

**The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet**  
by William Shakespeare

Dramatis Personæ

ESCALUS  
Prince of Verona

MERCUTIO  
kinsman to the Prince, and friend to Romeo

PARIS  
a young Nobleman, kinsman to the Prince

PAGE to Paris

MONTAGUE  
head of a Veronese family at feud with the Capulets

LADY MONTAGUE  
wife to Montague

ROMEO  
son to Montague

BENVOLIO  
nephew to Montague, and friend to Romeo

ABRAM  
servant to Montague

BALTHASAR  
servant to Romeo

CAPULET  
head of a Veronese family at feud with the Montagues

LADY CAPULET  
wife to Capulet

JULIET  
daughter to Capulet

TYBALT  
nephew to Lady Capulet

CAPULET'S COUSIN  
an old man

NURSE to Juliet

PETER  
servant to Juliet's Nurse

SAMPSON  
servant to Capulet

GREGORY  
servant to Capulet

SERVANTS

FRIAR LAWRENCE  
a Franciscan

FRIAR JOHN  
of the same Order

APOTHECARY

CHORUS

THREE MUSICIANS

AN OFFICER

CITIZENS of Verona; several MEN and WOMEN, relations to both houses; MASKERS, GUARDS, WATCHMEN and ATTENDANTS

SCENE

*During the greater part of the play in Verona; once, in the Fifth Act, at Mantua*

THE PROLOGUE

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

*Exit.*

ACT 1

Scene 1

*a public place; enter Sampson and Gregory armed with swords and bucklers. [Samson and Gregory are servants of the Capulet family.]*

SAMPSON

Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.<sup>1</sup>

GREGORY

No, for then we should be colliers.<sup>2</sup>

SAMPSON

I mean, if we be in choler, we'll draw.<sup>3</sup>

GREGORY

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *carry coals* By saying they will not carry coals, Samson means that they will not be humbled by the Montagues. What follows is a quick succession of wit. As in other plays, notably *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* the lower classes have humorous dialog consisting of puns.

<sup>2</sup> *collier* Here the pun is on collier (one who works with coal), choler (anger), collar (part of the upper garment that clothes the neck, but with the idea of being hanged).

<sup>3</sup> *if we be . . . we'll draw* If we get angry, we will respond by drawing our swords.

<sup>4</sup> *Ay, while . . . o' the collar.* Yes, while you live, do your best to avoid being hanged.

SAMPSON

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

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

GREGORY

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

SAMPSON

True, and therefore women, being the weaker vessels, 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. [ . . . ]  
*Enter Abram and Balthasar. [Abram is a servant of the Montague family, while Balthasar is a servant of Romeo.]*

SAMSON

My naked weapon is out: quarrel, I will back thee.

GREGORY

How? Turn thy back and run?

SAMSON

Fear me not.

GREGORY

No; I fear thee!

SAMSON

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

GREGORY

I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.<sup>5</sup>

SAMSON

Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them,<sup>6</sup> which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

ABRAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMSON

I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAM

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMSON

Is the law of our side if I say ay?

GREGORY

No.

SAMSON

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

GREGORY

Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM

Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMSON

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

ABRAM

No better.

SAMSON

Well, sir.

*Enter Benvolio. [Benvolio is a nephew of Montague and a friend of Romeo.]*

GREGORY

Say better; here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

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<sup>5</sup> *list* desire or want to

<sup>6</sup> *bite my thumb* The gesture is explained by Samson, probably meaning that Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience would not have been familiar with this Italian gesture. (*Folger Shakespeare Library*. "How to Behave Badly in Elizabethan England" by Ruth Goodman (excerpt). <https://www.folger.edu/blogs/shakespeare-and-beyond/excerpt-how-to-behave-badly-in-elizabethan-england-by-ruth-goodman/>. Accessed on December 27, 2024.

SAMSON

Yes, better, sir.

ABRAM

You lie.

SAMSON

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

*They fight.*

BENVOLIO

Part, fools! put up your swords, you know not what you do.

*Beats down their swords. Enter Tybalt, [who is a nephew of Lady Capulet and cousin of Juliet].*

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?

