

# The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

## Act II

William Shakespeare

### REVIEW AND ANTICIPATE

Act I reveals a bitter, long-standing feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. It also introduces the play's title characters, who meet at a party and immediately fall in love, only to discover that they come from opposing sides of the feud. As you read Act II, think about the choices Romeo and Juliet make as both their love and the conflicts they face intensify.

### Prologue

[Enter Chorus.]

**Chorus.** Now old desire<sup>1</sup> doth in his deathbed lie,

And young affection gapes to be his heir.<sup>2</sup>  
That fair<sup>3</sup> for which love groaned for and would die,

With tender Juliet matched, is now not fair.

Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,

[Alike bewitched<sup>4</sup> by the charm of looks;

But to his foe supposed he must complain,<sup>5</sup>

And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful hooks.

Being held a foe, he may not have access

To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear,

*Because they're foes/enemies, their relationship must carry on in secret*

### NOTES:

*Romeo's love for Rosaline is forgotten with his love for Juliet*

1. **old desire** Romeo's love for Rosaline.

2. **young . . . heir** Romeo's new love for Juliet is eager to replace his love for Rosaline.

3. **fair** beautiful woman (Rosaline).

4. **Alike bewitched** Both Romeo and Juliet are enchanted.

5. **complain** v. address his words of love.

she literally has less ability to see Romeo

And she as much in love, her means much less  
To meet her new beloved anywhere;  
But passion lends them power, time means to meet,  
Temp'ring extremities with extreme sweet.<sup>6</sup>  
[Exit.]

\* 6. Temp'ring . . . sweet easing their difficulties with great delights.

✂ ✂ ✂

Scene i • Near Capulet's orchard.

immediately after the party ends

[Enter Romeo alone.]

**Romeo.** Can I go forward when my heart is here?  
Turn back, dull earth,<sup>1</sup> and find thy center<sup>2</sup> out.

I can't leave Juliet

[Enter Benvolio with Mercutio. Romeo retires.]

**Benvolio.** Romeo! My cousin Romeo! Romeo!

technically still on stage

**Mercutio.**

He is wise.

And, on my life, hath stol'n him home to bed.

**Benvolio.** He ran this way and leapt this orchard wall.  
Call, good Mercutio.

into Juliet's garden

**Mercutio.**

Nay, I'll conjure<sup>3</sup> too.

Romeo! Humors! Madman! Passion! Lover!

Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh;

Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied!

Cry but "Ay me!" Pronounce but "love" and "dove";

Speak to my gossip<sup>4</sup> Venus one fair word,

One nickname for her purblind son and heir,

Young Abraham Cupid, he that shot so true

When King Cophetua loved the beggar maid!

He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not;

The ape is dead,<sup>5</sup> and I must conjure him.

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,

By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,

By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,

And the demesnes that there adjacent lie,

That in thy likeness thou appear to us!

**Benvolio.** And if he hear thee, thou wilt anger him.

**Mercutio.** This cannot anger him. 'Twould anger him  
To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle

Of some strange nature, letting it there stand  
Till she had laid it and conjured it down.

That were some spite; my invocation  
Is fair and honest; in his mistress' name,  
I conjure only but to raise up him.

teasing Romeo to get him to respond and show himself

Talk about Rosaline because he doesn't know about Juliet

1. dull earth lifeless body.

2. center heart, or possibly soul (Juliet).

did he go home to bed?

3. conjure v. recite a spell to make Romeo appear.

4. gossip n. good friend

5. The ape is dead. Romeo, like a trained monkey, seems to be playing.

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30 **Benvolio.** Come, he hath hid himself among these trees  
To be consorted<sup>6</sup> with the humorous<sup>7</sup> night.  
Blind is his love and best befits the dark.

**Mercutio.** If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.  
Now will he sit under a medlar<sup>8</sup> tree  
35 And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit  
As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.

O, Romeo, that she were, O that she were  
And open *et cetera*, thou a pop'rin pear!  
Romeo, good night. I'll to my truckle bed;<sup>9</sup>  
40 This field bed is too cold for me to sleep.  
Come, shall we go?

**Benvolio.** Go then, for 'tis in vain  
To seek him here that means not to be found.

[Exit with others.]

✂ ✂ ✂

Scene ii • Capulet's orchard.

**Romeo.** [Coming forward] He jests at scars that never felt a  
wound.

[Enter Juliet at a window.]

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,  
Who is already sick and pale with grief  
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.  
Be not her maid, since she is envious.  
Her vestal livery<sup>1</sup> is but sick and green,  
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

It is my lady! O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold; 'tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
To twinkle in their spheres<sup>2</sup> till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars

As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

NOTES

6. **consorted** v. associated.

7. **humorous** adj. humid; moody, like a lover.

8. **medlar** n. applelike fruit.

9. **truckle bed** trundlebed, placed under a larger bed when not in use.

gives up on  
Romeo  
responding

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In lines 2–22, mark words and phrases that relate to brightness and light.

QUESTION: What connection does this language make between Juliet and the skies?

