

ACT 2, SCENE 4

Enter BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO

MERCUTIO

Where the devil should this Romeo be?
Came he not home tonight?

BENVOLIO

Not to his father's. I spoke with his man.

MERCUTIO

Why, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline,
5 Torments him so, that he will sure run mad.

BENVOLIO

Tybalt, the kinsman to old Capulet,
Hath sent a letter to his father's house.

MERCUTIO

A challenge, on my life.

BENVOLIO

Romeo will answer it.

MERCUTIO

10 Any man that can write may answer a letter.

BENVOLIO

Nay, he will answer the letter's master, how he dares, being
dared.

MERCUTIO

Alas, poor Romeo! He is already dead, stabbed with a white
15 wench's black eye, shot through the ear with a love song, the
very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt
shaft. And is he a man to encounter Tybalt?

BENVOLIO

Why, what is Tybalt?

MERCUTIO

More than Prince of Cats. Oh, he's the courageous captain
of compliments. He fights as you sing prick-song, keeps
20 time, distance, and proportion. He rests his minim rests—

ACT 2, SCENE 4
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 2, SCENE 4

BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO enter.

MERCUTIO

Where the devil can Romeo be? Didn't he come home last night?

BENVOLIO

Not to his father's house. I asked a servant.

MERCUTIO

That fair-skinned, hard-hearted hussy, Rosaline is going to torment him until he goes insane.

BENVOLIO

Tybalt, old Capulet's nephew, has sent a letter to Romeo's father's house.

MERCUTIO

I bet it's a challenge.

BENVOLIO

Romeo will answer the challenge.

MERCUTIO

Any man who knows how to write can answer a letter.

BENVOLIO

No, Romeo will respond to the letter's writer, telling him whether he accepts the challenge.

MERCUTIO

Oh, poor Romeo! He's already dead. He's been stabbed by a white girl's black eye. He's been cut through the ear with a love song. The center of his heart has been split by blind Cupid's arrow. Is he man enough at this point to face off with Tybalt?

BENVOLIO

Why, what's Tybalt's story?

MERCUTIO

*The Prince of Cats
is a figure from
Medieval lore
whose first name
was also Tybalt.*

He's tougher than the Prince of Cats. He does everything by the book. He fights like you sing at a recital, paying attention to time, distance, and proportion. He

one, two, and the third in your bosom. The very butcher of a silk button, a duelist, a duelist, a gentleman of the very first house of the first and second cause. Ah, the immortal *passado*, the *punto reverso*, the *hai*!

BENVOLIO

25 The what?

MERCUTIO

30 The pox of such antic, lipping, affecting fantasmies, these new tuners of accents! "By Jesu, a very good blade! A very tall man! A very good whore!" Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these "pardon me's," who stand so much on the new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? Oh, their bones, their bones!

Enter ROMEO

BENVOLIO

 Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

MERCUTIO

35 Without his roe, like a dried herring. O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in. Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench—marry, she had a better love to berhyme her—Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gypsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots, Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose.—
40 Signior Romeo, *bonjour*! There's a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

takes the proper breaks: one, two, and the third in your heart. He's the butcher who can hit any silk button. A master of duels. He's a gentleman from the finest school of fencing. He knows how to turn any argument into a swordfight. He knows *passado*—the forward thrust—the *punto reverso*—the backhand thrust—and the *hai*—the thrust that goes straight through.

→
Mercutio lists
Italian terms for
fencing moves.

BENVOLIO

He knows what?

MERCUTIO

I hate these crazy, affected guys who use foreign phrases and newfangled expressions. I hate their strange manners and their weird accents! I hate it when they say, "By Jesus, this is a very good blade, a very brave man, a very good whore." Isn't this a sad thing, my good man? Why should we put up with these foreign buzzards, these fashionmongers, these guys who say "pardon me," these guys who care so much about manners that they can't kick back on a bench without whining? "Oh, my aching bones!"

ROMEO enters.

BENVOLIO

Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo!

