemy.

NURSE

What's this? What's this?

JULIET

Just a rhyme I learned from somebody I danced with at the party.

Somebody calls, "Juliet!" from offstage.

NURSE

Right away, right away. Come, let's go. The strangers are all gone.

They exit.