Turn thee Benvolio, look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO

I do but keep the peace, put up thy sword,

Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT

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.*

FIRST CITIZEN

Clubs, bills and partisans<sup>7</sup>! Strike! Beat them down!

Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

*Enter Capulet in his gown and Lady Capulet.*

CAPULET

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

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, a crutch!<sup>8</sup> Why call you for a sword?

CAPULET

My sword, I say! Old Montague is come,

And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

*Enter Montague and his Lady Montague.*

MONTAGUE

Thou villain Capulet! Hold me not, let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

*Enter Prince Escalus, with Attendants.*

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

With purple fountains issuing from your veins,

On pain of torture, from those bloody hands

Throw your mis-tempered weapons to the ground

And hear the sentence of your moved Prince

Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,<sup>9</sup>

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,

Cankered<sup>10</sup> with peace, to part your cankered hate.

If ever you disturb our streets again,

Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.<sup>11</sup>

For this time all the rest depart away:

You, Capulet, shall go along with me,

And Montague, come you this afternoon,

To know our farther pleasure in this case,

To old Free-town, our common judgement-place.

Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

*Exeunt Prince and Attendants; Capulet, Lady Capulet, Tybalt, Citizens and Servants.*

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<sup>7</sup> *clubs, bills and partisans* A club is a cudgel. A bill is a weapon used in the 16th and 17th centuries which was made up of a hooked blade attached to a shaft; Partisans were 16th/17th swords made up of a blade on a shaft. (*Webster's Third International Dictionary*)

<sup>8</sup> *A crutch, a crutch* Lady Capulet is commenting on her husband's infirmity or inability to enter the fray. The wives of the contending families are demonstrating rational restraint, while the husbands are hot-headed.

<sup>9</sup> *Three civil brawls . . . airy word* Three public fights fought on insubstantial grounds

<sup>10</sup> *cankered* rusted. The The denizens of Verona are wielding their rusty, old weapons to quell the feud.

<sup>11</sup> *forfeit of the peace* the loss of peace

MONTAGUE

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

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,  
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,  
Till the Prince came, who parted either part.

LADY MONTAGUE

O 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,  
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,  
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,<sup>12</sup> not pursuing his,  
And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *humor* mood

<sup>13</sup> *Madam, an hour . . . from me* Benvolio was out on an early morning walk when he saw Romeo underneath a grove of sycamore trees. Romeo saw him and ran away into the woods. Benvolio, however, did not pursue him, saying that he gladly did not pursue Romeo who was glad that he was not pursued.

<sup>14</sup> *pens himself* confines himself

<sup>15</sup> *his own affections' counselor* Like a confidential adviser, Romeo is being discreet ("Secret" and "close") about his own emotions

<sup>16</sup> *sounding* finding out; discerning

<sup>17</sup> Montague is comparing Romeo's secret emotions to a bud being eaten by a worm, which is devoured before it can blossom.

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  
Should in the farthest east begin to draw  
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,  
Away from light steals home my heavy son,  
And private in his chamber pens himself,<sup>14</sup>  
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

Have you importuned him by any means?

MONTAGUE

Both by myself and many other friends;  
But he, his own affections' counsellor,<sup>15</sup>  
Is to himself—I will not say how true—  
But to himself so secret and so close,  
So far from sounding<sup>16</sup> 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 sun.<sup>17</sup>  
Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow,  
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  
To hear true shrift.<sup>18</sup> Come, madam, let's away,  
*Exeunt Montague and Lady Montague*

BENVOLIO

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?<sup>19</sup>

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO

Not having that which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO

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,  
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.

Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:

Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!

O anything, of nothing first create!

O heavy lightness! serious vanity!

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

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

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 prest

With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown

Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs;

Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;

Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears:

What is it else? A madness most discreet,

A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

Farewell, my coz.

*Going*

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

Tell me in sadness who is that you love?

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<sup>18</sup> *true shrift* a true confession, from the verb "shrive," which means to make a confession and receive pardon.

<sup>19</sup> *Was that . . . so fast* Was that my father who ran away so fast?

ROMEO

What, shall I groan and tell thee?