MERCUTIO

He looks skinny, like a dried herring without its eggs, and he hasn't got his girl. O flesh, flesh, you've turned pale and weak like a fish. Now he's ready for Petrarch's poetry. Compared to Romeo's girl, Laura was a kitchen slave. Surely she has a better love to make rhymes for her. Dido was shabbily dressed. Cleopatra was a gypsy girl. Helen and Hero were sluts and harlots. Thisbe might have had a blue eye or two, but that doesn't matter. Signor Romeo, *bonjour*. There's a French greeting that matches your drooping French-style pants. You faked us out pretty good last night.

→
Mercutio teases
Romeo by allud-
ing to the poet
Petrarch and six
mythical and
historical women
who inspired love
poetry.

ROMEO

Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?

MERCUTIO

The slip, sir, the slip. Can you not conceive?

ROMEO

45

Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great, and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.

MERCUTIO

That's as much as to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams.

ROMEO

Meaning "to curtsy"?

MERCUTIO

Thou hast most kindly hit it.

ROMEO

50

A most courteous exposition.

MERCUTIO

Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

ROMEO

Pink for flower.

MERCUTIO

Right.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROMEO

Good morning to you both. What do you mean I faked you out?

MERCUTIO

You gave us the slip, sir, the slip. Can't you understand what I'm saying?

ROMEO

Excuse me, good Mercutio. I had very important business to take care of. It was so important that I had to forget about courtesy and good manners.

MERCUTIO

→
*Mercutio implies
Romeo's business
was sexual.*

In other words "important business" made you flex your buttocks.

ROMEO

You mean do a curtsy?

MERCUTIO

→
*This is sexual
double entendre.*

You've hit the target, sir.

ROMEO

That's a very polite and courteous explanation.

MERCUTIO

Yes, I am the pink flower—the master, of courtesy and manners.

ROMEO

→
*"Pink flower"
suggests the
female genitalia.*

The pink flower.

MERCUTIO

Right.

ROMEO

Why, then is my pump well flowered.

MERCUTIO

55

Sure wit, follow me this jest now till thou hast worn out thy pump, that when the single sole of it is worn, the jest may remain, after the wearing solely singular.

ROMEO

O single-soled jest, solely singular for the singleness.

MERCUTIO

Come between us, good Benvolio. My wits faints.

ROMEO

60

Switch and spurs, switch and spurs, or I'll cry a match.

MERCUTIO

Nay, if our wits run the wild-goose chase, I am done, for thou hast more of the wild-goose in one of thy wits than, I am sure, I have in my whole five. Was I with you there for the goose?

ROMEO

65

Thou wast never with me for anything when thou wast not there for the goose.

MERCUTIO

I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.

ROMEO

Nay, good goose, bite not.

MERCUTIO

Thy wit is a very bitter sweetening. It is a most sharp sauce.

ROMEO

70

And is it not well served into a sweet goose?

MERCUTIO

Oh, here's a wit of cheveril, that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad!

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROMEO

*Romeo plays
along: pump=
shoe and penis.*

Well, then my pump is well decorated with flowers.

MERCUTIO

Alright my witty friend, this joke has worn out your pump. Its thin skin is all worn out. The joke is all you have left.

ROMEO

This is a bad joke. It's all silliness.

MERCUTIO

Come break this up, Benvolio. I'm losing this duel of wits.

ROMEO

Keep going, keep going, or I'll declare myself the winner.

MERCUTIO

Now, if our jokes go on a wild-goose chase, I'm finished. You have more wild goose in one of your jokes than I have in five of mine. Was I even close to you in the chase for the goose?

ROMEO

*Romeo implies
that Mercutio is
only good for
jokes.*

You were never with me for anything if you weren't there for the goose.

MERCUTIO

I'll bite you on the ear for that joke.

ROMEO

No, good goose, don't bite me.

MERCUTIO

Your joke is a very bitter apple. Your humor is a spicy sauce.

ROMEO

Then isn't it just the right dish for a sweet goose?

MERCUTIO

Oh, that's a joke made out of leather that spreads itself thin, from the width of an inch to as fat as a yard.

