



ROMEO & JULIET

by
William
Shakespeare

CHARACTERS

MONTAGUE HOUSE

- **Romeo** – the young son of Lord and Lady Montague, who is prone to falling deeply in love.
- **Lord Montague** – the head of the Montague family and a bitter enemy of the Lord Capulet.
- **Lady Montague** – Lord Montague's wife.
- **Friar Lawrence** – a priest who has expertise in potions and herbs, and a friend of Romeo
- **Mercutio** – a young party animal, Romeo's close friend, and a relative of the Prince.
- **Benvolio** – Romeo's cousin and friend. He often tries to smooth over potential conflicts.
- **Balthasar** – Romeo's personal servant.
- **Abram** – A servant of the Montagues.

CAPULET HOUSE

- **Juliet** – the only child of Lord and Lady Capulet, who is almost at the age of marriage.
- **Lord Capulet** – the head of the Capulet family, who is eager to find a good match for Juliet.
- **Lady Capulet** – Lord Capulet's wife, who relies on Nurse to raise her daughter for her.
- **The Nurse** – the dim-witted nursemaid who raised Juliet.
- **Tybalt** – Juliet's cousin. He thinks highly of himself and is quick to anger.
- **Count Paris** – a relative of the Prince. He wants to marry Juliet.
- **Cousin** – Lord Capulet's elderly cousin.
- **Page** – the Count's pageboy.
- **Sampson & Gregory** – Two servants of the Capulets.
- **Peter** – the head servant of the Capulets. He is illiterate and a bad singer.

OTHERS

- **Prince Escalus** – the ruler of Verona. He is in charge of the city's law and order.
- **Friar John** – another priest.
- **The Pharmacist** – a dealer of herbs and potions in the nearby city of Mantua.
- **Rosaline** – the woman that Romeo is in love with at the start of the play. We never see her.
- Assorted **Servants, Musicians, and Policemen**

ACT 1, PROLOGUE

NARRATOR

Our story takes place in the breathtaking Italian city of Verona, where two similar households stand against one other in a bitter feud. Fresh violence will emerge from this ancient grudge and even bloody the hands of bystanders. The children of these two feuding families will become star-crossed lovers and eventually take their own lives. And it is due to this tragedy that the hatred between the families will finally end. So we will watch this tragedy unfold, the way this adolescent love blossoms, the way the fury of their parents escalates, and the end that can only come with devastating death. Watch and listen, and you shall see all this come true.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

SAMPSON and GREGORY, two servants of the powerful Capulet family, walk the streets of Verona early in the morning while wielding swords and shields.

SAMPSON

I'm telling you, Gregory, I swear to God, I'm not going to be taking anyone's crap.

GREGORY

Ha, like plumbers?

SAMPSON

(Annoyed) No, listen! If they upset us we'll draw our swords.

GREGORY

Nah, wouldn't it better to just stay out of trouble?

SAMPSON

No one can beat me when I'm angry.

GREGORY

(Sarcastic) Oh yes, lucky it's difficult to make you angry...

SAMPSON

Unless it's one of those Montague dogs. They always make me angry.

GREGORY

You'll get so angry and brave that the emotions will become too much and you'll run away!

SAMPSON

(Ignoring Sampson's insult) A Montague dog will make me stand my ground. If I see them in the street I won't step out of their way, they'll have to walk in the gutter.

GREGORY

You're weak. You're a slave. You'll hug the wall like the weakling you are so they can pass.

SAMPSON

That's true. Women get pushed up against walls because they're so weak. Therefore I will push the Montague men into the street and then thrust their women up against the wall, if you know what I mean.

GREGORY

Keep the women out of it. The feud is between our masters and the men.

SAMPSON

It's the same thing. I will be a monster. When I have fought the men, I will then play nice with the maids. I'll cut off their heads.

GREGORY

You mean you'll take their virginity?

SAMPSON

One or the other – heads or virginity. Take it however you like.

GREGORY

It's the women who'll take it though, isn't it?

SAMPSON

They'll feel me for as long as I can last. It's well-known how good my meat is.

GREGORY Red met? Lucky you're not fish. If you were, you'd be a shrivelled up piece of flake.

ABRAM, a servant of the Montagues, can be seen at the other end of the street with another servant.

GREGORY Whip your tool out! Here come some Montague servants.

SAMPSON My sword is out. Fight them, Gregory, I've got your back...

GREGORY How? By turning your back and running away?

SAMPSON Don't be afraid for me.

GREGORY No, listen, I am afraid for you.

SAMPSON Just... hang on, we'll let them start the fight so we can't get in trouble from the law.

GREGORY I'll stare them down as we walk past. Watch how they react.

SAMPSON That won't be enough. I'll give them the finger. If they don't react then it means they're weak.

SAMPSON gives them the finger.

ABRAM Did you just give us the finger?

SAMPSON Yeah. I did give you the finger.

ABRAM *(Getting angrier)* Did you give us the finger?

SAMPSON *(To GREGORY, quietly)* If I say 'yes' again will the law still be on our side?

GREGORY *(To SAMPSON, quietly)* Nah.

SAMPSON *(To ABRAM)* Uh, no, I wasn't giving you the finger. I was just sticking my finger up in general.

GREGORY *(Also to ABRAM)* Do you want to make a fight out of it?

ABRAM A fight? No. Of Course not.

SAMPSON If you *did* want to fight, then I'm ready. My master is as good as yours.

ABRAM But not better.

SAMPSON Uh...

BENVOLIO, the nephew of Lord Montague, arrives on the street. GREGORY sees him.

GREGORY *(Quietly, to SAMPSON)* Say "better". Benvolio is coming and he'll back you up.

SAMPSON *(Loudly)* He is better.

ABRAM Liar.

SAMPSON Be a man and pull out your sword. Get ready, Gregory!

They fight. BENVOLIO rushes over and pulls out his sword as well.

BENVOLIO Cut it out, you idiots! Put your swords away. Are you stupid?

TYBALT, a Capulet, arrives on the street behind BENVOLIO.

TYBALT What's all this, you're going to fight with some pathetic servants? Turn around Benvolio - look upon your death!

BENVOLIO *(Turning around)* I'm actually trying to keep the peace. Put your sword away or help me break this fight up.

TYBALT Bullshit. Who talks of peace while they have their sword drawn? Peace? I hate the word. I hate lots of things... hell, Montagues, and you. Come at me, coward!

BENVOLIO and TYBALT strike their swords against each other, fighting the streets alongside their servants.

Three POLICEMEN arrive on the scene, holding clubs and barbed spears.

POLICEMAN Use your clubs and spears, men! Strike them. Beat them down onto the ground. Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

Lord CAPULET, wearing his pyjamas, comes running down onto the street with his wife, LADY CAPULET.

CAPULET What's all this commotion? Someone bring me my longsword!

LADY CAPULET A sword? You need crutches, not a sword!

Old Lord MONTAGUE arrives with his sword already drawn, with his wife LADY MONTAGUE by his side.

CAPULET My sword! Someone bring me my sword! Old Montague, you bastard, you've only drawn your sword to spite me!

MONTAGUE *(With LADY MONTAGUE holding him back)* Capulet, you criminal... *(To his wife)* Stop holding me back! Let me go!

LADY MONTAGUE Stop it, you're not going anywhere near him or any other enemy.

PRINCE ESCALUS, the ruler of Verona, arrives with his entourage of servants and soldiers, and starts shouting at the fighting Montagues and Capulets.

PRINCE Hooligans, you're disturbing the peace! Stop attacking your fellow citizens. Listen to me! Why aren't you listening? You men are acting like animals. You'll put out the fire of your anger with the blood of each other's veins. If you don't throw your weapons down now I'll have you all tortured! Listen to your Prince!

MONTAGUE, CAPULET, and all their followers throw down their weapons.

PRINCE Capulet and Montague, this is the third time a riot has broken out because of you two old men. Three times you've turned our quiet streets into a place of

violence, and the good citizens of Verona have had to pick up spears just to break it up. I'm talking about old men having to wave clubs in their old hands despite their arthritis. So listen to me, if you ever disturb our streets again then you'll pay for it with your lives. Everyone – go home. *(To CAPULET)* You, Capulet, come with me to Freetown now. *(To MONTAGUE)* And you, Montague, come see me this afternoon. I'll pass judgement on your both. *(Noticing that no one has left)* Once again, on pain of death, everyone go home.

Everyone leaves. The PRINCE leaves with CAPULET, leaving behind just MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and BENVOLIO.

MONTAGUE *(To BENVOLIO)* Nephew, who re-started this old feud just now? Tell me. Where you here when it began?

BENVOLIO Capulet's servants started it. They were already fighting when I got here so I drew my sword and tried to break it up. Then, in an instant, Tybalt came in like a fireball with his sword out too. He wouldn't listen to me, just put his defiance in my ears, waving his word about and cutting the air with it. I fought him and then more and more people came and joined in. Until the Prince showed up and stopped it all.

LADY MONTAGUE And where is Romeo? Have you seen him today? At least he didn't get involved in this.

BENVOLIO I've been awake since before the sun came up. Just walking around and thinking about things. I've been troubled. I went to the West Side to where the Sycamore trees grow and I saw your son there. I tried to go to him but when he saw me coming he ran into the forest. I thought maybe he was feeling troubled like me and just wanted to be alone. I can understand that. I kept to myself and let him keep to himself too.

LADY MONTAGUE Yes, he goes there early every morning at the moment in the dark, crying his tears into the morning dew on the grass. He's so depressed he makes an already cloudy day even cloudier. But then the sun comes up and it's too cheerful for him, so he comes home to hide in his room from the daylight. He locks himself in there, shuts up his windows, keeps out the sun – makes the day into an artificial night time. Unless someone can talk some sense into him then I feel like his dark mood may lead to bad things.

BENVOLIO *(To Montague)* My noble uncle, do you know what has caused this?

MONTAGUE I don't know. He won't talk to me about it.

BENVOLIO How hard have you tried?

MONTAGUE I've tried. So have all our friends. But he keeps his feelings to himself. Secretive and alone. Rather than discussing how he feels he's just like a worm-ridden flower bud – unable to open because his sadness holds him closed like a parasite. If I could find out where his sadness comes from then I might be able to help him.

ROMEO arrives from the other end of the street.

BENVOLIO Here he comes now. If it's okay, let me talk to him. He'll confide in me. Maybe.

MONTAGUE *(Nodding)* I hope so. *(To his wife)* Come on, let's go home.

MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE exit.

BENVOLIO Good morning, cousin.

ROMEO It's still morning?

BENVOLIO Yeah. It's only nine.

ROMEO Ay. Sad hours seem so long. Was that my father who just left so quickly?

BENVOLIO Yeah, it was. What's making your days so sad and long, Romeo?

ROMEO Not having the thing that would make them feel short.

BENVOLIO Ah... I see. You're in love?

ROMEO Out.

BENVOLIO Out of love?

ROMEO Out of her favour. She doesn't love me like I love her.

BENVOLIO Ah, yes, that kind of love – it seems so gentle when you see it, but when you actually experience it yourself then it's a brutal and rough time.

ROMEO It's sad. Love is meant to be blind and yet it can control you. Perhaps we should go and get some breakfast.

ROMEO notices blood on the street.

ROMEO What the... what happened here? Hang on, don't tell me, I've heard it all before. Another fight based on hate but probably even more so based on love. Fighting for love. Loving to hate. It's ridiculous. Depressing and passionate, fools who take themselves too seriously, so much chaos from those who should just feel happy for being beautiful. Love is like... feathers and lead, brightness and smoke, the freezing cold and the burning fire, both sickness and health. Walking around while feeling asleep. Such confusion. This is how I feel... I'm in love and she doesn't love me back. Why are you laughing?

BENVOLIO No, cousin, I'm crying.

ROMEO Oh, my good friend... what for?

BENVOLIO At your poor broken heart.

ROMEO Benvolio, this is how love is. My depression is so heavy in my chest and yet you want to add to it with your own? I can't have any more sadness added to this - your sympathy has only made me sadder. Love is a smoke that comes from our sighing – and when the smoke blows away you can see the fire sparkling in your lover's eyes. And when it frustrates you? Well, then you drown in your own sea of loving tears. You know what love is? It's a clever form of mental illness. It chokes you and it preserves you. Anyway, I'll catch up with you later.

BENVOLIO Hang on, I'll come with you. You can't make me this depressed and then just leave me here.

ROMEO I'm lost, cousin. I'm not Romeo anymore – he's somewhere else.

BENVOLIO Listen, since you're so sad anyway, just tell me who it is that you love.

ROMEO What? Should I complain some more?

BENVOLIO Complain? No, it's not complaining. Tell me who.

ROMEO I'm too sick. You ask too much of me... it's just making me even more ill. Cousin, I love a woman.

BENVOLIO Well, yes, I kind of figured that out.

ROMEO You guessed right! And she's beautiful.

BENVOLIO Romeo, the beautiful ones are always the first to get noticed.

ROMEO Well, you're wrong actually. She doesn't want to be noticed. She's resisting Cupid's arrow and wears an armour of chastity - it shields her from the weak and childish arrows of love. She can't be worn down by smooth words, she won't make eye contact with loving eyes, she won't let golden gifts be placed in her lap. Oh Benvolio! She's rich in beauty but she's also poor – because when she dies her beauty will die with her.

BENVOLIO Do you mean that's promised to never give up her virginity?

ROMEO She has! What a waste. Such beauty is pointless in a virgin – it means she'll never pass her beauty on to future generations because she'll never have children. She's so beautiful, so smart... and I'm miserable. She's refusing to love anyone and so I am like the living dead. I live only to talk about my misery.

BENVOLIO Listen, you need to forget about her.

ROMEO Oh yeah? Teach me how to forget to think.

BENVOLIO It's easy – give your eyes the freedom to wander and look at other girls.

ROMEO And that will just make me compare them to her and I'll think more about how beautiful *she* is. The beautiful women in this city wear black masks but by covering up their faces it only makes us think about how beautiful they must be underneath. And a man who has been struck blind will never forget how precious it was to once see. What point does her beauty serve? It's like a note that tells me the kind of beauty I should be looking for. So... goodbye Benvolio. You can't teach me how to forget.

BENVOLIO You know what? I *will* teach you how to forget, or I'll at least die trying.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

CAPULET walks the streets of Verona with PARIS (a Count) and PETER (a servant)

CAPULET ...but Montague has promised to follow the same laws as me, and will be punished in the same way if he breaks them. It won't be too difficult for old men like us to keep the peace.

PARIS You are both honourable men. It's a pity you and him have been locked in this feud for so long. But anyway, my Lord, what do you say to my request?

CAPULET Well, I'll say again what I've said before – my daughter is very young, she's not even fourteen years old. Let's wait two more years before we start thinking about her as a bride.

PARIS Younger girls than her have become happy mothers.

CAPULET It's too soon for her to marry, she's much too young to become a woman. This world has taken away all my hopes but at least I still have her. I look at her and think about the future of my family. Paris, you are a gentleman though, so I give you permission to woo her and win her heart. If she decides she wants to marry you then I will agree – it's her choice. Tonight I'm having a big feast and there will be many guests; all my best friends and family. Please, join us tonight at my humble house and you'll see a great party, you'll see women who shine so bright like stars that they light up the dark night. You'll enjoy watching all the young women... you'll be delighted. It will be like a spring garden of young flowers and you can pick any one of them. And the one you like most might not be my daughter. Let's go to my place.

CAPULET hands PETER a paper.

CAPULET Boy, go walking all over Verona and find the people on this list. Invite them to my house for the party tonight.

CAPULET and PARIS leave.

PETER *(To himself)* Find all the people on this list? Does it say that shoemakers should make clothes, that tailors should make shoes, that fisherman should draw, that painters should cast nets into the water? I've been sent to find all the people on this list... but I can't read! I'll never find any of these people. What will I do? *(He notices someone coming)* These men look educated... they'll save me.

BENVOLIO and ROMEO approach PETER.

BENVOLIO *(To ROMEO)* Come on, man, start a new fire to put out the old one. If you fall in love again then the pain of this new love will help you forget the old one. A new girl will start a new infection in your eye, and the old poison will die as a result.

ROMEO *(Not really getting BENVOLIO's point)* I hear banana leaves are excellent for that.

BENVOLIO What are you talking about?

ROMEO Banana leaves – they're good for when you have infections and grazes.

BENVOLIO You're crazy.

ROMEO No, I'm not crazy, but I feel like I'm getting there. I'm shut up in a prison without food. Whipped and tormented. *(Noticing PETER)* Good evening, my friend.

PETER God bless you, sir, and excuse me. Can you read?

ROMEO Ay, I can read my own future and it's miserable.

PETER Perhaps you've learned how to read without any lessons. Please, I must ask, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO *(Sarcastically)* Ay, if I recognise the letters and what language it's in.

PETER *(Not realising that ROMEO is joking)* Oh. Well, at least you're honest. Have a good day.

ROMEO Stay, stay... I can read. *(He reads the list)* "Signor Martino and his wife and daughters. Count Anselme and his beautiful sisters. Widow Vitruvio. Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces. Mercutio and his brother Valentine. My uncle Capulet and his wife and daughters. My nieces Rosaline and Livia. Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt. Lucio and the party-girl Helena". That's a good list. Where are they going?

PETER *(Motioning up the street)* Up.

ROMEO Where? To dinner?

PETER To our house.

ROMEO Whose house?

PETER My master's.

ROMEO Yes. I guess I should have asked that first – who is your master?

PETER The great and rich Lord Capulet. As long as you're not with the house of Montague then please come along and drink some booze. Have a good day and be happy!

PETER leaves.

BENVOLIO At this Capulet party – the one they have every year – you will see your Rosaline, the one you love so deeply. All the most admired and beautiful girls of Verona will be there. You should go there and check out all these women – I'll show you ones you can measure against your love. You'll realise that Rosaline looks like a cow in comparison.