CONCLUDE: What does this famous speech suggest about Romeo's feelings for Juliet?

1. **livery** n. clothing or costume worn by a servant.

2. **spheres** n. orbits.

on a balcony  
on 2nd floor



They make fun of me without understanding

what's that light? It's Juliet's window!

she's so pretty she's like the sun

her eyes are having a conversation with the stars

Juliet has no idea Romeo is below her balcony. she doesn't hear him.

Juliet literally puts her head in her hands

See how she leans her cheek upon that hand,  
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,  
\* That I might touch that cheek!

**Juliet.** Ay me!

**Romeo.** She speaks.

O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art  
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,  
As is a winged messenger of heaven  
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes  
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him  
When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds  
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

an angel above  
(she's literally above)

3. Wherefore . . . Romeo? Why are you Romeo—a Montague?

still doesn't know  
Romeo can hear her

**Juliet.** O Romeo. Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?<sup>3</sup>

Deny thy father and refuse they name;  
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

give up your name  
so we can be together

**Romeo.** [*Aside*] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

4. though not even if you were not.

more of a diary entry  
than how you'd tell  
someone you like them

**Juliet.** 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.  
Thou art thyself, though not<sup>4</sup> a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes<sup>5</sup>  
Without that title. Romeo, doff<sup>6</sup> thy name;  
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.

saying Romeo  
isn't defined by  
the name  
montague,  
so he can have  
all of her

5. owes v. owns; possesses.

6. doff v. remove.

**Romeo.** I take thee at thy word.  
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;  
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

says this  
to Juliet

**Juliet.** What man art thou, thus bescreened in night,  
So stumblest on my counsel?<sup>7</sup>

-who are you?! doesn't  
initially recognize  
him

**Romeo.** By a name

I know not how to tell thee who I am.  
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself  
Because it is an enemy to thee.  
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

**Juliet.** My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words  
Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.  
Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?

I know  
your voice ...

**Romeo.** Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.

**Juliet.** How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?  
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,

how & why  
are you here?

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And the place death, considering who thou art, **its super dangerous for you**  
65 If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

**Romeo.** With love's light wings did I o'erperch<sup>8</sup> these walls;  
For stony limits cannot hold love out,  
And for what love can do, that dares love attempt.  
Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me. **Love gave me wings to get over the walls!**

70 **Juliet.** If they do see thee, they will murder thee.  
**Romeo.** Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye  
Than twenty of their swords! Look thou but sweet,  
And I am proof<sup>9</sup> against their enmity. **your eyes hold more danger for me than your swords**

**Juliet.** I would not for the world they saw thee here. **I hope they don't see you.**

75 **Romeo.** I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes;  
And but<sup>10</sup> thou love me, let them find me here.  
My life were better ended by their hate  
Than death prorogued<sup>11</sup>, wanting of thy love. **I'd rather die than not have your love**

**Juliet.** By whose direction found'st thou out this place? **how'd you find me?**

80 **Romeo.** By love, that first did prompt me to inquire.  
He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.  
I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far  
As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea,  
I should adventure<sup>12</sup> for such merchandise. **Love showed me the way**

85 **Juliet.** Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face;  
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight. **it's dark I'm blushing because you heard me**

Fain would I dwell on form<sup>13</sup>—fain, fain deny  
What I have spoke; but farewell compliment!<sup>14</sup>  
90 Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say "Ay";  
And I will take thy word. Yet, if thou swear'st,  
Thou mayst prove false. At lovers' perjuries,  
They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,  
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully. **I should play hard to get you may be lying if you say you love me**