BENVOLIO

Groan! Why, no; but sadly tell me who.

ROMEO

Bid a sick man in sadness make his will,  
A word ill urged to one that is so ill.  
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  
With Cupid's arrow, she hath Dian's wit<sup>20</sup>;  
And in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,  
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,  
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold:  
O she's 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;  
For beauty starved with her severity,  
Cuts beauty off from all posterity.<sup>21</sup>  
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  
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.

BENVOLIO

By giving liberty unto thine eyes;  
Examine other beauties.

ROMEO

'Tis the way  
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.  
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.*

Scene 2

*a street; enter Capulet, Paris and 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,  
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;  
Let two more summers wither in their pride  
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

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<sup>20</sup> *she hath Dian's wit* She has the same mindset as the virgin Roman goddess of the Moon and of the hunt in that she will not marry.

<sup>21</sup> *cuts beauty off from all posterity.* Because she will not marry, she will not have children as lovely as herself. Shakespeare expresses the same idea of marriage and beauty in his sonnets, such as Sonnets 3 and 4.

PARIS

Younger than she are happy mothers made.

CAPULET

And too soon marred are those so early made.  
The earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she,  
She is the hopeful lady of my earth:  
But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart,  
My will to her consent is but a part;  
And she agree, within her scope of choice  
Lies my consent and fair according voice.  
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  
Earth-treading stars that make dark heaven light:  
Such comfort as do lusty young men feel  
When well appareled April on the heel  
Of limping winter treads, even such delight  
Among fresh female buds shall you this night  
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. Go, sirrah, trudge about  
Through fair Verona; find those persons out  
Whose names are written there, [*gives a paper*] and to them  
say,  
My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.  
*Exeunt Capulet and Paris.*

SERVANT

Find them out whose names are written here! It is written 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

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<sup>22</sup> *holp* helped

<sup>23</sup> *God-den* Good evening (Bevington, p. 998)

<sup>24</sup> *God gi' god-den* God give you a good evening.

<sup>25</sup> *rest you merry* “Rest you merry” means “May you continue to be happy.” The phrase is used in the popular Christmas carol, “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen,” which means “May God continue to give you happiness.” Note that there should be no comma after “you.” (Gary Martin. *Phrase Finder*. “God Rest You Merry Gentleman.”) <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/god-rest-you-merry-gentlemen.html>.

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

Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning,  
One pain is lessened by another's anguish;  
Turn giddy, and be holp<sup>22</sup> by backward turning;  
One desperate grief cures with another's languish:  
Take thou some new infection to thy eye,  
And the rank poison of the old will die.

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

Not mad, but bound more than a madman is:  
Shut up in prison, kept without my food,  
Whipped and tormented and—God-den<sup>23</sup>, good fellow.

SERVANT

God gi' go-den.<sup>24</sup> I pray, sir, can you read?

ROMEO

Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.

SERVANT

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.

SERVANT

Ye say honestly, rest you merry<sup>25</sup>!

ROMEO

Stay, fellow; I can read.

*He reads the letter.*

“Signior Martino and his wife and daughters;

County Anselmo and his beauteous sisters;

The lady widow of Utruvio;

Signior Placentio and his lovely nieces;

Mercutio and his brother Valentine;

Mine uncle Capulet, his wife, and daughters;

My fair niece Rosaline and Livia;

Signior Valentio and his cousin Tybalt;

Lucio and the lively Helena.”

A fair assembly. [*Gives back the paper.*] Whither should they come?

SERVANT

Up.

ROMEO

Whither to supper?

SERVANT

To our house.

ROMEO

Whose house?

SERVANT

My master’s.

ROMEO

Indeed I should have asked you that before.

SERVANT

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.*

BENVOLIO

At this same ancient feast of Capulet’s

Sups the fair Rosaline whom thou so lov’st;

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

When the devout religion of mine eye

Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fire;

And these who, often drowned, could never die,

Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars.

One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun

Ne’er saw her match since first the world begun.

BENVOLIO

Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by,

Herself pois’d with herself in either eye:

But in that crystal scales let there be weighed

Your lady’s love against some other maid

That I will show you shining at this 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 my own.