ROMEO I'll never see it. And if I did, then my tears would turn to fire and burn my eyes out for lying to me. Someone more beautiful than my love? No one in all of history has ever been as beautiful as her.

BENVOLIO Ah yes, but you only thought she was that beautiful because you hadn't seen any of the other girls yet. Wait until this party – I'll show you a girl who shines even brighter and you'll stop thinking your lady is the best.

ROMEO I'll go the party. But not because I believe what you say... I want to admire my lady again.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

LADY CAPULET and a NURSE are in the Capulet House.

LADY CAPULET Nurse, where's my daughter? Go and get her.

NURSE I swear on my virginity, as lost at age twelve, that I already told her to come. *(Calling out to Juliet)* Little lamb! Little ladybird! Goddammit, where is she? Juliet!

JULIET comes into the room.

JULIET What? Who wants me?

NURSE Your mother.

JULIET Madam, I am here. What's the matter?

LADY CAPULET The matter? (*To the Nurse*) Nurse, leave us for a while, I need to speak to Juliet in secret. Wait. Nurse, come back. You can stay and listen, you know my daughter is very young.

NURSE Trust me, I could tell you her age to the hour.

LADY CAPULET She's not fourteen yet.

NURSE I'll bet fourteen of my teeth – hang on, I've only got four teeth, actually – but I'd still bet them on my ability to tell her age. You're right, she's not fourteen yet. How long until her birthday on Lammas Eve?

LADY CAPULET A fortnight and a couple of days.

NURSE "A couple of days" – you know exactly how far away it is. On Lammas Eve she will be fourteen. My Susan – God rest all Christian souls – and Juliet were born on the same day. Well, Susan is with God, she was too good for me. But, as I said, on Lammas Eve your Juliet shall be fourteen. Yes, she will! Eleven years ago that earthquake struck and I stopped breastfeeding Juliet – I never shall forget it, of all the days of the year, it was on Lammas Eve. I put wormwood herb on my boob, I was sitting in the sun near the dovehouse. You and Lord Capulet were at Mantua and – yes, I remember! When Juliet tasted the wormwood on the nipple and realised how bitter it was, ha! She was a pretty little thing with a silly, scrunched up face, and she just about fell off my boob! Then the earthquake shook that dovehouse and I knew to get right out of there. And now it's been eleven years and she could already walk around on her back then. She could run and waddle around, and had grazed her head just the day before. My husband – God rest his soul, he was such a happy man – picked her up. "Oh", he said, "Did you just fall on your little head? When you're older you should fall backwards to avoid injuring yourself, won't you, Juliet?" And I swear to God, the little thing waddled off crying and stopped to say "Yeah". It was very funny. I won't ever forget it, "Won't you, Juliet", and she said "Yeah".

LADY CAPULET Oh... that's enough. Be quiet now, please.

NURSE Yes, madam. I can't stop laughing though. To think of her stopping her crying to say "Yeah". And yet, I swear, she had a huge bump on her head as big as rooster's scrotum. It was a hard knock, and she cried so hard. "Oh", said my husband, "Did you just fall on your little head? When you're older you should fall backwards to avoid injuring yourself, won't you, Juliet?" and she stopped to just say "Yeah".

JULIET And now you should stop too *please*, Nurse.

NURSE Okay! I'm done. God bless you, Juliet. You were the prettiest baby that I ever nursed. If I live to see you married one day then it will be my greatest wish come true.

LADY CAPULET Funny you should say that, as marriage is the very thing I've come to talk about. Tell me, my daughter Juliet, what do you think of the idea of marriage?

JULIET It would be an honour. But I don't dare dream of it.

NURSE "An honour?" If I didn't know better, I'd say that you'd sucked wisdom straight from the breast that fed you as a baby!

LADY CAPULET Well, you can think about marriage now. There are rich girls in Verona even younger than you that have already become mothers. If I remember correctly, I was your age when I had you. And yet here you are, still a virgin. Anyway. I'll be brief: the determined Paris wants to marry you.

NURSE Oh my! A great man, young lady. Perhaps the greatest man in the world. As perfect as a wax sculpture.

LADY CAPULET There are no flowers in the Verona summer as handsome as him.

NURSE Oh yes, he's quite a flower.

LADY CAPULET *(To JULIET)* What do you think? Can you love this fine gentleman? Tonight you shall see him at our party. Look very closely over Paris's young face and find happiness written on there with beauty's pen. Examine every line of his face and how they join up to make a handsome man. And if you're not sure then look closely into his eyes and you'll see love there, the love of a man whose only fault is that he isn't married yet. Anyone who married him would share his beauty through their association with him. If you married him, you would also share everything he owns. By having him, you would everything you could ever need.

NURSE Everything? No, you'd have even more. You'd get pregnant!

LADY CAPULET *(To Juliet)* Tell me quickly. Do you think you could love Paris?

JULIET I'll look at him to see if I like him. But I'll also make sure I don't fall in love too deeply so that I can wait for your permission before I do anything.

Enter PETER, the servant.

PETER My lady - the guests have arrived, supper is served, people are calling for you, people are asking after Juliet, and people in the kitchen are complaining about the Nurse. Everything is going wrong and I must get back to the supper to wait on the guests. Please, my Lady, follow me back!

LADY CAPULET We'll follow you. Juliet, Count Paris is waiting for you.

NURSE Go, Juliet, and maybe in your future he'll give you have happy nights at the end of happy days.

They all leave to go downstairs.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

ROMEO, MERCUTIO, and BENVOLIO arrive outside the Capulet house disguised as dancers alongside five or six other masked dancers, torchbearers, and a drummer.

ROMEO How are we going to talk our way into this party? Or should we just walk in without saying anything?

BENVOLIO People don't bother to talk their way into parties anymore. It's not like we're going to announce that we're here by dressing up as Cupid with a bow and arrow and scaring the ladies like we're a scarecrow. Or would you like to prepare a special speech to announce that you're here? No, Romeo, just let them think whatever they like. We'll dance a bit and then we'll head off.

ROMEO *(Not impressed with BENVOLIO's advice)* Give me one of the torches. I'm not a dancer, I'm too sad still. Just let me carry the light.

MERCUTIO Nah, c'mon Romeo, you have to dance.

ROMEO No, no, I mean it... you have dancing shoes with proper soles. I have a soul of lead that weighs me down so much that I cannot move.

MERCUTIO You're a lover. Borrow Cupid's wings and you will fly higher than the average man.

ROMEO No, Cupid's arrow has pierced me too violently for me to soar with his light feathers and so I'm stuck here on the ground. I'm so depressed that I can't even jump a little. Under love's heavy weight I'm sinking into the ground.

MERCUTIO Don't drag love down with you. Love is too tender and great for that.

ROMEO Is love really tender, though? It feels rough to me. It's rude, it's loud, and it pricks into me like a thorn.

MERCUTIO You know, if love is being rough with you then maybe you should be a little rough with love, ay? If love pricks you then you should prick it back, and beat it down. Someone give me a mask to put over my other mask. I couldn't care less if someone thinks I'm ugly. Check out my big bushy eyebrows *(MERCUTIO puts on an outrageous mask)*.

ROMEO and BENVOLIO put their masks on as well.

BENVOLIO C'mon, let's go in – let's get dancing!

ROMEO Just give me the torch. Let those who feel happy be the ones who tickle the dancefloor with their feet. As for me? Remember the old saying – if I don't play the game then I simply can't lose. I'll hold my torch and just watch.

MERCUTIO Man, you are bringing us all down. We'll pull you out of the muck you're wallowing in – but only because we love you, Romeo. You're up to your ears in depressing crap. C'mon, we're burning daylight, let's go!

BENVOLIO That just isn't true – it's night-time.

MERCUTIO My friend, I just mean that we're wasting the light of these torches. Stop trying to be so clever and just pay attention.

ROMEO We're trying to be clever by crashing this party, but I'm not sure it's the best idea.

MERCUTIO Can I ask why?

ROMEO I had a dream last night.

MERCUTIO Yeah? So did I.

ROMEO Well, what was yours?

MERCUTIO In my dream I was told that dreamers often lie...

ROMEO Yes, they lie asleep in bed while they dream about the truth of things.

MERCUTIO Oh, right, I think you've been sleeping with Mistress Mab.

ROMEO Mistress Mab? Who's that?

MERCUTIO She delivers the babies of fairies and she's tiny, like the size of a stone in a ring. She drives around in a carriage drawn by a team of little atoms, so small that she drives over the noses of men while they sleep. The wheels have spokes made of spider's legs, the roof is made from grasshopper wings, the atoms are harnessed with spider's web and moonshine beams, and Mistress Mab has a whip made out of cricket's bone. The driver is a small gray-coated gnat about half the size of a worm that crawled out of the finger of a lazy little girl.

ROMEO looks confused while BENVOLIO laughs.

MERCUTIO Her chariot is an empty hazelnut shell that's been put together by a squirrel-carpenter or an old grub. They make carriages for fairies all the time. Anyway, Mistress Mab gallops night by night through the brains of lovers and makes them dream of love. She drives over the knees of rich young women and they dream all night of doing curtsies. She drives over the fingers of lawyers and they dream about money. She drives over the lips of women and they dream of kissing. Mistress Mab gets so angry that she puts blisters and sores on their lips, and this is because she is jealous of how sweet their breaths are. Sometimes she gallops over a young rich man's nose, and then he'll dream of conning someone out of money. Other times, she get the pet pig of a priest and use its tail to tickle someone's nose while he sleeps and he'll then dream of giving the priest some money. She'll then drive over a soldier's neck and he have dreams about cutting the throats of his enemies – breaking through castle walls, ambushing foreign warriors, fighting against the Spanish with their sparkling swords, and then getting incredibly drunk. Then, drums will beat in the soldier's ear and he'll suddenly wake up, and he'll be so frightened that he says a desperate prayer to God before he'll go back to sleep. This is the same Mab that takes the hair out of the manes of horses and tangles them up in the hairs of slutty women, and if they untangle their hair they'll then have bad luck. Mab is an awful old hag who makes virgins have sex dreams where they can learn how to make babies. Mab is the one who...

ROMEO Okay, okay! Mercutio, shut up, you're talking absolute nonsense.

MERCUTIO Yes, I'm talking about dreams, which are the nonsense that brains make when they have nothing to do. Dreams are just silly fantasies – they have no substance or worth. Dreams are like the wind – they'll blow whatever way they like and they aren't predictable.

BENVOLIO Yeah, like the wind that is blowing us away from this party right now. Supper is over and by the time we get inside we'll be too late.

ROMEO We don't want to be too early. What if this party brings us nothing but bad luck? I just had a dark thought – what if something about this night's partying leads to my death? Fate will probably steer me into even more misfortune. I guess I can't do anything about it, can I? After you, my eager friends!

BENVOLIO (To the drummer) Strike the drum.

The drummer starts playing the drum and the dancers all enter the Capulet house.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

The dining hall of the Capulet house. PETER and some other SERVANTS come in with some napkins.

PETER Where's Potpan? He should be here helping us to clear the table and clean the plates!

FIRST SERVANT Even those with good manners still made a huge mess here.

PETER Take away the stools, remove all the plates and cutlery. (To the *SECOND SERVANT*) You, be a good man and save me a piece of marzipan, and get the doorkeeper to let Susan Grindstone and Nell back into the kitchen. Where are the others? Antony! Potpan!

SECOND SERVANT Ay, I'll go.

PETER (To the *FIRST SERVANT*) They've been calling for you in the great chamber.

FIRST SERVANT We can't be here and there at the same time. C'mon, boys, we'll work quickly and whoever's left alive at the end can have everyone's wages.

PETER and the SERVANTS leave.

LORD CAPULET enters with TYBALT, LADY CAPULET, JULIET, his COUSIN, and other members of the house. ROMEO, BENVOLIO, and MERCUTIO are on the other side of the room with the masked dancers.

CAPULET Welcome, gentlemen! There are many ladies here to dance with. (Calling to the women around him) Which of you has no corns on your feet? Perhaps you can dance with these newcomers... don't be shy now, I'll tell everyone you have disgusting corns on your feet! You don't want me saying that, do you? Again, welcome, gentlemen! I remember the days when I wore a mask and whispered things in the ears of beautiful ladies. Ah, those days are behind me now. Anyway, welcome to the party. (Calling out) Music! (Musicians begin to play) Make room in the hall! Make room! C'mon girls, start dancing. (To some nearby SERVANTS) Light more torches, you idiots. Get rid of these tables and put the fireplace out so it doesn't get too hot.

LORD CAPULET turns to his COUSIN.

CAPULET Ah-ha, see how much fun this is? No, no, I don't expect you to dance, take a seat with me – we're past our dancing days. How long ago was it since yourself and I wore masks?

COUSIN (Thinking) Hmmm, must be thirty years.

CAPULET What? No, it can't be that long. Last time was Lucentio's wedding. The years can go by as fast as they like but I tell you, it was more like twenty-five years ago when we last wore masks.

COUSIN It was more than that. Lucentio's son is at least thirty years old now.

CAPULET Oh, don't say that. I feel like his son was still a boy just two years ago.

Meanwhile, ROMEO grabs a passing SERVANT by the arm.

ROMEO Hey, who's that lady holding the hand of that knight over there?

FIRST SERVANT I don't know, sir.

ROMEO She... She shows the torches how to burn brightly. She lights up the night like a sparkling jewel against the cheek of a rich African. Her beauty is too much for this Earth, amongst all these other women she is a snow-white dove amongst a pack of drab crows. When this dance is done, I'll watch where she goes, and I'll brush my ugly hand against her beautiful wrist. Did my heart ever truly love before now? My eyes have lied to me all my life – I've never seen true beauty until tonight.

TYBALT *(Overhearing ROMEO and thinking aloud to himself quietly)* This man, by his voice, I can tell that he is a Montague. *(To his PAGE)* Fetch me sword, boy. *(The PAGE runs off)* How can this street-rat dare to come here with his face covered by a mask, laughing at us all behind his disguise. By the honour of my family, it would not be a crime for me to strike him dead right here.

CAPULET What's wrong, nephew? What are you storming about?

TYBALT *(Pointing to ROMEO who is now on the other side of the room)* Uncle, that man is a Montague – our sworn enemy. This bastard has come here to mock our party.

CAPULET Possibly young Romeo?

TYBALT Yes, of course, it's Romeo.

CAPULET Calm down, nephew. Let him be. He looks like a gentleman and, to be honest, he has a reputation all over Verona as an honest and well-behaved young man. I wouldn't risk my honour by attacking him in my own house, not for all the money in this city. Be patient and ignore him. If you respect you'll do as I say and at least try to look like you're having a good time. Smile, it's a party.

TYBALT Smile? How can I smile when a villain such as Romeo walks through our house. I won't have it.

CAPULET You *will* have it. You think you're the man of this house? What I say here, goes. Am I master here or you? You won't have it? Goddammit, you'll start a riot among my guests and spoil this party. If there's any trouble then I'll be blaming you.

TYBALT Uncle, he's disrespecting us!

CAPULET Keep talking, you're just showing me how defiant you are. Is this really how you want to play it? Why must you argue with me? I'll show you... *(Calling to the other GUESTS to get their attention)* Well done, my dear friends, it must be time for some dancing. *(To TYBALT)* You cocky little brat. Get out of here and shut your mouth. *(To the SERVANTS)* More light, more light! *(To TYBALT)* You're the one who's being disrespectful. *(To the GUESTS)* Let's have some fun, my friends!

The music plays again and the guests begin to dance.

TYBALT Patient and fury do not go together. My flesh trembles because they refuse to mix. I shall leave, but Romeo's intrusion here, which seems sweet now, will turn to the bitterest acid later.

TYBALT leaves.

ROMEO *(Taking JULIET's hand)* You are so sacred that I'm committing blasphemy just by touching you with my unworthy hand. But here, imagine my lips are like two good little blushing Christians, ready to make things better with a tender kiss.

JULIET Good Christian, you shouldn't be so harsh on your hand. Your touch is quite gentle and no worse than the way a Christian might've reached out to grasp the hand of a saint. Your palm and my palm touch now like a holy kiss.

ROMEO Don't saints have lips? Christians have lips too.

JULIET Ay, *Christian*, but you should be using those lips to speak a prayer.

ROMEO Okay, then, dear saint, I'm praying for you to kiss me. Please make my prayers come true, or I'll despair.

JULIET Saints might make prayers come true but most saints now are statues. Statues don't move.

ROMEO Then don't move, and I'll follow my prayer...

ROMEO kisses JULIET.

ROMEO And now from my lips, thanks to you, all my sins are gone.

JULIET So your sins are now on my lips?

ROMEO Sins on your lips? Oh, you want me to be bad... give it back to me then.

They kiss again.

JULIET You kiss a little *too* well.

NURSE comes over.

NURSE Madam, your mother needs to speak to you.

JULIET goes away towards LADY CAPULET.

ROMEO Who's her mother?

NURSE Ha, young man, her mother is the lady of the house! She is a good lady; very wise and with high standards. That girl you were just talking to – I'm the one who nursed her. And I can tell you, the man that marries her will be very well off.

ROMEO *(In shock, quietly to himself)* She's a Capulet? What have I done... she's my sworn enemy.

BENVOLIO *(Coming over to ROMEO)* Hey, let's get out of here while the party is still at its height.

ROMEO

Ay, good idea. I think I've just done something very bad.

Lord CAPULET notices them making for the door and comes over quickly.

CAPULET

No, no, gentlemen, don't go yet. We haven't had any dessert yet. *(Realising that he hasn't convinced them to stay)* Okay then, well, thanks for coming. Good night! I'll get some more torches so you can see your way out. *(To his COUSIN)* Perhaps I should head to bed too? It's getting late and I need to rest.

All the guests begin to leave, except for JULIET and NURSE.

JULIET

Come here, Nurse. Who was that gentleman?

NURSE

(Looking at the wrong person) That's old Tiberio's son.

JULIET

No, not him, the one who's going out the door right now.

