

# 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 fleer 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 unwortheiest 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.*