ROMEO

I stretch it out for that word "broad," which, added to the goose, proves thee far and wide a broad goose.

MERCUTIO

75

Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable. Now art thou Romeo. Now art thou what thou art—by art as well as by nature, for this driveling love is like a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole.

BENVOLIO

80

Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO

Thou desirest me to stop in my tale against the hair,

BENVOLIO

Thou wouldst else have made thy tale large.

MERCUTIO

85

Oh, thou art deceived. I would have made it short, for I was come to the whole depth of my tale, and meant, indeed, to occupy the argument no longer.

Enter NURSE and her man PETER

ROMEO

Here's goodly gear.

BENVOLIO

A sail, a sail!

MERCUTIO

Two, two—a shirt and a smock.

NURSE

Peter!

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ROMEO

I stretch my joke for that word "fat." If you add that word to the word "goose," it shows that you are a fat goose.

MERCUTIO

Why, isn't all this joking better than groaning about love? Now you're sociable. Now you're Romeo. Now you are what you've learned to be and what you are naturally. This love of yours was like a blithering idiot who runs up and down looking for a hole to hide his toy in.

→ *Toy = a double entendre for penis*

BENVOLIO

Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO

→ *Tale = a double entendre for penis*

You want me to stop my tale before I'm done.

BENVOLIO

Otherwise your tale would have gotten too long.

MERCUTIO

Oh, you're wrong. I would have made it short. I had come to the deepest part of my tale, and I planned to say nothing more on the topic.

The NURSE enters with her servant, PETER.

ROMEO

Here's something good.

BENVOLIO

→ *Benvolio makes the cry of a sailor who spots another ship on the horizon because the nurse is fat and silly-looking.*

A sail, a sail!

MERCUTIO

There's two—a man and a woman.

NURSE

Peter!

PETER

90 Anon!

NURSE

My fan, Peter.

MERCUTIO

Good, Peter, to hide her face, for her fan's the fairer face.

NURSE

God ye good morrow, gentlemen.

MERCUTIO

God ye good e'en, fair gentlewoman.

NURSE

95 Is it good e'en?

MERCUTIO

'Tis no less, I tell you, for the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon.

NURSE

Out upon you! What a man are you?

MERCUTIO

One, gentlewoman, that God hath made, himself to mar.

NURSE100 By my troth, it is well said. "For himself to mar," quoth he?
Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where I may find the young Romeo?**ROMEO**

105 I can tell you, but young Romeo will be older when you have found him than he was when you sought him. I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse.

NURSE

You say well.

MERCUTIO

Yea, is the worst well? Very well took, i' faith, wisely, wisely.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

PETER

I'm at your service.

NURSE

Give me my fan, Peter.

MERCUTIO

Good Peter, give her her fan to hide her face. Her fan is prettier than her face.

NURSE

Good morning, gentlemen.

MERCUTIO

Good afternoon, fair lady.

NURSE

Is it now afternoon?

MERCUTIO

→ Again, Mercutio's language is full of offensive sexual innuendo.

It's not earlier than that, I tell you. The lusty hand of the clock is now pricking noon.

NURSE

Get out of here! What kind of man are you?

MERCUTIO

I'm a man, my lady, that God has made for himself to ruin.

NURSE

I swear, you speak the truth. "For himself to ruin," he says. Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where I can find young Romeo?

ROMEO

I can tell you, but young Romeo will be older when you find him than he was when you started looking for him. I am the youngest man by that name, because there is no one younger, or worse.

NURSE

You speak well.

MERCUTIO

Is the worst well? Very well taken, I believe, very wise.

NURSE

If you be he, sir, I desire some confidence with you.

BENVOLIO

She will indite him to some supper.

MERCUTIO

110 A bawd, a bawd, a bawd! So ho!

ROMEO

What hast thou found?

MERCUTIO

No hare, sir, unless a hare, sir, in a Lenten pie—that is, something stale and hoar ere it be spent.

(sings)

115

*An old hare hoar,
And an old hare hoar,
Is very good meat in Lent.
But a hare that is hoar
Is too much for a score
When it hoars ere it be spent.*

(speaks)

120

Romeo, will you come to your father's? We'll to dinner, thither.