NURSE

(Looking at another wrong person) Hmm, I think that might be young Petruccio.

JULIET

And what about *that one*? The other one going out the door? The one who wouldn't dance.

NURSE

I don't... I don't actually now.

JULIET

Go ask him.

NURSE runs over to catch ROMEO as he leaves.

JULIET

(To herself quietly) If he's already married then I might as well be dead.

NURSE rushes back over.

ROMEO

His name is Romeo. Of the Montague House. The only son of your family's greatest enemy.

JULIET

(To herself) I've fallen in love and he's the son of the only man I hate! If I had known who he was... but it's too late! Love is a monstrous thing for making me love my most hated enemy.

NURSE

What are you talking about?

JULIET

(Realising NURSE could hear some of what she has just said) Uh, just a quote I learned from someone tonight.

LADY CAPULET calls for JULIET from offstage.

NURSE

Okay, okay. C'mon, let's go, the party is over.

They leave the dining hall and head upstairs.

ACT 2, PROLOGUE

NARRATOR

The desire in Romeo's broken heart is finally dying and a new affection is looking to move in. Romeo, oh he said he would die because the beautiful Rosaline had no interest in him, but now that he's met Juliet he no longer cares for his previous love. This time, Romeo is loved by someone else and he loves them in return. Both are attracted to the other. But yet, this is his greatest enemy so how can he woo her? And Juliet should be afraid of this man that she loves. The situation they find themselves in means that they cannot see one another the way that normal lovers would. But their passion is so powerful, and a happy coincidence will let them meet, and their desire for one another is strong that they'll risk the danger.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

It is night, in the streets outside the Capulet house. ROMEO is alone.

ROMEO

How can I leave when my heart is still here? I must go back to find my love again.

ROMEO walks off into the bushes. BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO come looking for him.

BENVOLIO

(Calling) Romeo. Cousin. Romeo. *Romeo!*

MERCUTIO

He's not an idiot. He's probably just gone home and gone to bed.

BENVOLIO

Nah, he went this way and jumped over the orchard wall. Call him.

MERCUTIO

(Sarcastically) Yeah, I'll conjure him up out of thin air. *(He calls)* Romeo! You crazy fool! Make some kind of sound if you can hear me. *(He waits)* Like, just say "Hey", or give me a bit of rhyming, like "Love" and "Dove". I bet you're praying to Venus.

BENVOLIO

Venus?

MERCUTIO

Yeah, Venus – the ancient Goddess of Love. Romeo! Say 'Cupid'. *(To Benvolio)* That's Venus's blind son, he shoots arrows that force people to love randomly.

MERCUTIO listens and hears nothing.

MERCUTIO

He can't hear me. I can't even hear those bushes moving. He's a dumb ape. *(Calling)* Romeo, Rosaline is here with her bright eyes and beautiful forehead and her scarlet lips. She has lovely legs and her thighs are quivering for you. If you know what's good for you you'll come back out here and show yourself to us.

BENVOLIO

Are you trying to make him angry?

MERCUTIO

Why would he get angry? It's not like she's out here having sex with evil spirits – now *that* would make him angry. I'm not saying anything bad, I'm just trying to get him to come out here by saying the name of the woman he loves.

BENVOLIO

Come on, let's go home. He's hidden in those trees, all depressed and lovesick. He falls in love so blindly, so maybe the darkness of the night suits him.

MERCUTIO

If love is blind then how does it hit its target? You know what he's probably doing? Sitting under a peach tree and imagining the fruit is a woman... Romeo! I bet you wish that peach was an open arse and that you had your own piece of

fruit to go in it. Good night, Romeo, it's too cold here and I'm going home to bed. (*More quietly, to BENVOLIO*) Should we head off?

BENVOLIO Yeah, let's go. He obviously doesn't want to see us.

BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO leave.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

ROMEO is in the bushes outside JULIET's room.

ROMEO (*To himself*) Those who make fun of scars have never truly felt a wound.

JULIET comes out onto her balcony overlooking the bushes below.

ROMEO Wait (*He inhales sharply in surprise, still talking to himself*) What is this light that comes through this window? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, my beautiful sun, and kill the moon, who is so jealous of your beauty that she is sick and pale with grief. The moon is the goddess of virgins, so you should stop being foolish and just cast off your virginity. Oh Juliet, you are my lady. Oh, I wish she understood how deeply I love her.

JULIET says something softly to herself.

ROMEO What is she saying? I can't hear her words but her eyes are talking. Perhaps I should answer them? No, that would be too direct. She's just talking to herself. I bet two of the brightest stars in the heavens above have gone off on some business and the sky has asked Juliet to send her eyes up to take their place. What if her eyes are up there and the stars are in her head? The brightness of her face makes the stars look pathetic. It's like comparing the sun to a lamp. If her eyes were in the sky they would light up the night like day and the birds would start singing again.

JULIET places her hand on her cheek.

ROMEO See how she leans her cheek upon her hand? Oh, I wish were a glove on that hand so that I could touch that cheek!

JULIET (*Sighing*) Oh.

ROMEO (*To himself*) She speaks! Oh, speak again, bright angel! You are as glorious to this night as an angel. Shine down on me like a winged messenger of Heaven and watch as my white, upturned, wondering eyes gaze up into the sky to watch this angel walk atop the lazy-puffing clouds and sails upon the air.

JULIET Oh Romeo, Romeo! Why do you have to be a Montague? Turn your back on your father and forget your name. Or, if you cannot do this, then promise that you love me and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO (*To himself*) Shall I listen a while longer, or should I say something?

JULIET It's only your name that is my enemy. You would still be you even if you weren't a Montague. What's a Montague? It's not a hand, or a foot, or an arm, or a face, or any other necessary part that belongs to a person. Just forget your surname. What's the point of a name anyway? A rose with any other name would still smell just as sweet. Romeo would still be my love even if he wasn't called Romeo. He should trade his name in and I'll give myself to him in exchange.

ROMEO (*Loudly, to Juliet*) I'll take you at your word. Call me your love and I'll change my name. From this point on I will never again be 'Romeo'.

JULIET Who's there? How dare you hide under cover of night and listen to my private thoughts!

ROMEO I'm not sure I want to tell you my name. You're so pure and good that my name makes me hate myself. If I see my name written down anywhere I'll tear up the paper.

JULIET I can tell who you are even from just these few words. You're Romeo, aren't you? And a Montague, yes?

ROMEO That depends. If you dislike those things then... no, I'm not.

JULIET How did you even get in here? The orchard wall is quite high and very hard to climb. This place could be your death, considering who you are, because if any of my family find you here...

ROMEO I'm so in love that I flew over the walls. Stone barriers can't hold my love back because when a man is in love he can do anything. Your family won't be able to stop me.

JULIET If they see you, they'll kill you.

ROMEO Ah, but I worry more about seeing you upset than facing twenty of their swords. As long as you look at me sweetly then I'll be sword-proof against their anger.

JULIET Still... I'd do anything to stop them from seeing you here.

ROMEO The night will hide me from them. Let them find me here if you don't love me... I would give up my life rather than live waiting for your love.

JULIET And from whose directions were you able to find my bedroom?

ROMEO Love's directions. Love told me to inquire after you, love gave me advice and I gave love my eyes in return. I'm no sea captain but if you were off in some distant far-away land I would still sail the seas to find you.

JULIET I'm glad it's too dark for you to see my face because otherwise you would see me blushing! The things I've said to you tonight... I'd be embarrassed if other people heard them. But... oh, to hell with it. Do you love me? If you say 'yes' I'll believe you, however, if you swear it then you might be lying. They say the King of the Gods laughs when lovers trick each other. Oh, Romeo, if you do love me, please say it faithfully. If you think I'm too easy then I'll frown and be a tease – but only if you promise to chase after me.

JULIET thinks for a moment.

JULIET But I'd rather not. To be honest, you are a most handsome Montague, and I like you too much. You probably think I'm too easy. But you know what? If you trust me then you will see that I am more faithful than any girl who makes you chase after her. I wish I hadn't been so quick to say 'I love you' but, as you know, you already listened in on my private thoughts so it would be silly to pretend otherwise. Please pay attention when I say: I may have fallen in love with you quickly but this (*JULIET pauses*) ...this is a serious love

ROMEO My lady, by the silver light of the holy moon above, I swear...

JULIET Don't swear on the moon, it never looks the same – it's always changing throughout the month. Is your love going to be just as inconsistent?

ROMEO Would should I swear on, then?

JULIET Who says you have to swear? If you must, then swear on yourself. I worship you like a god... so I'll believe you.

ROMEO The love in my heart...

JULIET Look, just don't swear at all. You could make me so happy but I can't find any happiness in this tonight. It's all too sudden and crazy. This love has struck like lightning – which disappears just as quickly as it strikes. Our love might blossom from a bud into a beautiful summer flower by the next time we meet. But for now – good night, Romeo. I hope you can be warmed by just the thought of our love in the meantime.

ROMEO What? You're going to just leave it at that? I feel unsatisfied.

JULIET And what kind of satisfaction exactly were you hoping for?

ROMEO We should exchange vows of love and promise to be faithful to each other.

JULIET Oh Romeo... I already promised to be faithful to you before you even asked. I would take it back if it meant I could promise it again.

ROMEO Why would you take it back? What's the point of that, my love?

JULIET So I could be sincere and give it to you again in person. But it doesn't matter – I've already promised it. My gifts for you are as endless at the seas, and my love is just as deep. The more I give to you, the more I have in return. It's an infinite feeling.

NURSE calls for JULIET from offstage.

JULIET They're calling for me. My dearest love, I must really say goodnight. *(To NURSE)* Coming, Nurse! *(To ROMEO)* Sweet Montague, be true. Stay for a little while longer and I'll come back out.

JULIET goes back inside.

ROMEO I'm afraid that this is all too good to be true. The night is so dark and this meeting is so sweet that it could be a dream.

JULIET comes back out onto the balcony.

JULIET I want to hear three words from you, dear Romeo, and then I'll really say goodnight. If you are a man of honour and your love is true, then you should propose to me. Send me a messenger tomorrow and ask me to marry you. Tell me the time and place and I will meet you there. Everything I own will become yours and I'll follow you forever.

NURSE *(Shouting from offstage)* Young madam!

JULIET (To NURSE) I'm coming! (To ROMEO) If you do not mean the things you've been saying then I beg you...

NURSE (Offstage) Madam!

JULIET Yes, yes, I'm coming! (To ROMEO) I beg you. Don't lead me on. Just leave me to my grief. (She pauses) I'll send the messenger tomorrow.

ROMEO My soul will sing as it waits.

JULIET A thousand times - good night!

JULIET goes inside.

ROMEO (To himself) A thousand times? It's a thousand times worse to want you so badly. My love aches for you as much as a schoolboy aches to not do their schoolwork. Leaving you tonight, my Juliet, is as depressing to me as going to school is for that schoolboy.

ROMEO slowly turns around to leave but then JULIET suddenly reappears on the balcony above.

JULIET (Quietly) Psssst! Romeo, psssst! Can you hear me? I wish I could you like a bird and you would swoop back to me, my little falcon. Romeo, can you hear me? I can't talk too loudly while I'm in my house, otherwise I risk them hearing your name.

ROMEO I hear you! My soul hears you! It's the most silver-sweet sound to hear my lover say my name. Like the softest music my ears could hear.

JULIET Romeo!

ROMEO Yes, my baby hawk?

JULIET At what time tomorrow should I send my messenger?

ROMEO By nine o'clock.

JULIET Okay, I promise they will come by then. It will feel like twenty years until they do. (She pauses and tries to remember something) Why did I call you back again?

ROMEO I am quite happy to wait here all night until you remember.

JULIET No, it's okay, I don't want you to have to stand out here all night. Even if I do love having you around.

ROMEO I don't mind if you can't remember. I'll still stay here and I'll make this spot in the bushes my new home.

JULIET It's almost morning, Romeo. You should go. I feel like a spoilt brat who won't let their pet bird leave their sight. You know the sort... the bird is like a poor prisoner that gets pulled back by a string every time it tries to hop away.

ROMEO I would be your bird.

JULIET You're sweet. I wish you were too. I'd probably hug you so tight that you would die though. I really must say goodnight. Our parting is such a sweet misery.

JULIET goes back inside.

ROMEO

(To himself) May you sleep peacefully. I wish I were your Sleep so I could rest with you. But instead I will go and find my friend, the priest, and tell him my good luck. He will help us.

ROMEO leaves.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

FRIAR LAWRENCE, a priest, is in the garden outside the church. He carries a basket and speaks to himself in a philosophical way.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The sleepy morning smiles and replaces the frowning night, and darkness trips over and out of the daylight like a drunken bum. The sun is coming up to burn away the night's dew with its cheerful eye, and I must fill my basket with all the poisonous weeds and medicinal herbs. The Earth – that's Mother Nature – is where plants die but it's also where plants are born. So they are born and they die in the same soil. Us humans are nourished by her natural resources and we benefit from all that she offers. All things in nature have their purpose. Herbs, plants, stones... they have their own special qualities. There is nothing so vile on this Earth that does not at least provide something worth having. And, on the flipside of this, there is nothing that is so good that it can't be misused by someone. What is good can turn into sin, and sometimes sin can turn into a good deed. It all depends on the person and what they do.

ROMEO enters.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Within this little, baby flower, there is both a dangerous poison and a highly useful medicine. If you smell the flower then it can help to heal the entire body. But, if you taste it, then your heart will stop and you'll die. This is symbolic of humanity – we have the potential for both of these things. Good and evil. When the balance tips towards evil... this is when death eats up the body like a cancer.

ROMEO

Good morning, Father.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Bless you. Why are you here so early? My son, it's a troubled mind that gets someone out of bed this early in the morning. Usually it's old men who have trouble sleeping – young men like yourself should be carefree. You should be enjoying a golden and comfortable sleep. So Romeo, if you're awake now, you must be wrestling with some inner turmoil, or perhaps – and I suspect this is the real answer – maybe you've been up all night?

ROMEO

I have indeed been up all night. And it's been so much sweeter than sleep.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I hope you haven't been committing any sins! Were you with Rosaline?

ROMEO

No, my father, I was not with Rosaline. I have forgotten that name and the way it made me depressed.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I'm glad, my son. Where have you been, then?

ROMEO

I've been partying with my enemies. And then one of them suddenly wounded me, and I wounded them back. We can only be healed by you and your holy powers. There is no hatred in this, my Father, because your healing will benefit my enemy too.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Tell it to me straight then, my son. I can't help you if you speak to me in riddles.

- ROMEO** Okay. My heart is set on Lord Capulet's daughter. We love each other, and we need you to marry us. I'll tell you later how we met but all you need to know for now is that we wooed one another and have exchanged vows. Please Father, will you marry us today?
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** Holy crap, are you serious? What about Rosaline? Have you given up on her already? The love young men feel must not truly be in their hearts – you're just jumping from one woman to the next based only on how they look. Dammit, you cried so much for Rosaline, don't you think it's ridiculous how much you cried for her when you didn't even get to be with her? The sun hasn't even yet dried up all the damp complaining you filled my ears with. My old ears are still ringing from all your groaning. I can still see tear marks on your cheeks that haven't been washed off yet. You were so depressed about Rosaline, and now you're a changed man? Listen. You have to agree with me when I say: men are unreliable and that's why women cheat on them!
- ROMEO** Come on, Father, you told me off so much for loving Rosaline.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** No, my student, I told you off for stalking her, not for the love you felt.
- ROMEO** But you told me to bury my love deep inside.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** And now you've taken that love and just replaced it with another one.
- ROMEO** C'mon, Father, please don't hassle me so much. The girl I love now is also in love with me. The other girl didn't love me.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** Oh, I think Rosaline knew very well that your feelings weren't true love. But anyway, my inconsistent young man, come with me and I'll help you. If you love one of your enemy then this marriage may be the alliance that both families need to end their hate.
- ROMEO** Yes, let's go now, let's not waste any time.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** Take it a bit more slowly. Those who rush are the ones who fall over first.

They leave.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO are chatting near Montague House.

- MERCUTIO** Where's Romeo? He didn't come home last night, did he?
- BENVOLIO** Not to his father's house. I asked one of the servants.
- MERCUTIO** That Rosaline is a pale, hard-hearted wench for tormenting Romeo. He will go crazy over her rejection of him.
- BENVOLIO** (*Changing the subject*) Lord Capulet's nephew Tybalt has sent a letter to Lord Montague.
- MERCUTIO** Ha! It will be a challenge of some sort.
- BENVOLIO** If it is, then Romeo will gladly answer that challenge.
- MERCUTIO** Anyone can 'answer' a letter.

BENVOLIO No, I mean that Romeo will respond to Tybalt by fighting him!

MERCUTIO Alas, poor Romeo. He's already dead, stabbed by the beautiful eyes of Rosaline and shot through the ear by her sweet voice. The middle of his heart has been cut in two by blind Cupid's arrow. Do you really think he's man enough to face Tybalt?

BENVOLIO Why wouldn't he be?

MERCUTIO Tybalt is tough, and he's disciplined. The way he fights is the way that a musician plays a song – he keeps time, he knows how to keep track of distance and stamina. He'll hold back when he needs to and then strike quickly – one, two, three, right in the heart. He does the same damage as a butcher but has the precision of a tailor. He is a master swordsman – an expert of the forward thrust, the backhand slash, and of pushing a sword right through a man's body. They call those moves the *passado*, the *punto reverso*, and the *hai*.

BENVOLIO Who does?

MERCUTIO Poxy, phony, up-themselves little bitches who use fancy words. They say things like "By Jesus, a very good blade!" or "A very tall man" or "A very good whore". It's just pathetic, my friend. These kinds of guys are like irritating mosquitos, all dressed up fancy and going "pardon me". They're so obsessed with manners that they can't hang out with the boys and just have a good time while talking shit.

ROMEO arrives.

BENVOLIO Speaking of the boys, here comes Romeo. Hey Romeo!