*Exeunt.*

Scene 3

*room in Capulet’s house; enter Lady Capulet and Nurse.*

LADY CAPULET

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

NURSE

Now, by my maidenhead,<sup>26</sup> at twelve year old,

I bade her come. What, lamb! What ladybird!

God forbid! Where’s this girl? What, Juliet!

*Enter Juliet.*

JULIET

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,

I have remembered me, thou’s hear our counsel.

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<sup>26</sup> *by my maidenhead* a vulgar oath which Shakespeare uses for comedic effect. He is characterizing the nurse as a member of the lower class who uses “impolite” language.



Thou knowest my daughter's of a pretty age.

NURSE

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 spoken, I have but four,  
She is not fourteen.<sup>27</sup> How long is it now  
To Lammas-tide<sup>28</sup>?

LADY CAPULET

A fortnight and odd days.<sup>29</sup>

NURSE

Even or odd<sup>30</sup>, of all days in the year,  
Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.  
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.  
'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<sup>31</sup>,

Sitting in the sun under the dovehouse wall;

My lord and you were then at Mantua:

Nay, I do bear a brain.<sup>32</sup> 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<sup>33</sup>, and fall out with the dug!

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, [ . . . ]

She could have run and waddled all about;

For even the day before she broke her brow,

And then my husband,—God be with his soul!

A<sup>34</sup> 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;<sup>35</sup>

Wilt thou not, Jule?' and [ . . . ],

The pretty wretch left crying, and said 'Ay'.

To see now how a jest shall come about.<sup>36</sup>

I warrant, and I should live a thousand years,

I never should forget it. 'Wilt thou not, Jule?' quoth he;

And, pretty fool, it stinted, and said 'Ay.'

LADY CAPULET

Enough of this; I pray thee hold thy peace.

NURSE

Yes, madam, yet I cannot choose but laugh,

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<sup>27</sup> *I'll lay fourteen . . . not fourteen* The nurse is betting fourteen of her teeth that Juliet is not yet fourteen,—but she adds that she, truth be told, has only four, not fourteen, teeth. “To my *teen* be spoken” means “To my great disappointment” (*teen* means “grief” or “vexation.” The nurse is obviously playing on the words *four* and *teen* in the word *fourteen*.)

<sup>28</sup> *Lammas-tide* the time around Lammas Day, which is August 1

<sup>29</sup> *a fortnight and odd days* a little more than two weeks

<sup>30</sup> Even or odd. The nurse is misunderstanding Lady Capulet's use of the word *odd*, which means “some” or “indefinite amount.” She takes it to mean *not even referring to numbers*). Shakespeare's commoners are often pictured as making malapropisms and puns.

<sup>31</sup> *dug* breast In trying to wean the baby, the nurse put wormwood, a bitter herb, on her breast.

<sup>32</sup> *do bear a brain* the Nurse is commenting on her memory; i.e., I do remember

<sup>33</sup> *tetchy* annoyed

<sup>34</sup> A He

<sup>35</sup> *Thou wilt . . . more wit* When Juliet as a toddler hit her head by falling forward, the nurse's husband said that when she gets wiser she will fall on her back, a crude way of saying that she will marry. The Nurse is

<sup>36</sup> Her husband made a jest (joke) and the Nurse is in wonder that it should now come to happen as he joked.

To think it should leave crying, and say 'Ay';  
And yet I warrant it had upon it brow  
A bump as big as a young cockerel's stone;  
A perilous knock, and it cried bitterly.  
'Yea,' quoth my husband, 'fall'st upon thy face?  
Thou wilt fall backward when thou comest to age;  
Wilt thou not, Jule?' it stinted<sup>37</sup>, and said 'Ay'.

JULIET  
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:  
And I might live to see thee married once, I have my wish.

LADY CAPULET  
[. . .] 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,  
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  
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.

LADY CAPULET  
Verona's summer hath not such a flower.