ROMEO

I will follow you.

MERCUTIO

Farewell, ancient lady. Farewell, lady, lady, lady.

Exeunt MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

NURSE

The nurse means "conference," not confidence.

This is a joke called a malapropism, where the right word is replaced by a similar-sounding word with a completely different meaning.

(to ROMEO) If you're the Romeo I'm looking for, sir, I would like to have a confidence with you.

BENVOLIO

Benvolio makes fun of the Nurse by saying "indite" instead of "invite."

She will indite him to some dinner party.

MERCUTIO

A pimp! A pimp! A pimp! I've found it out.

ROMEO

What have you found out?

MERCUTIO

She's not a prostitute unless she's using her ugliness to hide her promiscuity.

(he walks by them and sings)

Old rabbit meat is good to eat,

If you can't get anything else.

But if it's so old,

That it goes bad before you eat it,

Then it was a waste of money.

(speaking)

Romeo, are you going to your father's for lunch? Let's go there.

ROMEO

I'll follow after you.

MERCUTIO

Mercutio mockingly sings a romantic song to the Nurse.

Goodbye, old lady. Goodbye, lady, lady, lady.

BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO exit.

NURSE

125 I pray you, sir, what saucy merchant was this that was so full of his ropery?

ROMEO

A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month.

NURSE

130 An he speak any thing against me, I'll take him down, an he were lustier than he is, and twenty such Jacks. And if I cannot, I'll find those that shall. Scurvy knave! I am none of his flirt-gills. I am none of his skains-mates. (*to PETER*) And thou must stand by, too, and suffer every knave to use me at his pleasure?

PETER

135 I saw no man use you at his pleasure. If I had, my weapon should quickly have been out, I warrant you. I dare draw as soon as another man if I see occasion in a good quarrel and the law on my side.

NURSE

140 Now, afore God, I am so vexed that every part about me quivers. Scurvy knave! (*to ROMEO*) Pray you, sir, a word. And as I told you, my young lady bid me inquire you out. What she bade me say, I will keep to myself. But first let me tell ye, if ye should lead her into a fool's paradise, as they say, it were a very gross kind of behavior, as they say. For the gentlewoman is young, and therefore, if you should deal
145 double with her, truly it were an ill thing to be offered to any gentlewoman, and very weak dealing.

ROMEO

Nurse, commend me to thy lady and mistress. I protest unto thee—

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

NURSE

Please tell me, sir, who was that foulmouthed punk who was so full of crude jokes?

ROMEO

Nurse, he's a man who likes to hear the sound of his own voice. He says more in one minute than he does in a whole month.

NURSE

If he says anything against me, I'll humble him, even if he were stronger than he is—and twenty punks like him. If I can't do it myself, I'll find someone who can. That dirty rat! I'm not one of his sluts. I'm not one of his punk friends who carries a knife. (*to PETER*) And you just stand there letting every jerk make fun of me for kicks.

PETER

I didn't see anybody use you for kicks. If I had seen something like that, I would have quickly pulled out my weapon. Believe me, I'll draw my sword as quick as any other man if I see a fight starting and the law is on my side.

NURSE

Now, I swear, I'm so angry that I'm shaking all over. That rotten scoundrel! (*to ROMEO*) Now, please, may I have a word with you, sir? My young mistress asked me to find you. What she asked me to say I'll keep to myself. But let me tell you this first. If you lead her into a fool's paradise, as the saying goes, it would be an outrageous crime because the girl is so young. And if you try to trick her, it would be an evil thing to do to any woman and very poor behavior.

ROMEO

Nurse, give my regards to to your lady. I swear to you—

NURSE

150 Good heart, and i' faith, I will tell her as much. Lord, Lord,
she will be a joyful woman.

ROMEO

What wilt thou tell her, Nurse? Thou dost not mark me.

NURSE

I will tell her, sir, that you do protest, which, as I take it, is
a gentlemanlike offer.