MERCUTIO He looks all dried up like a sterile fish that has no eggs left. So pale and fishy! Ah Romeo, compared to the lady you love, I bet you think all the great beauties of history don't compare. The famous Laura is a wench, and Queen Dido is a hobo. Cleopatra is ugly and poor. Queen Helen of the Ancient World is basically a prostitute. And the beautiful Thisbe might have a nice eye or two, but she wouldn't have been good enough for Romeo. Oh, Signor Romeo, *bonjour!* That's a French greeting that matches your stupid French pants. You tricked us last night.

ROMEO Good morning to you both. How exactly did I trick you?

MERCUTIO You disappeared, my friend. You disappeared. You get what I'm saying, yeah?

ROMEO Yes, well, sorry Mercutio. My business last night was so significant that I had to forget all about saying goodnight to you.

MERCUTIO Yeah, right, 'significant business'. What you really mean is that you were busy thrusting your pelvis.

ROMEO You mean I was bowing in a polite fashion, right?

MERCUTIO Something like that.

ROMEO (*Sarcastically*) Charming.

MERCUTIO Oh yes, I am as charming as the colour pink.

ROMEO Pink like the flower.

MERCUTIO *(Laughing)* Right.

ROMEO In that case, I have decorated many 'flowers'.

MERCUTIO Very funny. The biggest joke here is that you think we would believe that.

ROMEO Oh no, the joke is that you think I'm joking.

MERCUTIO *(To BENVOLIO)* Can you say something? I can't joke any further.

ROMEO In that case – I am the winner of this match.

MERCUTIO Romeo, if our jokes were to race against one another, I am sure that one of yours would outrun five of mine. Did I keep up for at least some of the race?

ROMEO Mercutio, if you stopped joking then I wouldn't even know you were here.

MERCUTIO Are you saying that I don't matter to you? I'll sink my teeth into your ear!

ROMEO *(Laughing)* No, no, don't bite me.

MERCUTIO Your last joke of was a little too sharp and bitter for my taste.

ROMEO Ah, Mercutio, my jokes will only make you stronger.

MERCUTIO No, I think you spread your jokes too far for them to be worth anything.

ROMEO I spread them like butter to help make them taste better.

MERCUTIO You know what? You can keep making fun of me – it's so much more preferable than all the moping and sooking you've been doing. You're much more sociable now. You're back to your normal self, Romeo. Love turned you into dribbling idiot, running around looking for a hole to put your most prized-possession into.

BENVOLIO Okay, okay, that's enough.

MERCUTIO My tale isn't finished – it's long like some other things of mine.

BENVOLIO It's already too long to be of any interest.

MERCUTIO Ah, you're wrong. I would have actually made it short and then when I got to the best part I would've stopped.

NURSE and the servant PETER come walking towards them.

ROMEO Finally, I hope you have come to bring me good news!

BENVOLIO Ahoy there!

MERCUTIO A strange pair – a man and a woman.

NURSE *(To PETER)* Peter.

PETER Yes, madam.

NURSE Hand me my fan, Peter.

PETER hands NURSE a decorative fan for her to hold near her face, as is the fashion in Italy at this time.

MERCUTIO Oh yes, *Peter*, better give that fan to her to hide her face. The fan is far better looking than her face, that's for sure!

NURSE (*Ignoring MERCUTIO*) Good morning, gentlemen.

MERCUTIO Good evening, my lady.

NURSE It's not evening, surely?

MERCUTIO Ay, it is. I'm telling you – the groping hand of the clock is pointing to noon.

NURSE Groping?! You are not a gentleman.

MERCUTIO I am still a man. God made me this way, and if I wreck myself then it's His fault.

NURSE Yes, I think you might be right there – at least about the 'wrecking'. Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where I may find the young Romeo?

ROMEO I can tell you, but Romeo will not be as young as he was when first started seeking him. There's no one younger or worse than me that has that name.

NURSE You are a well-spoken young man, Romeo.

MERCUTIO He might be the worst but he's looking quite well, isn't he? And he speaks wisely.

ROMEO (*Ignoring MERCUTIO*) Romeo, if you're the man I'm looking for then I'd like to speak with you.

MERCUTIO I've figured it out! She's not a prostitute.

ROMEO (*Confused and amused*) What do you mean?

MERCUTIO (*Speaking about NURSE*) She's not a prostitute, my friend, unless this prostitute has disguised herself by looking as unattractive as possible.

MERCUTIO starts to sing.

MERCUTIO "Old mouldy rabbit meat
Is a very good meat to eat
If you have nothing else to mash.
But if the meat is far too old
For twenty days or more I'm told
Then it's just a massive waste of cash.

He stops singing.

MERCUTIO Romeo, let's go visit your father for lunch.

ROMEO I'll catch up with you later.

MERCUTIO blows a kiss to NURSE and leaves with BENVOLIO while humming his song.

NURSE Sir, please tell me who that dirty and awful man was with all his disgusting jokes.

ROMEO He's a man who loves to hear himself talk without really saying much of value.

NURSE I hope he thinks twice about insulting me again. I'll take him down. I could take down twenty brats like him at once. I have important friends who could do it for me. What a turd! I'm not one of his slutty girls. I'm not one of his rude mates. *(To PETER)* And you just stood there, too, and let that bastard make jokes at my expense.

PETER I saw no man do any such thing. If I had, believe me, I would have gotten my sword out, I swear it. If the law is on my side then I have no problem fighting a man who is in the wrong.

NURSE God, I am so worked up now that I'm shaking. What a bastard! *(To ROMEO)* Ahem. Now, please, can I speak to you? My young lady sent me to find you and gave me a secret message to pass along. But, before I tell you, please just know that if you lead her astray and make a fool out of her, that would be the grossest crime. My lady is very young and if you don't treat her right then it would reflect very badly on you and be the greatest of sins.

ROMEO Please, Nurse, put in a good word for me with your lady. I promise you...

NURSE You seem like you have a good heart. You can trust me to tell her that – it will make her very happy.

ROMEO What? What are you going to tell her, Nurse? You haven't even heard what I wanted to tell you!

NURSE Um... I will tell her, sir, that you will... I will tell her that you have made a gentlemanly offer.

ROMEO Ask her to find a way to come to the church this afternoon. She can pretend she's going to confession and we'll get married. *(ROMEO hands NURSE some coins)* Here is a tip for your assistance.

NURSE Oh no, I couldn't. I don't want a single cent.

ROMEO Just take it. I insist.

NURSE *(Taking the money)* This afternoon, sir? Well, she will be there.

NURSE goes to leave but ROMEO stops her.

ROMEO Hang on, Nurse. In about an hour from now I will have one of my friends come to the wall around your garden and give you some ropes that have been tied together like a ladder. I'll use this to visit Juliet in secret at night after we're married. Farewell, Nurse, and I thank you for your secrecy. Goodbye. Make sure you commend me to your lady.

NURSE God bless you. Can I say one thing before I go?

ROMEO What's that, my dear Nurse?

NURSE Will your friend keep this secret? I'm worried that if too many know about this then they may turn against us.

ROMEO You don't have to worry. My friend is as true as steel.

NURSE Well, sir, my young Juliet is the sweetest lady. You know, when she was a little baby... Oh, wait, I should tell you: there is a nobleman in town, named Paris, who also wants to marry Juliet. I can tell you that Juliet would rather see a toad than see him. You know, sometimes I stir her up by telling her that Paris is a better man than you. I can assure you though, when I say this, Juliet becomes as pale as a ghost.

NURSE stops to think for a moment and then changes subject suddenly.

NURSE Don't 'rosemary' and 'Romeo' start with the same letter?

ROMEO Ay, Nurse, so what? They both begin with an 'R'.

NURSE You sound just like a dog. 'R'! Very funny. Seriously though, Juliet says the prettiest things about both you and rosemary. It would do you good to hear the wonderful things she says about you.

ROMEO Remember, tell your lady that I am her truest love.

NURSE Yes, of course, I will tell her a thousand times. (*Turning to PETER*) Peter!

PETER I'm ready to go when you are.

NURSE (*She hands PETER her fan*) Okay, let's go. Quickly.

NURSE and PETER leave in the direction they came, and ROMEO goes off in the direction of his friends.

ACT 2, SCENE 5

JULIET waits in the orchard owned by the Capulet family.

JULIET (*Worried*) It was nine o'clock when I sent the Nurse out and she promised she'd only take half an hour. Perhaps she couldn't find him. No, that can't be possible. She's so slow! Those who carry messages of love should be as quick as thoughts, ten times faster than the sun's beams, and so powerful that they can drive shadows back over entire hills. That's why nimble doves are the best messengers of love, and why Cupid's wings carry him so swiftly on the wind.

JULIET sighs.

JULIET Look at where the sun is! It must be twelve o'clock – a full three hours since she left. If Nurse had the emotions of a younger woman she would be as quick as a ball flying through the air. She'd think of my words and they'd take her to my Romeo so much more swiftly. But, unfortunately, the old act as if they're already dead. Clumsy, slow, heavy, and as colourful as lead.

NURSE and PETER arrive.

JULIET Oh God, finally, here she is – Sweet nurse, what news do you have for me? Did you meet with him? Tell the servant to go away.

NURSE Peter, go back to the gate and wait there.

PETER leaves.

- JULIET** Okay, now, good Nurse – Oh God, why do you look sad? Even if you have bad news for me, you should at least look happy when you tell me. And if your news is good, then why are you wrecking it by playing me with that sour face you're pulling?
- NURSE** Oh, leave me alone, I'm just tired. My bones ache! I've had such a big day!
- JULIET** I would swap my bones for your news. Now, c'mon, please, just tell me what he said. C'mon Nurse, speak.
- NURSE** Jesus, why are you in such a rush? Can't you just wait a bit? Can't you... can't you see I'm out of breath?
- JULIET** Pfft. How can you be out of breath when you're still able to tell me you're out of breath? You're wasting time making excuses. Just tell me – is it good news or bad? Tell me. Whatever it is, I need to know. Is it good or bad?
- NURSE** Well, you've made a dumb choice. You don't know how to choose a man. Romeo? He's not a good choice at all. I know his face is very handsome and he has good legs, and – if you forced me to admit it – he does have quite a good body. He's quite gentle, like a little lamb, but he doesn't have very good manners. (*NURSE pauses and thinks*) You're going to do what you want though, aren't you? Try to be good, won't you? Have you had lunch yet today?
- JULIET** No, I haven't. I already knew all that stuff you just said. Tell me what he says about our marriage! What did he say?
- NURSE** Oh dear, I've got such a headache! My head feels like it's pounding and will fall apart into twenty pieces. My back is so sore too. (*JULIET rubs her back*) Ah, yes, my back. And the other side (*JULIET rubs the other side of NURSE's back*). You're so awful for sending me all over town. I could drop dead with all this running around.
- JULIET** Oh, Nurse, I'm sorry that you aren't feeling well. Now... sweet, sweet, *sweet* Nurse, please tell me, what message did my lovely Romeo give you?
- NURSE** He gave a message in the same way that an honest gentleman would. He was polite, and kind, and handsome, and I think quite good-hearted... wait, where is your mother?
- JULIET** My mother? She's inside. Why? Where should she be? Stop talking nonsense and tell me what he *actually* said.
- NURSE** Bloody hell, you're so impatient! This isn't helping my aching bones, you know. From now on you can just take your own messages.
- JULIET** Calm down. Come on, what did Romeo say?
- NURSE** Is today your day to give confession in church?
- JULIET** Yes, it is.
- NURSE** Then you better hurry to see Friar Lawrence. There's a husband there who wants to make you his wife. Oh, you're blushing! You turn bright red whenever

you hear things like this. Get to the church. I have to go another way to fetch a rope ladder from Romeo's friend, so your new husband can climb up to your room afterwards. See how hard I work to make you happy? Later tonight you'll be working even harder in your bed. Now go. I'm going to get a quick bite to eat. You go to Friar Lawrence.

JULIET

(Taking a deep breath) Okay. Wish me luck. And thank you, dear Nurse.

They both leave the orchard.

ACT 2, SCENE 6

FRIAR LAWRENCE and ROMEO wait in a secret back room of the church.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I pray that the heavens above will smile down on this marriage, and afterwards that there will be no bad luck to make us sorry about this decision.

ROMEO

Amen, amen. But however bad things might get it will be worth it to feel such joy. Just one short minute with Juliet will be enough. All you have to do is join us in marriage and then death can devour our love as much as it wants. It will be enough for me to just call her mine.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

When joy comes quickly it can leave just as suddenly. Such delight can die in violence, like when fire and gunpowder 'kiss' and consume one another. The sweetest honey can be sickening if too much is eaten. Do you understand what I'm saying? Don't overdo it. Love lasts longer if you take it at an even pace.

JULIET comes running in and embraces ROMEO fiercely.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Here is the lady now. Your footsteps are so light... you'll surely never grow tired on your journey through life. Those in love can walk on air itself without falling. Or at least they feel that way.

JULIET

Good evening, my spiritual father. Will you hear my confession?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo is very thankful that you are here, my girl. He is thankful enough for us both.

JULIET

I'm just as thankful.

ROMEO

Oh, Juliet, if you have as much joy in you as I do, and you are more educated than me, then tell me in great and elaborate detail the happiness you can imagine we'll have after we're married.

JULIET

My imagination goes far beyond anything I could put into word. If I could put it into words then I wouldn't be as rich as I feel right now. My true love is so great that I can't sum up half of my wealth.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Okay, come with me now, and we'll have you two married as quickly as possible. I know I better do this quickly because it wouldn't very wise for me to leave you two alone before you've been united as husband and wife.

They move into another part of the church.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

MERCUTIO, BENVOLIO, Mercutio's PAGE, and others walk through the streets of Verona.

BENVOLIO C'mon Mercutio, let's go back home, it's such a hot day. There are Capulets around too and if we meet them we won't be able to avoid a fight. It's on hot days like this that people go mad.

MERCUTIO You're one of those guys who'll go into a bar, throw his word onto the table, and say, "By God, I hope I never have to use you!" Then you'll get onto your second beer and suddenly threaten the guy behind the bar for no reason.

BENVOLIO Do you really think I'm like that?

MERCUTIO Oh c'mon, you can lose your mind like any young guy in Italy. Anything will make you angry, and if you're in the mood then you *want* to get angry.

BENVOLIO Okay. So what?

MERCUTIO You'll find someone just as angry as you and you'll end up killing each other. You'd find some guy and will decide to fight him just because he has a better beard than you. Or perhaps you'll fight him because your beard is better than his. Some guy will be cracking walnuts and you'll lose your shit because he has hazel eyes. That's what you're like. Your head is as full of anger as an egg is full of yolk, and you're so angry that it's all beaten inside like scrambled eggs. I've seen you fight a man for coughing in the street and waking up your dog. Didn't you once punch a tailor for wearing a suit at the wrong time of year? Or what about the time you beat up that guy for wearing ribbons in his shoes instead of shoelaces? And here you are, trying to lecture me about avoiding fighting!

BENVOLIO If I fought as much as you then it would be a sure bet that I'd be dead very soon.

MERCUTIO Ha, whatever.

TYBALT, PETRUCHIO, and other CAPULETS enter at the other end of the street.

BENVOLIO Dammit, here come the Capulets.

MERCUTIO Doesn't bother me. I'm not worried.

TYBALT *(To PETRUCHIO and others)* Stick close to me, I'll speak to them. *(Calling out to the MONTAGUES)* Good afternoon, gentlemen, can I have a word with one of you?

MERCUTIO Just one word with one of us? Why not more? How about a word and a punch?

TYBALT I'm more than ready to do that, sir, if it comes to it.

MERCUTIO Why do I need to give you a reason?

TYBALT You're Romeo's associate, aren't you, Mercutio?

MERCUTIO 'Associate'? Like business partners in a musical group? Do we look like musicians to you? Shall I play you some noise? *(MERCUTIO puts his hand on his sword)* This is my violin. Shall I make you danced? 'Associate'! *Piss off.*

BENVOLIO This is a public space. If you want to speak with us then perhaps we should go somewhere private to talk about it in a reasonable manner? Or maybe it's better if you just leave. There are people watching us.

MERCUTIO Let them watch. I'm not going anywhere.

ROMEO arrives.

TYBALT Nevermind. Here comes the one I'm after.

MERCUTIO He has nothing to do with you. The only thing he will ever do with you is chase you down in a field.

TYBALT *(Ignoring MERCUTIO)* Romeo, I have only one thing to say to you: you're a scumbag.

ROMEO Tybalt, I'm going to ignore that. I'm going to put aside my boiling rage right now because there is a love between us. I'm not a scumbag, and I'll leave it at that because you don't really know me.

TYBALT You're nothing but a boy. Your words mean nothing and you've done great injury to me and my House. Turn around and draw your sword.

ROMEO I've done nothing to hurt you. I love you more than you can understand. And so, good Capulet – and that name is one that I now love as dearly as my own – please be satisfied when I say that I don't mean you any harm.

MERCUTIO What are you doing, Romeo? Why are you so calm? It's dishonourable and vile. His words can only be responded to by the stab of a sword. *(MERCUTIO draws his sword)* Tybalt, you stinking rat, will you fight with me?

TYBALT What do you want with me? It's Romeo I want.

MERCUTIO They call you the King of Cats. Well, I just want to take one of your nine lives, and then maybe after that I'll beat the other eight out of you too. Are you too scared to draw your sword? Come on, before I strike you down before you get a chance.

TYBALT *(Draws his sword)* Let's go.

ROMEO Mercutio, be a better man and put your sword back.

MERCUTIO *(To TYBALT)* C'mon, come at me.

MERCUTIO and TYBALT rush at each other with their swords held out, and begin to strike at one another.

ROMEO Draw your sword, Benvolio! Help me stop these other men from joining in. *(Yelling at the CAPULETS)* Gentlemen, stop it, you're bringing shame on us all. Tybalt! Mercutio! The Prince has made it very clear that fighting has been forbidden in the Verona streets. Stop, Tybalt, you too Mercutio!

