

Romeo and Juliet  
William Shakespeare

**ACT I**

**PROLOGUE**

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

**SCENE I. Verona. A public place.**

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

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

No, for then we should be colliers.

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar.

**SAMPSON**

I strike quickly, being moved.

**GREGORY**

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

**SAMPSON**

A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

**GREGORY**

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

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

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

**SAMPSON**

True; and therefore women, being the weaker vessels,  
are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push  
Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids  
to the wall.

**GREGORY**

The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

**SAMPSON**

'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I  
have fought with the men, I will be cruel with the  
maids, and cut off their heads.

**GREGORY**

The heads of the maids?

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

They must take it in sense that feel it.

**SAMPSON**

Me they shall feel while I am able to stand: and

'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

**GREGORY**

'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor John. Draw thy tool! here comes two of the house of the Montagues.

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

How! turn thy back and run?

**SAMPSON**

Fear me not.

**GREGORY**

No, marry; I fear thee!

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

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

**SAMPSON**

Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them; which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.

*Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR*

**ABRAHAM**

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON**

I do bite my thumb, sir.

**ABRAHAM**

Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON**

[Aside to GREGORY] Is the law of our side, if I say  
ay?

**GREGORY**

No.

**SAMPSON**

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

**GREGORY**

Do you quarrel, sir?

**ABRAHAM**

Quarrel sir! no, sir.

**SAMPSON**

If you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.

**ABRAHAM**

No better.

**SAMPSON**

Well, sir.

**GREGORY**

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

**SAMPSON**

Yes, better, sir.

**ABRAHAM**

You lie.

**SAMPSON**

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

*They fight*

*Enter BENVOLIO*

**BENVOLIO**

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

*Beats down their swords*

*Enter TYBALT*

**TYBALT**

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?  
Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

**BENVOLIO**

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

**TYBALT**

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

*They fight*

*Enter, several of both houses, who join the fray; then enter Citizens, with clubs*

**First Citizen**

Clubs, bills, and partisans! strike! beat them down!  
Down with the Capulets! down with the Montagues!

*Enter CAPULET in his gown, and LADY CAPULET*

**CAPULET**

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

**LADY CAPULET**

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

**CAPULET**

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

*Enter MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE*

**MONTAGUE**

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

**LADY MONTAGUE**

Thou shalt not stir a foot to seek a foe.

*Enter PRINCE, with Attendants*

**PRINCE**

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

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

**MONTAGUE**

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

**BENVOLIO**

Here were the servants of your adversary,  
And yours, close fighting ere I did approach:  
I drew to part them: in the instant came

The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared,  
Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,  
He swung about his head and cut the winds,  
Who nothing hurt withal hiss'd him in scorn:  
While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,  
Came more and more and fought on part and part,  
Till the prince came, who parted either part.

#### **LADY MONTAGUE**

O, where is Romeo? saw you him to-day?  
Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

#### **BENVOLIO**

Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun  
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,  
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad;  
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore  
That westward rooteth from the city's side,  
So early walking did I see your son:  
Towards him I made, but he was ware of me  
And stole into the covert of the wood:  
I, measuring his affections by my own,  
That most are busied when they're most alone,  
Pursued my humour not pursuing his,  
And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me.

#### **MONTAGUE**

Many a morning hath he there been seen,  
With tears augmenting the fresh morning dew.  
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;  
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun  
Should in the furthest east begin to draw  
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,  
Away from the light steals home my heavy son,  
And private in his chamber pens himself,  
Shuts up his windows, locks far daylight out  
And makes himself an artificial night:  
Black and portentous must this humour prove,  
Unless good counsel may the cause remove.

#### **BENVOLIO**

My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

#### **MONTAGUE**

I neither know it nor can learn of him.

**BENVOLIO**

Have you importuned him by any means?

**MONTAGUE**

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

*Enter ROMEO*

**BENVOLIO**

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

**MONTAGUE**

I would thou wert so happy by thy stay,  
To hear true shrift. Come, madam, let's away.

*Exeunt MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE*

**BENVOLIO**

Good-morrow, cousin.

**ROMEO**

Is the day so young?

**BENVOLIO**

But new struck nine.

**ROMEO**

Ay me! sad hours seem long.  
Was that my father that went hence so fast?

**BENVOLIO**

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?



**ROMEO**

Not having that, which, having, makes them short.

**BENVOLIO**

In love?

**ROMEO**

Out--

**BENVOLIO**

Of love?

**ROMEO**

Out of her favour, where I am in love.

**BENVOLIO**

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,  
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

**ROMEO**

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,  
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!  
Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was here?  
Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.  
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.  
Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!  
O any thing, of nothing first create!  
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!  
Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!  
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire,  
sick health!  
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!  
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.  
Dost thou not laugh?

**BENVOLIO**

No, coz, I rather weep.

**ROMEO**

Good heart, at what?

**BENVOLIO**

At thy good heart's oppression.

**ROMEO**

Why, such is love's transgression.  
Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,  
Which thou wilt propagate, to have it prest  
With more of thine: this love that thou hast shown  
Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.  
Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;  
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;  
Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears:  
What is it else? a madness most discreet,  
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.  
Farewell, my coz.

**BENVOLIO**

Soft! I will go along;  
An if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

**ROMEO**

Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here;  
This is not Romeo, he's some other where.

**BENVOLIO**

Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.

**ROMEO**

What, shall I groan and tell thee?

**BENVOLIO**

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

**ROMEO**

Bid a sick man in sadness make his will:  
Ah, word ill urged to one that is so ill!  
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

**BENVOLIO**

I aim'd so near, when I supposed you loved.

**ROMEO**

A right good mark-man! And she's fair I love.

**BENVOLIO**

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

**ROMEO**

Well, in that hit you miss: she'll not be hit  
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit;  
And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,  
From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd.  
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,  
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,  
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold:  
O, she is rich in beauty, only poor,  
That when she dies with beauty dies her store.

**BENVOLIO**

Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

**ROMEO**

She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste,  
For beauty starved with her severity  
Cuts beauty off from all posterity.  
She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair,  
To merit bliss by making me despair:  
She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow  
Do I live dead that live to tell it now.

**BENVOLIO**

Be ruled by me, forget to think of her.

**ROMEO**

O, teach me how I should forget to think.

**BENVOLIO**

By giving liberty unto thine eyes;  
Examine other beauties.

**ROMEO**

'Tis the way  
To call hers exquisite, in question more:  
These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows  
Being black put us in mind they hide the fair;

He that is stricken blind cannot forget  
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost:  
Show me a mistress that is passing fair,  
What doth her beauty serve, but as a note  
Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?  
Farewell: thou canst not teach me to forget.

**BENVOLIO**

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

*Exeunt*