NURSE  
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.  
Examine every married lineament,  
And see how one another lends content;  
And what obscured in this fair volume lies,  
Find written in the margent<sup>38</sup> of his eyes.  
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,  
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;  
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.<sup>39</sup>

LADY CAPULET  
Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

JULIET  
I'll look to like, if looking liking move:  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.  
*Enter a Servant.*

SERVANT  
Madam, the guests are come, supper served up, you called,  
my young lady asked for, the Nurse cursed in the pantry, and

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<sup>37</sup> *stinted* stopped

<sup>38</sup> *in the margent of his eyes* around his eyes

<sup>39</sup> *grow by men* vulgar humor. By saying "making yourself no less," Lady Capulet means that her daughter will not lose her economic or social status by marrying Paris, as she will share his wealth in marriage. The nurse responds with a pun, intentional or unintentional, saying "no less, nay bigger," meaning that women are impregnated by men and in their pregnancy their bellies grow bigger.

everything in extremity. I must hence to wait, I beseech you follow straight.

LADY CAPULET

We follow thee.

*Exit Servant.*

Juliet, the County stays.

NURSE

Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

*Exeunt.*

Scene 4

*a street. Enter Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, with five or six Maskers; Torch-bearers and others.*

ROMEO

What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse?  
Or shall we on without apology?<sup>40</sup>

BENVOLIO

The date is out of such prolixity:  
We'll have no Cupid hoodwinked with a scarf,  
Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath,  
Scaring the ladies like a crow-keeper;  
Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke  
After the prompter, for our entrance:  
But let them measure us by what they will,  
We'll measure them a measure,<sup>41</sup> 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,  
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  
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.

MERCUTIO

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

ROMEO

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: [*Putting on a mask.*]  
A visor for a visor. What care I  
What curious eye doth quote 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

A torch for me: let wantons, light of heart,  
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels;  
For I am proverbied with a grandsire phrase,  
I'll be a candleholder and look on,  
The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.

MERCUTIO

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 stickest  
Up to the ears. Come, we burn daylight, ho.

---

<sup>40</sup> Romeo and Benvolio are talking about the party that Capulet is hosting, which is a mask. Romeo is asking what speech would be made for their justification ("excuse") in entering the mask. Benvolio answers that the occasion does not call for "prolixity" or a long speech. Benvolio adds to that what else that will not do to give them entrance.

<sup>41</sup> *measure*. Pun on the word *measure*, used three times. Benvolio is saying let the doorkeepers of the mask *measure* or judge us anyway they like—we'll do a dance for them and then be gone.

ROMEO  
Nay, that's not so.

MERCUTIO  
I mean sir, in delay  
We waste our lights in vain, light lights by day.  
Take our good meaning, for our judgment sits  
Five times in that ere once in our five wits.

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

MERCUTIO  
Why, may one ask?

ROMEO  
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  
O, then, I see Queen Mab<sup>42</sup> hath been with you.  
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 atomies  
Over men's noses as they lie asleep:  
Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs;  
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;  
Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;  
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;

Her whip of cricket's bone; the lash, of film;  
Her wagoner, a small grey-coated gnat,  
Not half so big as a round little worm  
Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid:  
Her chariot is an empty hazelnut,  
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,  
Time out o' mind the fairies' coach makers.  
And in this state she gallops night by night  
Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;  
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight;  
O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;  
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;  
And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail,  
Tickling a parson's nose as a lies asleep,  
Then dreams he of another benefice:  
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,  
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,  
Of breaches, ambuscados, Spanish blades,  
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon  
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes;  
And, being thus frightened, swears a prayer or two,  
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab  
That plats the manes of horses in the night;  
And bakes the elf-locks 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,  
Making them women of good carriage<sup>43</sup>:  
This is she,—

ROMEO  
Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace,  
Thou talk'st of nothing.

---

<sup>42</sup> *Queen Mab*. Although the name "Queen Mab" appears after Shakespeare, most notably Shelley's poem, the name does not appear before Shakespeare, and therefore appears to be the bard's own invention. Some, however, say that Shakespeare borrowed the fairy creature from English folklore. Whatever the case, Queen Mab is described in this passage as a sort of tiny fairy that is driven in a coach by a team of "atomies" or little creatures "over men's noses as they sleep." Her magic is to make men dream their various dreams: the lawyer of his money, the ladies of a kiss, the country preacher of his tithe, the soldier of his killing, and lovers of love. Mercutio depicts Mab as a cross between a Puck—the mischievous fairy who causes mishaps—and an incubus.