ROMEO tries to break up the fight. He gets between TYBALT and MERCUTIO but TYBALT manages to put his sword through MERCUTIO under ROMEO's arm.

Everyone stops as MERCUTIO drops to the ground.

PETRUCHIO

Let's get out of here, Tybalt.

TYBALT, PETRUCHIO, and the other CAPULETS run off.

MERCUTIO

I'm hurt. Damn both your families, I'm dying. Did I get him too?

BENVOLIO

You're hurt?

MERCUTIO

Ay. It's a scratch. Just a scratch. Still... it's enough. Where's my page? (*The PAGE crouches down next to MERCUTIO*) Go, boy, go and get me a doctor.

Mercutio's PAGE runs off.

ROMEO

Be brave, Mercutio. The wound doesn't look that bad.

MERCUTIO

You're right... it's not as deep as a well, or as wide as a church-door. But I think it's enough, it'll still kill me. If you ask around to see me tomorrow you will find me in a grave. I'm bleeding out. Damn both your families! That dog, that rat... I can't believe the King of Cats scratched me to death. He wasn't even a good fighter... that bastard fought like he learned it looking in a textbook. Why did you bloody have to come between us? I got confused and he stabbed me.

ROMEO

I was trying to help.

MERCUTIO

Benvolio, take me inside somewhere. I feel like I'm going to faint. I hope both your families die horrible deaths. You Capulets and Montagues have turned me into worm's meat. I'll be dead soon. To hell with you all.

BENVOLIO picks up MERCUTIO and they leave.

ROMEO

(To himself) My friend, Mercutio, was the Prince's close relative and he has been killed while fighting Tybalt on my behalf. My reputation has been stained with Tybalt's slander – Tybalt doesn't even realise that we became family just an hour ago. Oh, Juliet, your beauty has turned me into a pathetic woman. I was courageous and tough as steel but now I have become soft and weak.

BENVOLIO returns, without MERCUTIO.

BENVOLIO

Romeo, brave Mercutio is dead! He is in heaven now but he was much too young to die.

ROMEO

This is a very dark day and there will be consequences for what has happened here. Very serious consequences that will be felt for many days.

TYBALT appears at the end of the street again.

BENVOLIO

That furious Tybalt is back again.

ROMEO

It's a crime that he's so smug and alive while Mercutio is dead. The time for respect is gone. Now I will let fire and fury direct my conduct. (*Calling out to TYBALT*) Tybalt! Call me a 'scumbag' again. Mercutio is watching us now from just above our heads, waiting for you to join him in the afterlife. Either you, or me, or both of us, will go to meet him.

TYBALT

You pathetic child, just as you kept his company here you will also keep his company in heaven.

ROMEO We'll see who it is that dies.

ROMEO draws his sword, as does TYBALT, and they fight. Eventually ROMEO runs his sword through TYBALT, and TYBALT falls and dies.

BENVOLIO Romeo, get out of here! You've killed Tybalt and there are witnesses around. Try not to look so shocked – if the Prince catches you, he will sentence you to death. Go!

ROMEO Witnesses? Just my luck.

BENVOLIO Why are you still standing around? Get out of here!

ROMEO runs.

Some POLICEMEN arrive shortly after.

POLICEMAN Mercutio's killer – which way did he run? Answer me! Where's Tybalt?

BENVOLIO That's Tybalt there (*BENVOLIO points to the body on the ground*)

POLICEMAN (*To TYBALT*) Get up, sir, you're to come with me. (*He waits a moment, then speaks again*) In the name of the Prince, get up.

The PRINCE arrives on the scene with LORD MONTAGUE, LORD CAPULET, LADY MONTAGUE, LADY CAPULET and some others.

PRINCE Where are the thugs that started this fight?

BENVOLIO Noble Prince, I saw the whole thing. It was most unfortunate – there was a brawl and the man on the ground, Tybalt, killed your brave relative Mercutio. Young Romeo took revenge and killed Tybalt.

LADY CAPULET (*Upset, she crouches down over TYBALT*) My nephew! Prince, this was my brother's son. Husband, there has been blood spilt from our family! Prince, as you are an honourable man, I expect that you will take the life of a Montague for the death of our nephew!

PRINCE Benvolio, who started this bloody brawl?

BENVOLIO Tybalt did, and then Romeo killed him. Romeo spoke to Tybalt calmly and tried to shut the argument down. He even said that you would be upset if there was fighting. He was polite and knelt down out of respect. But then Tybalt put his sword through Mercutio's heart and Romeo realised that it wasn't possible to make peace with Tybalt. Romeo had tried to break it up as the other two fought in white hot anger, he got between them and held his hands out to stop them from striking one another. Romeo said, "Cut it out, break it up!", and quickly forced them to put their swords down. That was when Tybalt lashed out under Romeo's arm and killed the heroic Mercutio before running away.

BENVOLIO looks around at each of his audience to make sure they're listening.

BENVOLIO Then Tybalt came back to challenge Romeo, who was so angry that he wanted revenge. Before I knew it, quick as lightning, they were fighting each other. I couldn't stop them fast enough and Tybalt was killed. Romeo turned and ran away as Tybalt began to fall to the ground. I swear on my life, this is the absolute truth.

LADY CAPULET (To the *PRINCE*) Benvolio is a Montague so you can't trust him. He's lying. There were twenty Montagues fighting in this brawl and it took all twenty of them to kill just Tybalt. I must have justice, Prince. Romeo murdered Tybalt and therefore he must not live.

PRINCE Okay, so Romeo killed Tybalt, but Tybalt killed Mercutio. Who will pay the price for Mercutio's murder?

MONTAGUE Not Romeo, Prince, he was Mercutio's friend. Justice has been served through Romeo's killing of Tybalt.

PRINCE (*Loudly, for all to hear*) And for this offence Romeo is forever kicked out of Verona, effective immediately. I've now been pulled into this feud as Mercutio was my relative, and he has bled to death because of your ridiculous brawling. There will be incredibly harsh consequences for this, and you will all regret this great crime you have visited upon my family. Don't even try to defend yourselves, I am deaf to any excuses. Cease your crying, and don't bother praying. Spread the word that Romeo is to leave the city as quickly as possible. If he doesn't then he will be killed on sight. (*He calls to the POLICEMEN*) Get this body out of here and make sure my orders are carried out. We have to be careful because my leniency to Romeo may lead to more violence.

The crowd disperses as the PRINCE leaves.

ACT 3, SCENE 2

JULIET is in the Capulet House, alone.

ROMEO When will the sun finally set? Close the world's curtains and let night come to set the stage for loving. When everyone's asleep I'll open my arms and Romeo will leap into them, unspoken of and unseen. We don't need to see each other make love because we're young and beautiful! And if we weren't, well, love is blind and so is the night. Come on, night, come dressed all in black... show me how to lose my virginity to my husband. Be dark enough to hide my blushing, and give me courage to experience sex while maintaining my innocence.

JULIET shakes off her worrying and smiles.

ROMEO Romeo, hurry to meet me, and come shining like the midnight sun. You're as bright as snow on the back of a jet black raven. If I die, I hope the sky claims Romeo and turns him into a constellation of stars so that he makes the heavens above more handsome than ever. All the world will be in love with him as they look up at the night sky, and the sun will seem pathetic in comparison. Romeo, we've been married but we're yet to truly be man and wife. This day is so tedious – I feel like an impatient child waiting for a celebration, unable to wear my new clothes until the day comes.

The NURSE comes in. She is holding the rope ladder that ROMEO had delivered to her. She looks anxious.

JULIET Nurse, do you bring me news? Anyone who has anything to say about Romeo will be able to soothe my ears. Is that the rope ladder that Romeo sent?

NURSE Ay, ay, it's the ladder.

JULIET Oh... you look worried. What is the news?

NURSE My lady, it is a sad day. He's dead. Oh, he's dead. We're done for, lady, it's over. It's the worst day! He's gone, he's killed, he's dead.

JULIET (*In shock*) Can God be so spiteful?

NURSE Romeo can. God isn't – it's Romeo. Oh, Romeo, who would have seen it coming? Romeo!

JULIET You evil woman, why are you torturing me? It's like I'm in Hell. Has Romeo committed suicide? Say 'Yes'. I will rage like a venomous monster and you will feel my fury. Tell me he has killed himself, I dare you. Is he dead? Say 'yes'. If not, say 'no'. Those brief words will determine if I can be overjoyed or in misery.

NURSE I saw the wound. I saw it with my own eyes. May God have mercy... it was right across his chest. The corpse looked awful; pale as ashes and covered in blood. So much blood. I fainted at the sight of it!

JULIET My poor breaking heart. May my eyes be locked up in prison and never have the freedom to look at anything ever again. Put my disgusting body into the earth. I don't want to move anymore. Place my body against Romeo's so we can press together in our coffin.

NURSE Oh... Tybalt. He was the best friend I had. So polite, so honest, so honourable. I can't believe I have lived to see him dead.

JULIET What storm is this? You're not making sense. Is Romeo dead? Is Tybalt dead too? My dearest cousin Tybalt and my husband, who I loved even more. Have the trumpets play the funeral song, how can any of us still be alive if both of them are gone?

NURSE Tybalt is gone, and Romeo is banished. Romeo killed Tybalt and he has been punished by banishment.

JULIET Oh God, was Romeo the one who shed Tybalt's blood?

NURSE He did, he did! Damn this day. He did.

JULIET How could he? He's a serpent hiding within a flower. A dragon within a beautiful cave. Beautiful villain, evil angel! Raven with feathers of a dove, lamb with the brutality of a wolf! How can someone so divine attract so much of my hatred? He is the opposite of what he seemed. Damn this saint and his fake honour. Why did nature create this evil spirit and put it in the body of such a beautiful man? He's like a magnificent book containing the most vile contents. How can deception dwell in such a gorgeous palace!

NURSE Men can't be trusted, my lady. They have no faith or honesty. They all lie, they all cheat and twist the truth. Where's my servant? I need a strong drink. All this grief and pain makes me feel so old. Shame on Romeo!

JULIET May your tongue blister for making such a wish. Romeo was not born to be shamed, it doesn't suit him. He is honourable, I know it, he is the most honourable man on this earth. Oh, I was such a beast to say such awful things about him.

NURSE Juliet! He killed your cousin. How could say such nice things about him?

JULIET

He's my husband. Should I speak badly of him? If I dishonour him, and I'm his young wife of just three hours, then who else will speak nicely of him? I mean... I'm confused, I don't understand why he would become a villain and kill my cousin, but also, my cousin would have otherwise been the villain to kill my husband. Nurse, I'm trying not to cry because I don't want to be a fool... do I cry in relief that my husband is alive? Or should I cry in sadness because Tybalt has been killed? I'm relieved that Tybalt is dead because otherwise he would've murdered Romeo. So how can I cry? The worst news you could have brought me was not Tybalt's death. I wanted to die when I thought the worst... oh Nurse, I feel so sick and guilty about what you said, "Tybalt is gone, and Romeo is banished". Romeo's banishment from Verona is like ten thousand dead Tybalts. The death of my cousin was bad enough but it becomes even more sour when I add Romeo's banishment to it. If you had said "Tybalt's dead" and then told me my father or mother were also gone, then I would have wept in the expected fashion. But to say that "Romeo is banished"... it's like Tybalt, father, mother, Romeo, and myself have all been killed. There's no end, no limit, to the misery that brings me. Tell me Nurse, where are my father and mother right now?

NURSE

They are weeping. Screaming in pain over Tybalt's corpse. Will you go to them? I'll take you there.

JULIET

Are they crying so much that Tybalt's wounds are filled with their saltwater? When they finally stop crying I'll still be crying my own tears for Romeo's banishment. (*Noticing that NURSE has dropped the rope ladder*) Don't leave that on the ground, pick it up. Poor ladder – you're pointless now. I'm pointless too. We both are, now that Romeo has been ejected from Verona. He made you as a highway to my bed, but I will now die a virgin and a widow. Hand me those ropes, Nurse, I'm going to my wedding bed. Let death, not Romeo, take my virginity!

NURSE

Go to your bed then. I'll find Romeo and I'll bring him here to comfort you. I know where he's hiding, he's with Friar Lawrence.

JULIET

(*Giving NURSE her wedding ring*) Find him! Give this ring to my true knight, and tell him to come and see me one last time.

NURSE leaves and JULIET moves off to her bedroom.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

FRIAR LAWRENCE walks into the back room of the church.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo, come out, you don't need to be so afraid here. You always attract trouble – it's like you got married to tragedy.

ROMEO comes out of his hiding spot.

ROMEO

Father, what have you heard? What did the Prince sentence me to? I haven't heard what terrible punishment he has given me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Ah yes, you know all about bad news, don't you? I found out what the Prince said.

ROMEO

Did he sentence me to death?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

He went easy on you. Instead of death you are to be banished from Verona.

- ROMEO** Ha, banishment! It would be more merciful to say 'death'. Exile is worse than death. 'Banished'? Say it isn't so.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** From this point on, you are banished from Verona. (*He notices ROMEO's negative expression*) It isn't that bad, the world is a big place and there are lots of places you could go.
- ROMEO** There is no world beyond Verona's walls. Outside is torture and hell. To be 'banished' is to be banished from the world. It's death. It's like using a golden axe to cut my head off and thinking I should be happy about it.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** You're so ungrateful! You committed a crime that is punishable by death and the Prince has shown you kindness by relaxing the consequence. He has taken that black word 'death' and changed it to 'banishment'. This is mercy and you don't even see it.
- ROMEO** It's torture, not mercy. Juliet lives in Verona, so Verona is heaven. Every unworthy cat and dog and little mouse can see her, and I can't. The flies that hang around dead bodies can now be better husbands to Juliet. They can hold her beautiful white hand, and steal everlasting kisses from her lips, and she's so innocent and pure that she will blush at this. And here Romeo is, unable to do anything. He is banished. Flies can do all these things, but I must fly away. They are free and I am not. You say this isn't death? Poison me, Father. Stab me with a knife. Just make it quick. That word – 'banished' – it's what we use to describe someone who goes to hell. They've been 'banished to hell'. You're a priest, you forgive people for their sins, and you're meant to be my friend... why aren't you more understanding?
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** Stop going so crazy and just listen to me for a minute.
- ROMEO** Oh, you're just going to start going on about banishment again.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** I'll give you armour to protect you against that word. There is a sweet medicine that can fix your problem: philosophy. (*He pauses while he lets it sink in a moment*) This will comfort you while you're banished.
- ROMEO** 'Banished!' Stuff your philosophy. Can philosophy make me a new Juliet? Or move an entire town? Or reverse the Prince's decision? It doesn't help me. Just be quiet.
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** Crazy men like you are deaf too, I see.
- ROMEO** How can I hear anything when you can't even see my problems properly?
- FRIAR LAWRENCE** You're not listening. Let me talk with you about your problem.
- ROMEO** What do you know? You don't truly know my problem because you're old and you don't love Juliet. You don't know what it's like to murder Tybalt. You don't know what it's like to be a loving husband who has just been banished. If you did, then you fall onto the ground and tear your hair out.
- ROMEO falls to the ground.*
- ROMEO** I'll start measuring my grave now.
- Someone knocks on the back door.*

FRIAR LAWRENCE Get up. Someone's here – hide yourself, Romeo.

ROMEO I don't want to. My heart is too sick, let my misery hide me like a fog.

More knocking.

FRIAR LAWRENCE I mean it, go hide! (*To the person outside*) Who's there? (*To ROMEO*) Get up, Romeo! They'll arrest you. (*To the person outside*) Hang on, I'm coming. (*To ROMEO*) Get up!

Knocking.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Run to my bookroom. Oh God, why are you being so stupid? (*To the person outside*) I'm coming! Stop knocking so hard. What do you want?

NURSE's voice can be heard on the other side of the door.

NURSE Let me come in and I'll tell you! I have a message from Lady Juliet.

FRIAR LAWRENCE (*Opening the door*) Welcome, then.

The NURSE enters.

NURSE Oh, holy Father. Tell me, Father, where's my lady's husband? Where's Romeo?

FRIAR LAWRENCE He's there on the ground, getting drunk off his own sadness.

NURSE Just like Juliet. What a mess! She's lying on the ground just like him, blubbing and weeping. Stand up, Romeo. Stand up and be a man. Do you hear me? Stand up for the sake of your wife, why are you carrying on like this?

ROMEO Nurse!

NURSE Bad things happen to everyone, you know?

ROMEO What can you tell me about Juliet? How is she? Does she think I'm a bloodthirsty killer? I've ruined everything by killing her cousin. Where is she? How is she feeling? What is she saying about me?

NURSE She says nothing, sir, she just weeps and weeps. She falls on her bed, then she calls out 'Tybalt', and then she calls out 'Romeo', and then she falls down again.

ROMEO She says my name like it's a deadly bullet shot from a gun. One that murders her, just like I murdered her cousin. (*To FRIAR LAWRENCE*) Tell me, Father, in what despicable part of my body is my name hidden? Tell me, and I will cut it out. (*ROMEO pulls out a dagger*)

FRIAR LAWRENCE Stop right there! Are you a man? You look like one but you're crying like a woman. You're acting like an animal. Or a pathetic woman in the shape of a man. I'm shocked by your behaviour. By God, I thought you were better than this, Romeo. So you killed Tybalt... are you going to use this knife to kill yourself too? You would be killing your wife too, because she depends on you. How can you commit such a sin against your own birth, the heavens, and the earth? All three of these things have come together to create you – life is holy and sacred. Shame on you. You bring shame to yourself, and your love, and to your own intelligence. You have so much to offer the world but you waste it with all this moaning and whining. The love you promised to Juliet has become hollow –

you're killing it right now. You're not thinking clearly. You're like an untrained soldier who sets himself on fire while trying to light gunpowder. Stop being so stupid! Your Juliet is alive. Tybalt wanted to kill you because of her, and she was making you happy. Tybalt would have killed you, but you killed him first. You should be thankful that you're alive. Legally speaking, the Prince should have had you executed, but he went soft on you by sending you into exile instead. You should be happy. Take it as a blessing and find happiness in it.