ROMEO

155 Bid her devise
Some means to come to shrift this afternoon.
And there she shall at Friar Lawrence' cell
Be shrived and married. (*gives her coins*) Here is for thy
pains.

NURSE

No, truly, sir. Not a penny.

ROMEO

Go to. I say you shall.

NURSE

160 (*takes the money*) This afternoon, sir? Well, she shall be there.

ROMEO

165 And stay, good Nurse. Behind the abbey wall
Within this hour my man shall be with thee
And bring thee cords made like a tackled stair,
Which to the high top-gallant of my joy
Must be my convoy in the secret night.
Farewell. Be trusty, and I'll quit thy pains.
Farewell. Commend me to thy mistress.

NURSE

Now God in heaven bless thee! Hark you, sir.

ROMEO

What sayst thou, my dear Nurse?

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

NURSE

You have a good heart, and believe me, I'll tell her that.
Lord, Lord, she'll be a happy woman.

ROMEO

What are you going to tell her, Nurse? You're not paying attention to me.

NURSE

→ Here the Nurse makes another malapropism, saying "protest" when she means "propose."

Sir, I'll tell her that you protest to her, which I think is the gentlemanly thing to do..

ROMEO

Tell her to devise a plan to get out of her house and come to confession at the abbey this afternoon. At Friar Lawrence's cell she can make confession and be married. (*giving her coins*) Here is a reward for your efforts.

NURSE

No, really, I won't take a penny.

ROMEO

Go on, I insist you take it.

NURSE

(*taking the money*) This afternoon, sir? She'll be there.

ROMEO

Wait good Nurse. Within an hour, one of my men will come to you behind the abbey wall and give you a rope ladder. I'll use the rope ladder to climb over the walls at night. Then I'll meet Juliet joyfully and in secret. Goodbye. Be honest and helpful, and I'll repay you for your efforts. Goodbye. Sing my praises to your mistress.

NURSE

May God in heaven bless you. Now please listen, sir.

ROMEO

What do you have to say, my dear Nurse?

NURSE

170 Is your man secret? Did you ne'er hear say,
"Two may keep counsel, putting one away"?

ROMEO

Warrant thee, my man's as true as steel.

NURSE

175 Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady.—Lord, Lord!
when 'twas a little prating thing.—Oh, there is a nobleman
in town, one Paris, that would fain lay knife aboard, but she,
good soul, had as lief see a toad, a very toad, as see him. I
anger her sometimes and tell her that Paris is the properer
man. But, I'll warrant you, when I say so, she looks as pale
180 as any clout in the versal world. Doth not *rosemary* and
Romeo begin both with a letter?

ROMEO

Ay, Nurse, what of that? Both with an *R*.

NURSE

Ah, mocker, that's the dog's name. *R* is for the—No, I know
it begins with some other letter, and she hath the prettiest
sententious of it, of you and *rosemary*, that it would do you
185 good to hear it.

ROMEO

Commend me to thy lady.

NURSE

Ay, a thousand times.—Peter!

PETER

Anon!

NURSE

Before and apace.

Exeunt

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

NURSE

Can your man keep a secret? Haven't you ever heard the saying, "Two can conspire to put one away"?

ROMEO

I assure you, my man is as true as steel.

NURSE

Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady. Lord, Lord, when she was a little baby—Oh, there is one nobleman in the city, a guy named Paris, who would be happy to claim her as his own. Juliet would rather look at a toad than at him. I make her angry sometimes by saying that Paris is more handsome than you are. But when I say so, I swear she turns white as a sheet. Don't "rosemary" and "Romeo" begin with the same letter?

Rosemary was a token of remembrance between lovers and for the dead.

ROMEO

Yes, Nurse, what about that? They both begin with the letter "R."

NURSE

Ah, you jokester—that's the dog's name. "R" is for the—no, I know it begins with another letter. She says the most beautiful things about you and rosemary. It would be good for you to hear the things she says.

ROMEO

Give my compliments to your lady.

NURSE

Yes, a thousand times. Peter!

PETER

I'm ready.

NURSE

(giving **PETER** her fan) Go ahead. Go quickly.

They all exit.