<sup>43</sup> *carriage*. Mercutio is making a pun on the word *carriage*—meaning either "bearing a child" or "behavior"

MERCUTIO

True, I talk of dreams,  
Which are the children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,  
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 side to the dew-dropping south.

BENVOLIO

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  
With this night's revels; and expire the term  
Of a despised life, closed in my breast  
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.  
But he that hath the steerage of my course  
Direct my suit.<sup>44</sup> On, lusty gentlemen!

BENVOLIO

Strike, drum.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE 5

*a hall in Capulet's house. Musicians waiting. Enter Servants.*

FIRST SERVANT

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

SECOND SERVANT

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

FIRST SERVANT

Away with the join-stools, remove the court-cupboard, look  
to the plate. Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane<sup>45</sup>; and

as thou loves<sup>46</sup> me, let the porter let in Susan Grindstone and  
Nell. Antony and Potpan!

SECOND SERVANT

Ay, boy, ready.

FIRST SERVANT

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

SECOND SERVANT

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

*Exeunt. Enter Capulet, &c. with the Guests and Gentlemen  
to the Maskers.*

CAPULET

Welcome, gentlemen, ladies that have their toes  
Unplagued with corns will have a bout with you.  
Ah my mistresses, which of you all  
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  
That I have worn a visor, and could tell  
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.  
A hall, a hall, give room! And foot it, girls.

*Music plays, and they dance.*

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,  
For you and I are past our dancing days;  
How long is't now since last yourself and I  
Were in a mask?

CAPULET'S COUSIN

By'r Lady, thirty years.

CAPULET

What, man, 'tis not so much, 'tis not so much:

<sup>44</sup> *I fear . . . my suit* Romeo has an evil premonition of his own fate that he thinks will begin with the evening's mask and end with death. He expresses his premonition from the position of a fatalist acknowledging his inability to control his destiny.

<sup>45</sup> *marchpane* a sweet, known today by most Americans as *marzipan*.

<sup>46</sup> *as thou loves me* unusual grammar, as most Londoners would say *as thou lovest* me, perhaps showing that the servant is not genteel.

'Tis since the nuptial of Lucentio,  
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

What lady is that, which doth enrich the hand  
Of yonder knight?

SERVANT

I know not, sir.

ROMEO

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!  
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 blessed my rude hand.  
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.  
Fetch me my rapier, boy. What, dares the slave  
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

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,  
A 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.  
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.

TYBALT

It fits when such a villain is a guest:  
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!  
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! [. . .] 'tis time.  
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.

TYBALT

Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting  
Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.  
I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall,  
Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall.

*Exit.*

ROMEO

*To Juliet*

If I profane with my unworthiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
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' <sup>47</sup> kiss.

ROMEO  
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  
Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.  
Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is purged.  
*Kissing her.*

JULIET  
Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO  
Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!  
Give me my sin again.

JULIET  
You kiss by the book.

NURSE  
Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

ROMEO  
What is her mother?

NURSE  
[ . . . ] bachelor,  
Her mother is the lady of the house,  
And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous.  
I nursed her daughter that you talked withal.

I tell you, he that can lay hold of her  
Shall have the chinks.

ROMEO  
Is she a Capulet?  
O dear account! My life is my foe's debt.

BENVOLIO  
Away, be gone; the sport is at the best.

ROMEO  
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.  
More torches here! Come on then, let's to bed.  
Ah, sirrah, by my fay, it waxes late,  
I'll to my rest.

*Exeunt all but Juliet and Nurse.*

JULIET  
Come hither, nurse. What is yond gentleman?

NURSE  
The son and heir of old Tiberio.

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

NURSE  
[ . . . ] 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,  
My grave is like to be my wedding bed.

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

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<sup>47</sup> *palmer* one who travels to a holy place for special spiritual blessing, called such as these pilgrims would take palms.

JULIET

My only love sprung from my only hate!  
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!  
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,  
That I must love a loathed 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.*