He notices that ROMEO still holds the dagger and hasn't quite gotten his point.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Instead, you're acting like a sulking little girl. You go on and on about your bad luck and your love. Listen to me – people who complain like this die miserable deaths. Go and find Juliet, follow your original wedding night plans. Climb up into her balcony and comfort her in her bed. But then leave before anyone sees you. Go to the city of Mantua, and wait there until your marriage can be made public, and we'll use it to make peace between the Capulets and Montagues. We'll beg the Prince to show mercy and allow you to come back. You'll be twenty thousands times happier than how you feel now.

He turns to the NURSE as ROMEO puts his dagger back away.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Go back to your lady, Nurse, and tell her to make sure everyone in her house is asleep before Romeo gets there. They'll all be grieving so sleep will do them well.

NURSE Oh, Father, I could stay here all night listening to your wise words. You're so educated. (*To ROMEO*) My Lord, I'll tell my lady that you're on your way.

ROMEO Yes, and tell my sweet wife to be ready to tell me off.

NURSE Here, sir, she told me to give you this ring. (*She gives ROMEO the ring that JULIET gave her*) Now hurry up, it's getting late.

The NURSE leaves.

ROMEO I'm feeling much better with this plan.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Go then. And goodnight. Just remember – don't let the police see you, and you are moving around in daytime then wear a disguise. Hide out in Mantua. I'll find your servant and he'll bring you news occasionally. (*He grabs ROMEO's hand and holds it right for a moment*) Farewell, Romeo.

ROMEO My wedding night will be most joyful, but it's sad to leave like this, Father. Farewell.

ROMEO leaves.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

LORD CAPULET, LADY CAPULET, and PARIS are out the front of the Capulet House. It is night-time.

CAPULET Things have been so overwhelming that we haven't had time to talk to our daughter about marrying you. Look, she loved her cousin Tybalt so much, and so did I. I guess death comes to us all. It's getting very late, I don't think she'll be coming down to see you tonight. I would've been in bed an hour ago if you weren't here.

PARIS The last thing Juliet wants to be thinking about is romance – I understand. (*To LADY CAPULET*) Good night, madam. Tell your daughter I am thinking of her.

LADY CAPULET I will, and I'll talk to her about you tomorrow. She is much too upset tonight.

CAPULET Paris, I think I can predict what my daughter will do – she will listen to me and do what I say. No, she'll do more than that. I have no doubts about that. (*To LADY CAPULET*) Go and see here before you go to bed and tell her about the love that Paris has for her. And tell her, listen closely now, on Wednesday next... wait, what day is it?

PARIS Monday, my lord.

CAPULET Monday! Ha, well, maybe Wednesday is too soon. We'll make it Thursday – tell her that she will be married on Thursday to this noble man. (*To PARIS*) Will you be ready? It's not too fast? We'll keep the wedding small, just a couple of friends. It would be better that way as we don't want to look too disrespectful while people mourn Tybalt's recent murder. So we'll just have half a dozen friends at the wedding. What do you think? Is Thursday okay?

PARIS Thursday is good. I'd do it tomorrow.

CAPULET Good. You better get home then. Thursday it is. (*To LADY CAPULET*) Go see Juliet now and tell her to start getting prepared for her wedding day. (*To PARIS*) Goodnight, Paris. I'm off to sleep. It's so late that it's almost morning. Goodnight!

The CAPULETs go back inside and PARIS goes off home.

ACT 3, SCENE 5

JULIET and ROMEO are on her balcony. It is very early morning, just before the sun rises.

JULIET Where are you going? It's not day yet. You heard a night bird before, not a lark. It's a nightingale – it sits on that pomegranate tree over there and sings every night. I swear it, it's won't be morning for a while.

ROMEO No, it was a lark, I heard it. It means morning is almost here. Can't you see those streaks of sunlight across the clouds in the east? All the candles of the night are almost burnt out and the day is preparing to climb over those misty mountain tops in the distance. I have to go so that I live because if I don't, I'll die.

JULIET That light isn't daylight, I know it. It's a meteor. It's there to light your way to Mantua. Stay a bit longer, you don't need to go yet.

ROMEO (*Smiling*) Let me be arrested and put to death. I am happy and at least it means I'll die happy. If you say it isn't morning yet then I'll say all this light is just the moon. I didn't hear any lark. Trust me, I'd rather stay with you than go. Let death come and get me! Juliet will have it no other way (*He laughs*) How are you, my beautiful wife? Let's talk. It's not day yet.

JULIET Okay, okay! Go then. Get out of here. It was a lark, and it sounded awful. Its birdsong was like the noise of untuned instruments. People like to say that the lark makes a sweet song that divides the day and the night but for us that isn't true – it divides us. There's a story that the lark and the toad once traded eyes with one another – well, I wish they'd traded voices too, because right now the

lark's voice rips you out of my arms and now there will be men hunting through the day. Oh, you better get going, the sun really is coming up now.

ROMEO Yes, the more daylight there is, the more pain for us.

The NURSE comes out onto the balcony.

NURSE Madam.

JULIET Yes, Nurse?

NURSE It's morning and your mother is coming up to your bedroom. Be careful – he better go.

The NURSE leaves.

JULIET The window lets day in and now my life goes out the window.

ROMEO Farewell. Kiss me one more time and then I'll climb down.

They kiss. ROMEO then uses the rope ladder to climb down.

JULIET *(Still talking to him)* And you're leaving, just like that? Husband – you are my friend and I want to hear from you every day and hour. Each minute will feel like days. I'll be so old by the time I see my Romeo again.

ROMEO Farewell! I will send my love to you every chance I get.

JULIET Farewell? Don't you think we'll see each other again?

ROMEO Oh, I doubt there will be any problems. We'll laugh about all this when we're in our old age and telling each other stories.

JULIET *(Watching ROMEO as he reaches the ground)* Oh God. I've just had a bad thought – looking at you so far away right now, you look like someone dead in the bottom of a tomb. Are my eyes playing tricks on me or do you look really pale?

ROMEO My love, you look pale from up there too, it's just that we're sad to be parting like this. Goodbye. Goodbye!

ROMEO runs off as the sun rises.

JULIET The nature of luck is that we can never tell when we'll be lucky or not. What will happen to Romeo? I can't predict his fate. I hope he is lucky and he'll come back to me soon.

LADY CAPULET *(Her voice is heard from outside JULIET's room)* Daughter! Are you up?

JULIET *(To herself)* Who's that? Is that my mother? Why is she up so late? Or early. It's weird for her to come to me at this time.

LADY CAPULET enters JULIET's room and notices that she is wide awake.

LADY CAPULET What are you doing, Juliet?

JULIET Uh... mother, I am not well.

LADY CAPULET Still weeping for your cousin's death? You know, crying won't bring him back. Your tears serve no real purpose and you should give it a rest. Grieving a little is okay as it shows that you loved him. But if you go overboard then it makes it look like there's something wrong with your head.

JULIET He's just died. Let me weep longer for my loss.

LADY CAPULET Your feelings won't change if you stop crying. Just remember that the man you weep for doesn't feel anything anymore.

JULIET Yes, but feeling this loss means that I can't help but weep.

LADY CAPULET Perhaps, girl, you're really crying because the villain who killed him still lives.

JULIET Villain? What villain, madam?

LADY CAPULET That villain Romeo.

JULIET (*Quietly to herself*) He's nothing like a villain. (*To LADY CAPULET*) May God have mercy on him. I would pardon this Romeo, even though such a man makes my heart grieve.

LADY CAPULET That's because the traitor lives.

JULIET Yes, madam, he is just beyond the reach of my hands. I would have it so that only I could avenge my cousin's death!

LADY CAPULET Don't worry, we'll have our revenge. You can stop crying – I'm sending a man to Mantua to find Romeo. He'll give Romeo a poisoned drink and Romeo will go to keep Tybalt company in the afterlife. And then, I hope, you will be satisfied once more.

JULIET Uh, yes, but I'll never be satisfied until I can see Romeo for myself... dead is how my heart feels for my poor cousin. Madam, if you can find a man who'll take this poison, let me be the one who mixes it. Romeo will drink it and quickly fall into a quiet sleep. My heart aches to hear him named, especially as I can't go to him. I want to take my love for my cousin and 'wreck' the body of the man who killed him.

LADY CAPULET If you can figure out the poison then I'll find you the man who'll deliver it. (*Changing the subject*) Now, I have good news for you, my girl.

JULIET Good news is very welcome in these needy times. What is it, my lady?

LADY CAPULET Well, my child, you have a very caring father. He has arranged a day of joy that will end your misery. It's a day that you won't be expecting.

JULIET Mother, just tell me, what is it?

LADY CAPULET Pay attention, my child, as early next morning the handsome and brave young noble gentleman Paris will meet you at St. Peter's Church and make you his joyful bride!

JULIET (*Shocked*) What? I swear by St. Peter's Church and St. Peter too that he will *not* make me a joyful bride. Where has this come from all of a sudden? I can't marry him, he hasn't even dated me. Please, tell father that I'm not ready to marry.

And when I do marry, I swear it will be Romeo, who you know I hate, rather than Paris. How is this good news!

LADY CAPULET Well, your father's on his way up, so you can tell him yourself. See how he takes your reaction...

Lord CAPULET and the NURSE enter.

CAPULET Normally, the setting of the sun leaves a dew on the ground, but when the sun sets on the life of my brother's son, it's pouring rain. Juliet, why are you still crying? You can't cry forever. How many tears can there be in that little body of yours? Do you have an ocean in you, and a sea ship, and winds to carry it across the water? Maybe your eyes are the ocean, and the tears are its waves. Your body is the ship that sails in this saltwater flood. The winds are your sobbing and – unless you calm yourself – they will overcome your tired body and wear you out. *(To LADY CAPULET)* How did you go? Have you told her what we decided?

LADY CAPULET Ay, but she won't listen. She says "thanks but no thanks". She's being foolish and perhaps she's just better off dead.

CAPULET Hang on, wife, explain it to me in detail. How can she not be interested? Isn't she thankful? Doesn't the idea of it fill her with pride? It's a blessing for someone as unworthy as her to be have such a gentleman want her as his bride.

JULIET Pride?! I am thankful but how can I have pride at an idea that I hate? I'm thankful because I know you did this out of love, but I would never be proud.

CAPULET You're being unreasonable. What is this? How can you be thankful but not proud? You brat – this is how you show me thanks? It doesn't matter. Start getting ready for Thursday, you'll be marrying Paris in St. Peter's Church and I'll drag you there myself. You have no idea how angry I am right now, you little grub! You're a dead weight on this family! You're pathetic!

LADY CAPULET You bring shame on us! What, are you mad?

JULIET *(Throwing herself at her father's feet)* Good father, I'm begging you on my knees, just listen to me for one second.

CAPULET Go to hell, you're just worthless baggage. So disobedient! I'll tell you what – you better be at that church on Thursday or never look me in the face again. Don't say anything. No, shut up. Don't talk back.

JULIET gets back up again.

CAPULET I could hit you right now. *(To LADY CAPULET)* Wife, we thought that God had forsaken us by only giving us this one child. But now I see that she is one too many. She is a curse on this family. She is nothing but a dirty lowlife.

NURSE Oh my God! My Lord, stop saying such awful things!

CAPULET Why? Shut your mouth, you old bag. Go gossip with your old woman-friends.

NURSE I don't deserve that.

CAPULET Oh, piss off.

NURSE Am I not allowed to speak?

CAPULET Shut up, you mumbling fool. Keep your wisdom to your gossiping friends. We don't need to hear it.

LADY CAPULET You need to calm down.

CAPULET Dammit, it makes me mad. Day by day, night by night, every hour, all the time in my working day, even when I'm socialising, when I'm alone, when I'm with others... my only worry is to have Juliet married to a good man. And now I've found one, a gentleman from a noble family. He's good-looking, young, and dignified. Every honourable thing you could imagine – the man a girl surely wishes for. And then, to have this wretched and sulking little thing say "I'm not getting married", "I don't love him", "I'm too young", "Please, let me think about it". (*To JULIET*) I'll tell you what – if you won't get married then I'll let you think about it the rest of the life. You can go wherever you like, you won't be living in this house anymore. You think hard about that – I'm not joking. Thursday is just a couple of days away. Look in your heart and listen to me very carefully – if you are my daughter then you will marry my friend. And if you don't, you can beg and starve in the streets until you die. I swear on my soul, I will never acknowledge you as my daughter again. You can trust in that, I swear it.

CAPULET leaves.

JULIET Doesn't God see how sad I am? Oh, my sweet mother, don't turn your back on me. Please delay this marriage for a month, or even a week. If you can't then you should prepare a space in Tybalt's tomb for me.

LADY CAPULET Don't speak to me. You can do whatever you like, I'm done with you too.

LADY CAPULET leaves.

JULIET Oh God, Nurse, how can we prevent this? My husband is alive, and I am pledged to him in the eyes of God. Tell me what to do. Give me the advice and comfort I need. Oh, why does God twist the life of someone as soft and vulnerable as me? Talk to me, Nurse. Help me!

NURSE Listen carefully now... Romeo has been banished and he will not return because it will make things difficult for you. If he does come back, it will be in secret so that no one else knows. Therefore, perhaps it's best if you married Count Paris? He's a lovely gentleman – Romeo's a dirty dishrag compared to him. Paris is like a great and beautiful eagle. If it was me, I'd be very happy with this second marriage because it's even better than your first one. And even if you don't believe that, well, Romeo isn't here, so you might as well enjoy Paris.

JULIET Do you really mean that?

NURSE Yes, with all my heart.

JULIET Amen!

NURSE Really?

JULIET Yes, you have comforted me more than you know. Go inside and tell my mother that I've left to make up for making my father so angry. Tell her that I went to Friar Lawrence to confess and be forgiven for my sins.

NURSE Okay, I will, I think that's a wise idea.

The NURSE leaves.

JULIET

That stupid old lady! What an evil woman! It would be the greatest sin to have me break my vows to my husband. How dare she say bad things about Romeo... especially after she praised him so much before. Your advice is worthless, Nurse. You and my deepest thoughts will never meet again. I'm going to the Friar for his advice instead. If everything else fails, well, at least I have the power to kill myself.

JULIET leaves.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

FRIAR LAWRENCE and PARIS are in the church.

FRIAR LAWRENCE On Thursday, sir? That's not very long from now.

PARIS My father-in-law Lord Capulet wants it this way and I'm happy to do it quickly.

FRIAR LAWRENCE And you don't know what your future wife thinks of all this? That's not a good sign. I don't like it.

PARIS She's just really upset over Tybalt's death, so I haven't been able to talk to her much, or woo her. Romance doesn't stand much of a chance in a house of tears. But you know what? Her father thinks it's dangerous for her to be so sad, so he has been wise in deciding we should marry quickly as it will stop her from crying. I can keep her company and help her be happy. That's why we're rushing.

FRIAR LAWRENCE *(To himself)* This puts me in an awkward position. *(To PARIS)* Look, sir, here comes the lady now.

JULIET enters.

PARIS Great to see you, my wife!

JULIET We're not married yet, sir.

PARIS Oh, my love, it will come soon enough, on Thursday.

JULIET Whatever happens, happens.

PARIS Have you come to make a confession to the priest?

JULIET If I answered that, wouldn't I be confessing to you?

PARIS Don't deny to him that you love me.

JULIET I'll confess to you, shall I? I confess that I love this priest.

PARIS Oh, you will also surely confess that you love me.

JULIET If I do so, wouldn't it be better if I said it behind your back rather than to your face?

PARIS You poor thing, your face has suffered so many tears.

JULIET It already looked like this before I cried.

PARIS You should be kinder to yourself.

JULIET I'm not lying, sir, it's the truth. I said it to my own face.

PARIS Your face is mine, though, and I say that you've insulted it.

JULIET Perhaps. Maybe my face doesn't belong to me. *(To FRIAR LAWRENCE)* Father, do you have a moment to spare for me now, or should I come back at evening mass?

FRIAR LAWRENCE I have time now, my worried child. *(To PARIS)* My lord, we must ask for some privacy.

PARIS Of course! I would never intrude on this sacred time. Juliet, I will come early on Thursday to wake you (*He kisses her*) Until then, goodbye, and keep my kiss as a holy token of our love.

PARIS leaves

JULIET Please close the door! And then come and weep with me. My situation is beyond hope or cure or help!

FRIAR LAWRENCE Oh, Juliet, I already know your grief. This problem is beyond me – I have heard that you must marry Count Paris on Thursday and that there is to be no possibility of delay.

JULIET If you've heard about this marriage then you should be able tell me how I can prevent it. You are so wise... if you can't help me then at least acknowledge that I can help myself (*JULIET pulls a knife out*). With this knife I will prevent my marriage. God joined my heart to Romeo's heart, and you joined our hands together in marriage. I will plunge this knife into my heart before I am forced to marry someone else. (*JULIET stares at FRIAR LAWRENCE as he contemplates what she has said*) Now, surely in all your experience and wisdom, you can give me some advice? Otherwise you can watch me as I'm stuck between two impossible scenarios and I'll solve my problem with this bloody knife. It would be the honourable thing to do, especially if you – with all your education – can't fix things. I long to die if you can't provide me with a remedy.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Hang on, my child, there is still hope. But we must be drastic in our response to this desperate situation. If you're willing to commit suicide rather than marry Count Paris, then maybe we can use something similar to defuse this shameful situation. If you are willing, I will give you your remedy.

JULIET If you told me to leap from the top of a tower in order to avoid marrying Paris, or walk into an alleyway filled with street criminals, I would do it. I'd sit with poisonous snakes, I'd let you chain me to a roaring bear. You could even make me sleep every night in a morgue filled with stinking, rotting dead bodies and broken skeletons. I'd climb into a grave and hide alongside the fresh body of a dead man in his coffin. The old me would have trembled at these ideas but now I will do them without fear or doubt in order to remain pure to my sweet Romeo.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Okay, then. Go home, pretend to be happy, and tell your parents you will marry Paris. (*He thinks for a moment*) Yes, tomorrow is Wednesday. Tomorrow night, make sure that you are alone, and don't let the Nurse come in. (*He shows JULIET a potion*) Take this vial, and drink the liquor inside when you got to bed. It will run through all your veins and make you cold and drowsy, and it will seem like you have no pulse. Your body will become lifeless and all colour will drain from your face, it will look like you're not breathing. You'll go stiff and cold, and look like a dead body. You'll stay like this for 42 hours until you wake up again, and you'll feel like you've just had a very pleasant sleep.

FRIAR LAWRENCE holds the vial out to JULIET.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Paris will come to get you out of bed on Thursday morning and when he tries to wake you it will look as though you are dead. And then, as is the Verona tradition, you'll be dressed up on your best robes and carried in an open coffin to the tomb where all the deceased Capulets lie. I'll send letters to Romeo to let him know our plan and he will come, and we will keep watch over you until you wake, and then Romeo can take you to Mantua. This will free you from the

possibility of shame and sin. But, be aware, you must stick to the plan at all costs – do not become afraid like a typical woman. Be brave.

JULIET Give it to me! Don't talk to me about fear!

FRIAR LAWRENCE *(Giving her the vial)* Hold it carefully. Now be gone, and strong. I'll be praying for your success. I'll send one of my friars to Mantua as quickly as possible so Romeo gets the letter.

JULIET Love give me strength, and strength will help me find my love again. Farewell, dear Father.

She leaves in one direction, and FRIAR LAWRENCE in the other.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

Lord CAPULET and LADY CAPULET are preparing for the wedding at their house, with NURSE and two of three SERVANTS.

CAPULET *(Giving the FIRST SERVANT a paper)* These are the invitations.

The FIRST SERVANT leaves.

CAPULET *(To the SECOND SERVANT)* Boy, go hire me twenty best cooks you can find.

SECOND SERVANT I'll find the best cooks in Verona. I'll make them lick their fingers first before I hire them.

CAPULET What?

SECOND SERVANT It makes sense. A bad cook won't lick his own fingers. So if he doesn't lick his fingers then I won't hire him.

CAPULET Just go, be gone. I think I can do without *your* services for a while.

The SECOND SERVANT leaves.

CAPULET I'm not sure if we'll be ready in time. *(To NURSE)* So you said that Juliet has gone to see Friar Lawrence?

NURSE Ay, it's true.

CAPULET Maybe it'll do her some good to see the priest. She's a stubborn and irritating wench.

JULIET enters.

NURSE Here she is now! Look how happy she is.

CAPULET Stubborn daughter, where have you been wandering off to?

JULIET I went to church and repented the sin of being disobedient to my father. Holy Father Lawrence told me to get down on my knees and beg for your forgiveness. *(JULIET falls to her knees)* Please forgive me, father! From this point on I will follow all your instructions.

CAPULET Send for the Count. Go tell him what has happened and I'll have this marriage finished by tomorrow morning.

JULIET I've already seen him, I met him at Father Lawrence's church. I showed him affection, as much as I should – I still wanted to show some modesty.

CAPULET I'm glad. This is good. Stand up.

JULIET stands up.

CAPULET This is how it should be. I'll still see the Count. Ay, go and get him, and bring him to me – I swear before God that this whole city owes this holy friar so much!

JULIET Nurse, can you come with me to my closet and help me sort out the jewellery I should wear for tomorrow?

LADY CAPULET Wait until Thursday, why do we have to move the wedding forward another day.

CAPULET Go, Nurse, go with Juliet. We'll have the wedding at the church tomorrow, I don't want to delay any further.

JULIET and NURSE leave to go to her room.

LADY CAPULET We don't have enough for the wedding reception. It's almost night-time already.

CAPULET Stop worrying, I will make sure everything is on time. I promise you, wife. Go to Juliet and help her get her dress in order. I'll stay up tonight and get everything done. Go, you can leave me to it. I'll play the housewife just this once.

LADY CAPULET leaves.

CAPULET *(Looking around and realising he is now on his own)* What, where did everyone go? Well, I will go on my own to see Count Paris. I'll get him prepared for tomorrow. My heart is so light and happy to see Juliet untroubled again.

Lord CAPULET leaves.

ACT 4, SCENE 3

JULIET and NURSE are in her bedroom.

JULIET Yes, these clothes are the best ones. They'll do the job. You can go now, Nurse, I want to be alone tonight so I can say all my prayers. I want to ask God to smile down upon my future. You know how full my life is of trouble and sin right now.

LADY CAPULET comes in.

LADY CAPULET Are you still busy? Can I help?

JULIET No, madam, we've put aside all the things we don't need and have figured out what I'll be wearing for the marriage tomorrow. If it's alright I'd like to be left alone now. Nurse can keep you company tonight – I'm sure you have your hands full with trying to get everything ready in time.

LADY CAPULET Okay, goodnight then. Get to bed and rest well, you will need it.

LADY CAPULET and NURSE leave.

JULIET Farewell! God knows when we'll meet again. I have a faint cold fear that thrills through my veins. It almost freezes up the heat of life within me. Maybe I'll call

them back to comfort me. (*Calling out*) Nurse! (*Then thinking better of it*) Oh, she wouldn't be helpful at all. I should do this next bit on my own.

JULIET takes out the vial and holds it up.

JULIET

Okay, potion. What if this mixture doesn't work at all? Will I be forced to go through with the marriage? No, I can't have that. I have a back-up plan (*JULIET puts a knife on the table next to her bed*). What is this potion is really a poison and the friar secretly wants me dead? That would prevent him from being dishonoured by marrying me twice. I'm afraid it's really poison. No, I shouldn't think that, the friar is a holy man and should be trusted. What if I'm laid in my tomb and then I wake up before Romeo comes to get me? That's a scary possibility – I might suffocate in the tomb because there's no real air down there. Romeo will come and find me strangled by a lack of oxygen. Or if I live, I'll wake up in darkness and surrounded by the bones of all my dead ancestors. That's awful. Tybalt will be there, festering and rotting, and there could be spirits haunting the place. No, no, this is a terrible idea. The stench will make me sick and I'll go crazy hearing the screams of the dead. I'll become a complete wreck, and I'll use Tybalt's bones like a club to smash my brains out.

JULIET stares off into the distance as she raises the vial closer to her mouth.

JULIET

I can see your ghost, Tybalt. You're looking for Romeo, the man who put you on his sword like an animal's body on a spit. Stay here, Tybalt, don't go looking for Romeo. Oh, Romeo, I'm coming to see you. Here's a drink. I drink to you, Romeo.

JULIET drinks from the vial and falls onto her bed, hidden by the bed curtains.

ACT 4, SCENE 4

LADY CAPULET and NURSE are in the main hall of the Capulet House, early in the morning.

LADY CAPULET

Hold up, take these keys and go and get more spices, Nurse.

NURSE

The kitchen said they need dates and quinces.

Lord CAPULET comes in.

CAPULET

C'mon, wake up. Wake up! The rooster has been crowing for ages and the church bells rang ages ago. It's three o'clock in the morning. Go and get the baked meats, Angelica, I don't care how much it costs.

NURSE

Okay, okay, I'm going. I'm an old woman and I need to sleep. My lord, you should go bed too, you'll be sick tomorrow if you don't get any sleep.

CAPULET

Nonsense, I stay up all the night for lesser things and it's never made me sick.

LADY CAPULET

Oh yes, you used to stay up all hours chasing ladies in your time. But now you're older and you have a wife, and I'll make sure you go to bed earlier.

LADY CAPULET and NURSE leave.

CAPULET

Ha, they're just silly, jealous women!

Three or four SERVANTS enter with spits, logs, baskets.

CAPULET Stop, servant, what are you carrying?

FIRST SERVANT I dunno, stuff for the cook, sir.

CAPULET Walk quicker then, boy! Hurry up.

The FIRST SERVANT leaves.

CAPULET (To *SECONG SERVANT*) Go and get more logs and make sure they're dry. These ones are too damp. Call Peter, he'll show you where to find the better ones.

SECOND SERVANT I'm not an idiot, sir, I can find the logs myself without Peter.

The SECOND SERVANT leaves.

CAPULET Ha, what a comedian. The only logs he knows are the ones in his head. Goodness me, it's nearly daylight. The count will be here soon with the musicians. I think I hear him coming...

Music can be heard outside.

CAPULET Nurse! Wife! Hey, Nurse!

The NURSE returns.

CAPULET Go wake up Juliet. Get her dressed and ready and I'll go and chat with Paris. Quick, hurry up. The groom is already here. Go!

CAPULET goes to the front door while NURSE goes upstairs.

ACT 4, SCENE 5

The NURSE walks into JULIET's room. JULIET's bed has the curtains drawn around it.

NURSE Young lady! Hey, young lady! Juliet! (To herself) Fast asleep, I bet. (To JULIET) Little lamb! Little lady! C'mon, you little bed slug. Wake up, love. Come on, sweetheart, you're going to be a bride today. Why aren't you responding? Hmm, getting some extra sleep, hey? I can guarantee that Count Paris won't let you sleep much tonight! (Coming closer to the bed) You're so sound asleep! I'm going to have to shake you awake. Madam, madam, madam! I should let the Count crawl into your bed now, that would get you up!

NURSE opens the curtains.

NURSE Already dressed in your clothes but asleep? You must wake up. Lady! Lady!

JULIET is unresponsive as NURSE shakes her a little. NURSE suddenly takes in how pale and cold JULIET is.

NURSE Oh... Oh! Help! Help! She's dead! Someone get me a strong drink. My lord! My lady!

LADY CAPULET comes running in.

LADY CAPULET What's all this noise for?

NURSE It's a misery!

LADY CAPULET What is? What are you talking about?

NURSE Look, look at her! It is a dark day!

LADY CAPULET Oh... Oh my God. My child, my only life. Wake up! Say something! I'll die with you if you don't wake up. Help! Help! Go and get help.

Lord CAPULET comes in.

CAPULET Hurry up and bring Juliet out. Her groom is waiting for her.

NURSE She's dead. Deceased. She's dead! It's a curse.

LADY CAPULET Curse this day! She's dead, she's dead, she's dead!

CAPULET No! Let me see her. Oh no! She's cold. Her blood isn't moving and her joints are stiff. She must've died some time ago. Death has covered her like the frost on the sweetest flower.

NURSE Oh, darkest day!

LADY CAPULET I hurt so much without you, Juliet!

CAPULET Death has taken her from me. I want to cry but Death has tied up my tongue and I cannot speak...

FRIAR LAWRENCE and PARIS come into the room with some MUSICIANS.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Is the bride ready to go to church?

CAPULET Ready to go, but never to return. (*To PARIS*) Oh, my son. The night before your wedding day, death has laid down with your wife. There she lies, like a flower, but she has been deflowered by death. Death is my son-in-law. Death is my heir. My daughter has married death. I will die and leave all my possessions to death. It all belongs to death.

PARIS I have longed for this morning and now I am greeted with this awful sight.

LADY CAPULET This is a cursed, unhappy, wretched, hateful day! This is the most miserable hour that ever existed. I had only one child, one poor child, one poor and loving child. The only thing in my love to rejoice and share love with, and now cruel death has snatched her from my sight!

NURSE Oh... God, oh God! Darkest day! The worst day I have ever seen! A hateful day! There has never been a day as black as this. Oh God, this is the darkest day!

PARIS She has been tricked. Death was wrong to take her from us. Cruel, cruel death. Oh, my love! How can I live while my love is dead?

CAPULET Despicable, distressful, hated death. Why now? Why now when she was to marry? You murdered our child on her most significant day. Oh, my child! You're dead. My child is dead. All my happiness dies with her.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Shame on you all, be quiet! You are confused, but all this noise does not cure this confusion. It was God's will that you had this child, and now God has her again. Heaven is a better place than earth. She was always going to die but Heaven will provide her with eternal life. The most you hoped for was a good

marriage for her, but heaven is so much better than that. And yet you weep now, while she has gone to this place above the clouds. You say you love your child, but you are going mad with the idea that she has not been married, is it not better that she has gone to heaven? Dry up your tears and place rosemary on this beautiful corpse, as is the custom, and carry her to church. It's natural to be sad but we should also rejoice for her journey into the afterlife.

CAPULET Yes, all things that we organised for the wedding will now be used for the funeral. May the musicians play sad music, and our wedding celebration will be a burial feast. Our celebratory hymns will be mourning songs. The bridal flowers will sit on her corpse for burial. All things will be changed to their opposite purpose.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Sir, you walk ahead, and madam, you go with him. Sir Paris, you go too. Everyone prepare to follow this beautiful corpse to her grave. God is looking heavily down on the sins that your family has already committed. Don't add to it any further by angering him.

CAPULET, LADY CAPULET, PARIS, and FRIAR LAWRENCE all leave.

FIRST MUSICIAN I guess we can put our instruments away and go home.

NURSE Yes, boys, you can put them away. As you know, this is a very sad time.

The NURSE leaves.

FIRST MUSICIAN Things could certainly be better.

PETER enters.

PETER Musicians! Can you play 'Heart's Ease'? Do you know it? Oh, if you want me to keep on living, please play 'Heart's Ease'!

FIRST MUSICIAN Why 'Heart's Ease'?

PETER Because my heart is singing a sad song and I need to hear something to comfort me.

FIRST MUSICIAN It's not a sad song though, is it? It doesn't feel right to play it right now.

PETER You won't play it, then?

FIRST MUSICIAN No.

PETER Then I'll really give it to you!

FIRST MUSICIAN What will you give us?

PETER Not money, that's for sure! I'll give you an earful, you *minstrel!*

FIRST MUSICIAN Mate, you're just a servant.

PETER Oh yeah? I'll use the cake knife to smack you in the face. I won't hold back. I'll make you sing. Do you understand?

FIRST MUSICIAN Just try it. You'll hear us sing, alright.

PETER Aw, c'mon, I was only joking. I'm a jokester, I'll tell you so many jokes you'll wish you were dead. Now tell me:

(Singing)

*With griping grief the heart is wounded
And depression dumps upon your mind,
Then music with her silver sound-*

Why 'silver sound'? What do they mean when they say 'Music with her silver sound'? What do you think, musician?

FIRST MUSICIAN It's because silver has a sweet sound.

PETER Ridiculous. *(To another musician)* What do you think?

SECOND MUSICIAN I say 'silver sound' because musicians make sounds to earn silver coins.

PETER Also ridiculous. *(To another musician)* What do you think?

THIRD MUSICIAN Huh? I don't know.

PETER Oh right, apologies, you must be the singer. I'll tell you the answer. It is 'music with her silver sound' because musicians have no gold to use to pay for their instruments.

(Singing)

*Then music with her silver sound
With speedy help will make you feel okay again*

PETER leaves.

FIRST MUSICIAN What an idiot.

SECOND MUSICIAN Don't worry about it. Come on, we'll go downstairs and wait for the mourners. We might get some dinner out of it.

The MUSICIANS leave.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

ROMEO is in the streets of Mantua.

ROMEO

If I can trust the happy dreams that come to me in my sleep, then perhaps they tell my future. I feel my heart is filled with love and I'm lifted above the ground with cheerful thoughts. I dreamt that my lady came and found me dead – a strange dream, where a dead man can still see and hear what's going on – and she breathed life into me with her kisses. I rose back to my feet, alive once again, and was an emperor. What a great feeling, even the shadows of my love are enough to make me rich with joy.

ROMEO's servant BALTHASAR arrives.

ROMEO

Do you have any news? Come on, Balthasar, don't you have any letters from the Friar? How is my wife? Is my father well? How is my Juliet? That's what I want to know most. As long as she's okay then nothing else matters.

BALTHASAR

In that case: she is well, and nothing is wrong.

BALTHASAR pauses and clears his throat, unable to lie any further.

BALTHASAR

Her body sleeps in the Capulet family's tomb and her immortal soul has flown up to the heavens to be with the angels. I saw her laid to rest with her ancestors and quickly came to find you. I'm sorry for bringing you this bad news, but you left me orders to tell you if anything happened, sir.

ROMEO

How can that be true? I defy the stars themselves! Come and get me, God. Balthasar, get me ink and paper. Hire some horses for us both. I'll be leaving Mantua at sundown.

BALTHASAR

Sir, please, calm down. Don't do anything rash, you'll hurt yourself.

ROMEO

Ha, don't kid yourself. Go and tell what you're told. Do you have any letters for me from the Friar?

BALTHASAR

No, my lord.

ROMEO

It doesn't matter. Get going and hire those horses. I'll be with you shortly.

BALTHASAR leaves and ROMEO starts walking while thinking aloud.

ROMEO

My Juliet, I will lie alongside you tonight in some way or another. Evil is quick to enter my thoughts as I become desperate. There's a pharmacist who lives near here – I've seen him, he dresses like a homeless man and has big bushy eyebrows. He makes drugs and potions. He doesn't look like much because his own misery seems to have worn him down to his bones. But his store is strange and exotic – with tortoise shells and stuffed alligators and the skins of weirdly-shaped fish arranged along his shelves, along with empty boxes, green pottery, dried up seeds, and old string and dried-up rose cakes scattered around them to make it look like a herb shop. He is obviously poor... if a man ever needed poison then surely this is the man who is desperate enough to sell it to someone.

ROMEO stops outside a closed-up store.

ROMEO

As I remember, this should be the house. It must be shut for the holiday. (*Calling out*) Hey, pharmacist!

The PHARMACIST comes out.

PHARMACIST Who's that making all that noise?

ROMEO Come here, man, I can see how poor you are. I have forty pieces of gold I can pay you for a cup of poison. Make sure it's fast-acting poison that will disperse itself through all the veins so quickly that the life-weary taker will fall dead almost immediately. I want it to work as violently and quickly as gunpowder fired from a canon.

PHARMACIST I could give you those drugs. But Mantua's laws forbid them to be sold, on pain of death.

ROMEO How can you be this poor and pathetic and still afraid of death? You look like you've been starving, your cheeks are hollow and your eyes are desperate for food. It's obvious that you're basically a hobo. The world has not been kind to you, and neither has the law. The laws of this world have not made you rich, so take this money and be poor no longer.

ROMEO holds out the money.

PHARMACIST My poverty agrees with you, but I still don't think it's right.

ROMEO Well, it doesn't matter if you think it's right or not, I'm paying you for the sake of your poverty.

PHARMACIST *(Hands ROMEO the poison in a vial)* Put this in any liquid and it will kill you straight away once you drink it, even if you were as strong as twenty men.

ROMEO *(Handing the PHARMACIST the money)* Here's your gold, which is a far worse poison. Money is to blame for more murder in this world than any potion you could see me. In a way, I've just sold *you* some poison and you haven't sold me anything. Goodbye, pharmacist. Buy yourself some food and put some weight on. I'll take my 'medicine' with me to Juliet's grave, where it will be used.

ROMEO leaves.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

FRIAR JOHN walks into the church.

FRIAR JOHN Holy Franciscan Friar! Hey, Brother!

FRIAR LAWRENCE comes out from the back room.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Is that you, Friar John? Welcome back from Mantua. What message does Romeo send? Or did he give you a letter?

FRIAR JOHN I never went! I tried to find another priest to travel there with me. I'd heard he was here in the city visiting the sick, but when I found him the health officials told me that they believed we both may have exposed to the plague. They sealed up all the doors on the house and wouldn't let us out. I was stuck there this whole time.

FRIAR LAWRENCE So who took my letter to Romeo?

FRIAR JOHN No one. I couldn't send it. Here is it (*He hands the letter to FRIAR LAWRENCE*). I couldn't even find a messenger to bring it back to you because everyone's afraid to travel during this outbreak of plague.

FRIAR LAWRENCE What!? Oh Brother, this is terrible. The letter wasn't just a postcard, it included some important information, and if Romeo hasn't read it then it may lead to much danger. Friar John, go and get me an iron crowbar. Bring it straight back here.

FRIAR JOHN Yes, Brother, I'll go and bring it here.

FRIAR JOHN leaves.

FRIAR LAWRENCE I must get down to that tomb alone. Juliet will wake up in three hours' time and she will be upset that Romeo isn't aware of our secret plan. I must write another letter to send to Mantua. I'll keep Juliet hidden until Romeo comes. Oh that poor girl, closed up in a dead man's tomb like a corpse!

FRIAR LAWRENCE leaves.

ACT 5, SCENE 3

Night-time in the churchyard. PARIS enters with his PAGE.

PARIS Give you your torch, boy, and then go away and give me some privacy. (*The PAGE goes to give PARIS the lit torch*) Wait, put it out so no one can see me. (*The PAGE does so*) Now go and hide under those yew trees along the fence and make sure no one comes. If you hear someone coming, then signal me by whistling. Give me those flowers. Now go.

The PAGE gives PARIS the flowers.

PAGE (*To himself*) It's a bit scary hanging out in this graveyard at night. I guess it's a bit of an adventure!

The PAGE moves off under the trees.

PARIS (*Scattering flowers over JULIET's closed tomb*) Sweet flower, I cover your bridal bed with petals because... (*He becomes upset*) Oh, we should have been married! Now you are covered in dust and stones. I will keep these flowers fresh as long as possible by watering them every night, or I'll replace them nightly and weep for you.

The PAGE whistles

PARIS The boy is warning me that someone approaches. What bastard is coming here at night? This is a private moment of love. Dammit, they're carrying a torch, I better hide in the shadows.

PARIS hides. ROMEO and BALTHASAR arrive.

ROMEO Hand me that mattock and crowbar. (*BALTHASAR hands ROMEO some tools*) Here, now take this letter. When the sun starts to rise I want you to deliver it to my father, Lord Montague. Now give me that light.

ROMEO hands his letter to BALTHASAR and takes the torch from him.

ROMEO Swear on your life that, no matter what you are about to hear or see, you will stay away and not interrupt. I am going to descent into this bed of death to see my lady's face one last time, and also take a precious ring from her dead finger. I have a future purpose for this ring. Anyway, get out of here. If you come back to spy on me I will break every bone in your body and then throw your limbs all over the churchyard. This is a savage and wild time. I am more furious than a starving tiger or a roaring sea.

BALTHASAR I'll go, sir, and I won't cause you any trouble.

ROMEO That would be kind of you. Take this (*He gives BALTHASAR some money*). Live and be prosperous, and farewell, good friend.

BALTHASAR (*Speaking to himself*) I will still hide nearby. He has a crazed look on his face and I don't really trust what he says.

BALTHASAR crouches into a hiding spot, and falls asleep.

ROMEO (*Speaking to the tomb*) You detestable womb of death, you have stuffed yourself full of the dearest meal on this earth – my Juliet. I will force open your rotten jaws and cram even more food into you.

ROMEO begins to open the tomb with his tools.

PARIS (*Speaking to himself*) It's that banished up-himself Montague, the one who murdered my love's cousin! It was because of her grief over Tybalt that my beautiful fiancé died, and now this villain has come to commit more sins against her. I will protect the dead bodies within and perform a citizen's arrest.

PARIS comes out of his hiding spot and shouts at ROMEO.

PARIS Stop your evil activities, vile Montague. How disgusting do you have to be to want to take revenge on those who are already dead? You villain, I have caught you. Now listen to me and come quietly. You must die.

ROMEO I must indeed, and that's why I'm here. Good and noble young man, don't tempt me to do something crazy to you. Get out of here and leave me alone. Think about those who have already died and think about how they got there. It could be you next, if you're not careful. Would you have me commit even more sins by encouraging my fury? Go away! By God, I have no love for myself and have come here to face the villain you speak of. Run away, and you can live to say that a madman showed mercy to you.

PARIS No, I am arresting you for your crimes.

ROMEO Now you are just provoking me. Come at me, boy!

ROMEO and PARIS draw swords and start fighting.

PAGE Oh lord, they're going to kill each other. I better call the police!

The PAGE runs off.

ROMEO thrusts his sword through PARIS, who then falls to the ground.

PARIS Ah! This is death. Show me mercy... open the tomb and lay me with Juliet.

PARIS dies.

ROMEO

Okay, I will – let me look closely at your face. (*ROMEO bends down to look closely at PARIS, using the torch to see more clearly*) Oh, you are Count Paris, a relative of Mercutio! What did my servant say previously to me while we rode back to Verona? I didn't listen very carefully but I think he said that Paris was going to marry Juliet before she died. Is that what he said? Or did I dream it? Or am I just losing my mind?

ROMEO holds PARIS's hand.

ROMEO

Give me your hand. Both of us have had great misfortune. I'll bury you in the honourable fashion.

ROMEO lets go of PARIS's hand and opens the tomb up, revealing JULIET inside.

ROMEO

(*Talking to PARIS's body*) This is no grave, this is a lantern, my dead Paris. Juliet's beauty lights up this vault. Death is all around us now. I will put you to rest – one dead man burying another dead man.

ROMEO lays PARIS in the tomb.

ROMEO

I've heard that men often feel this happiness right before their moment of death. Oh, my love, my wife! Death has sucked the honey out of your breath but has not yet taken your beauty. Your lips are still crimson, your cheeks still blush. Death's pale flag has not claimed your face yet. Is Tybalt here too, under that bloody sheet? Tybalt, I am about to do you a great favour by killing the man who cut you down in your youth. Forgive me, cousin. Oh, dear Juliet, why are you still so beautiful? Has death realised how beautiful you are and spared your looks? Has death fallen in love with you? Does this monster keep you here in the dark as his secret lover? I will stay here with you, forever, to keep this monster away. We will never leave this palace of dim night. I will remain here forever, with worms as my servants.

ROMEO makes space next to JULIET's body in the tomb, and lies next to her.

ROMEO

This is where I will rest forever. My body is weary from all my bad luck. I will take one last look at you. (*ROMEO takes JULIET in his arms*) I will embrace you one last time. And your lips, I will seal with one more kiss, to symbolise the deal that I have made with death to stay with you always.

ROMEO kisses JULIET and takes out his vial of poison.

ROMEO

Okay, bitter poison, guide me on my forbidden journey! You are like a desperate sea-captain, and we will smash this breaking ship apart on the rocks together. Here's to you, my love.

ROMEO drinks the poison.

ROMEO

Oh, that pharmacist was honest! His drugs are quick, so I die with a kiss.

ROMEO dies.

FRIAR LAWRENCE comes running into the graveyard with a lantern, crowbar, and shovel.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Saint Francis, give me speed! My old feet have stumbled too much tonight... who's there?

BALTHASAR A friend. One who knows you well.

FRIAR LAWRENCE God bless you, friend. Tell me – where is that light coming from? Who would light up a graveyard just for the grubs and eyeless skulls? It looks like it's coming from the Capulet Family tomb.

BALTHASAR Yes, father, it is. My master is down there, your dear friend and student.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Who is it?

BALTHASAR Romeo.

FRIAR LAWRENCE How long has he been in there?

BALTHASAR A full half hour.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Come with me into the tomb.

BALTHASAR No, sir. My master sent me away and doesn't know I'm still here. He told me he would kill me if I saw what he was doing.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Fine. Stay up here. I'll go down there by myself. Suddenly I feel very afraid about what I will discover.

BALTHASAR I was asleep under these trees, and I dreamt that my master fought someone. I dream he killed this person.

FRIAR LAWRENCE *(Going into the tomb)* Romeo! Oh, what is this blood that stains the floor? Look at these gore-covered swords in this place of peace. *(He reaches the final resting place inside the tomb)* Romeo... you're so pale! Who's that there with you? Paris too? So much blood. When did this tragedy occur. The lady stirs awake.

JULIET wakes up.

JULIET Oh, Friar, I am so relieved to see your friendly face. Where is my husband? I remember our plan. Where is my Romeo?

A noise can be heard outside the tomb.

FRIAR LAWRENCE I hear some noise. Lady, come out of the this place of death and disease and unnatural sleep. Something greater than us has destroyed our plans. Come on, come on, your husband is next to you and dead. Paris is here too, also dead. Come on, I'll hide you with some nuns. Don't stay here, I think the police are coming. Come on, good Juliet, we can't waste any more time here.

JULIET Go, go away. I'll stay here.

FRIAR LAWRENCE leaves.

JULIET What is this? A cup, closed in my true love's hand... poison has put him to sleep forever. He has rudely drunk it all, leaving none to help me follow him. Romeo, I'll kiss your lips, hopefully there's some poison still on them and I will die from your sweet medicine. *(She kisses ROMEO)* Your lips are warm.

The POLICE enter the graveyard with PARIS's PAGE.

POLICE CHIEF (To the PAGE) Lead on, boy. Where are they?

JULIET What is this noise? I need to act quickly. Oh, happy dagger. I am your sheath. Rust inside me and let me die.

JULIET stabs herself with ROMEO's dagger and dies.

PAGE Here, this is the place. See where the torch is still burning?

The POLICE enter the tomb.

POLICE CHIEF The ground is covered in blood. Men, search around the graveyard. Go and arrest anyone who is hanging around.

Some of the POLICE leave to begin searching the graveyard.

POLICE CHIEF This is a pitiful sight. The Count is dead. Juliet is dead but still warm, bleeding all over the place, even though she was buried two days ago. Some of you and go and tell the Prince. Run to the Capulets, wake up the Montagues. Keep searching the area.

More of the POLICE leave, heading off in different directions.

POLICE CHIEF I can see how these deaths were caused – the dagger and the poison – but the true reasons behind all this we're yet to know.

One of the POLICEMEN enters with BALTHASAR.

POLICEMAN TWO Here's Romeo's man. We found him in the churchyard.

POLICE CHIEF Keep him safe until the Prince gets here.

Another POLICEMAN comes in with FRIAR LAWRENCE.

POLICEMAN THREE Here's a trembling friar. I found him crying at the edge of the graveyard. We confiscated a mattock and a shovel from him.

POLICE CHIEF This is getting very suspicious. Keep the friar under arrest too.

The PRINCE enters with his own GUARDS.

PRINCE What crime is so great that I had to be woken up this early?

Lord CAPULET and LADY CAPULET enter.

CAPULET What's going on? What's all this shrieking about?

LADY CAPULET People in the street are crying 'Romeo'. Some are talking about Juliet and Paris, and they're all gathering outside our family tomb. It's an angry mob.

PRINCE What's everyone getting worked up about?

POLICE CHIEF Noble Prince, Count Paris has been killed. And Romeo is dead too, and Juliet – who we previously thought dead – is warm and seems to have died just recently.

PRINCE What a foul murder. Find out what happened!

POLICE CHIEF Here is a friar, and Romeo's servant. We found them carrying tools that could be used to open this tomb.

CAPULET Oh God, wife, look at how our daughter bleeds! That Montague dagger has been pulled from Romeo's sheath and plunged into our daughter's breast.

LADY CAPULET Oh, the sight of this death is a bell that rings as a warning to me... I can't have long left on this earth. I will be dead too soon.

Lord MONTAGE arrives.

PRINCE Come down, Montague. You've gotten up early to see that your son has left this earth early.

MONTAGUE Oh, my Lord, my wife died tonight. She was overcome with so much grief over our son's banishment that her heart stopped. What further misery is there for me to face in my old age?

PRINCE Look, and you will see.

MONTAGUE (*Seeing ROMEO's body and becoming very sad*) You... you wild and impolite boy. You have such terrible manners... pushing in front of your father on our way to the grave.

PRINCE Everyone, quiet now, hold back your outrage for a moment. We have things we need to clear up so we can know what truly happened here. After we figure this out I will then stand and listen to all your grievances, and may even sentence some people to death. For the moment though, be patient. (*To the POLICE CHIEF*) Bring forth the suspicious parties.

FRIAR LAWRENCE I am the most suspicious and was unable to stop any of this tragedy. I was here at the time and place of this terrible murder. And here I stand, for you interrogate and punish me. I have already condemned and counselled myself.

PRINCE Tell us immediately what you know.

FRIAR LAWRENCE I will be brief. I don't think I'll live long enough to tell this tedious tale in the fullest detail. Romeo, now dead, was husband to Juliet. And she, also dead, was Romeo's faithful wife. I married them. Their secret marriage took place on the same day that Tybalt was killed. When Romeo murdered Tybalt he was banished from this city just after he had been married. Juliet became increasingly sad – not because her cousin had been killed but because Romeo had been removed from her. Then, in an attempt to address her sadness, a marriage to Count Paris was forced upon her. She came to me, more upset than ever, and asked for a plan that would help her escape this second marriage otherwise she was going to kill herself. So I called upon my skill with herbs and gave her a sleeping potion which would make it look like she had died.

FRIAR LAWRENCE pauses and looks around at the shocked faces of his audience.

FRIAR LAWRENCE Then I wrote to Romeo, organising for him to come here tonight and help rescue Juliet from her fake grave. It was at this time that the potion should have worn off. Unfortunately, my letter to Romeo did not arrive - the messenger, Friar John, was kept from leaving. Last night, Friar John returned my letter, so I came here as quickly as I could so I would be here when she woke up. I would have

taken her back to the church to wait for Romeo there. But when I came here I was several minutes too late... noble Paris and her beloved Romeo both lay here dead. Juliet woke up and I tried to get her to leave with me but... but I was spooked by noises outside and ran away. She would not leave with me. And while I was gone, she committed violence against herself. This is what I know. The Capulet Nurse knows much of this too. If you believe any of this to my fault, let my old life be sacrificed and punish me in the most severe way possible.

PRINCE I know you to be a holy man, Father. I believe you to be an honest man. Where's Romeo's servant? What do you say about all of this?

BALTHASAR I took news to my master of Juliet's death. He rode here from Mantua to this tomb. (*BALTHASAR shows the PRINCE a letter*) Early this morning he told me to give this letter to his father. He threatened me with death if I came into this tomb. He made me swear to leave him alone.

PRINCE Give that to me. Let me read it. (*He takes the letter*) Where's the Count's Page-boy? The one who called the police. (*He sees the PAGE*) Boy, why was your master here?

PAGE He came with flowers to put on his lady's grave. He told me to give him privacy, so I did. Then someone came with a torch and tried to open the tomb. My master pulled out his sword and started fighting him, so I ran and got the police.

PRINCE (*Quickly skim-reading over the letter*) This letter corroborates the Friar's story. Romeo talks about his love for Juliet, and how he heard about her death. He writes about the poison he bought from a poor pharmacist. He brought this poison down to this tomb so he could die and lie next to Juliet. Where are the old enemies? Capulet! Montague!

The PRINCE looks up and addressed Lord CAPULET and Lord MONTAGUE.

PRINCE Do you see what tragedy has come from your hatred of one another? God has figured out a way to kill the happiness in your lives by using love. And because I, the ruler of this city, turned a blind eye to your feud, I lost members of my family too. We have all been punished!

CAPULET Montague, my brother, give me your hand. This tomb for your son is my dowry for their wedding. I ask for nothing.

MONTAGUE I will give you more than that though... I'll raise a statue of Juliet in pure gold, and while Verona still stands, no figure will be looked upon with more love than the true and faithful Juliet.

CAPULET I will make a statue of Romeo to lie beside Juliet and it will be just as golden. Our rivalry has led to the sacrifice of our children.

PRINCE Peace has come at a great and evil price this morning. The sun is still yet to rise because of the sadness it feels. Let us dwell on this sadness longer. Some of you will be pardoned from your crimes, and others will be punished. I cannot think of a story more miserable and painful than the story of Juliet and her Romeo.

They all leave.