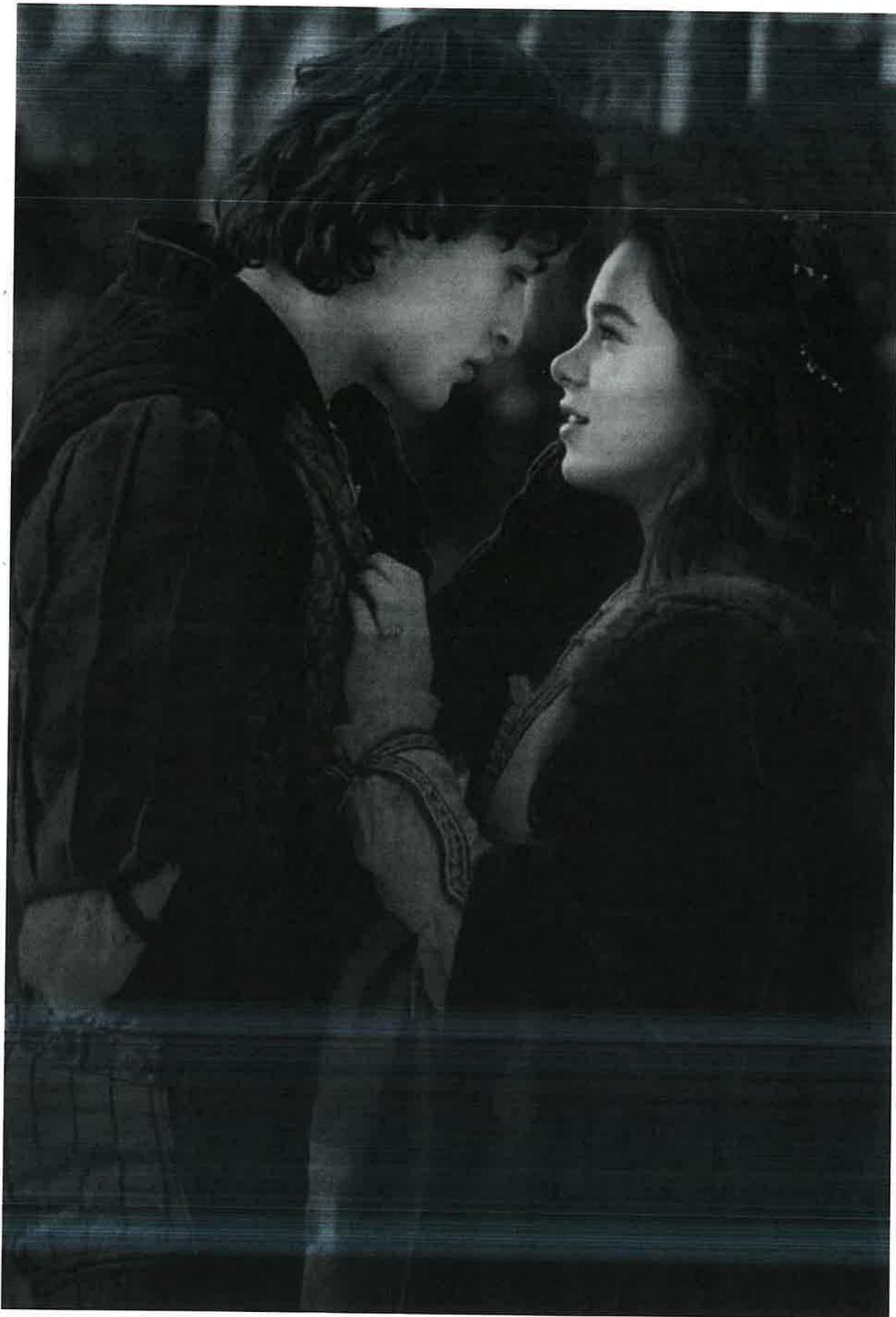
95 Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,  
I'll frown and be perverse<sup>15</sup> and say thee nay,  
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.  
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,<sup>16</sup>  
And therefore thou mayst think my havior light;<sup>17</sup> **I can play hard to get if you want**

100 But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.<sup>18</sup>  
I should have been more strange, I must confess,  
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,  
My true-love passion. Therefore pardon me,  
And not impute this yielding to light love,  
Which the dark night hath so discovered.<sup>19</sup> **But I like you too much to dwell on custom of pretending to care less**

**Romeo.** Lady, by yonder blessèd moon I vow,  
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops— **I vow by the moon...**

Juliet's embarrassed  
he heard everything  
she said

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**Juliet.** O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,  
That monthly changes in her circle orb,  
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

The moon changes (waxes and wanes). Will your love be that inconstant?

**Romeo.** What shall I swear by?

**Juliet.** Do not swear at all;  
Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,  
Which is the god of my idolatry,  
And I'll believe thee.

swear by yourself because I place you above all others

**Romeo.** If my heart's dear love—

**Juliet.** Well, do not swear. Although I joy in thee,  
I have no joy of this contract<sup>20</sup> tonight.  
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;

Actually don't swear at all. This is happening too fast. (Doh).

Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be  
Ere one can say it lightens. Sweet, good night!  
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,  
May prove a beauteous flow'r when next we meet.  
Good night, good night! As sweet repose and rest  
Come to thy heart as that within my breast!

**Romeo.** O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

wait, that's it?

**Juliet.** What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?

**Romeo.** Th'exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

**Juliet.** I gave thee mine before thou didst request it;  
And yet I would it were to give again.

**Romeo.** Wouldst thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?

**Juliet.** But to be frank<sup>21</sup> and give it thee again.  
And yet I wish but for the thing I have.  
My bounty<sup>22</sup> is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,  
The more I have, for both are infinite.

<sup>20</sup> contract *n.* betrothal.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In lines 116–124, mark repeated words and phrases.

QUESTION: Why do you think Juliet repeats herself so often in this short speech?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this repetition?

21. frank *adj.* generous.

22. bounty *n.* what I have to give.

[Nurse calls within.] -inside her room but offstage

I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu!  
Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.  
Stay but a little, I will come again.

[Exit.]

**Romeo.** O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard,  
Being in night, all this is but a dream,  
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.<sup>23</sup>

what if it's a dream?

this seems too good to be true...

<sup>23</sup> substantial *adj.* real.

[Enter Juliet again.]

**Juliet.** Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.  
If that thy bent<sup>24</sup> of love be honorable,  
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,  
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,  
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite;  
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay

24. bent *n.* purpose; intention.

let's get married!  
I'll send the nurse to you to get all the details for the ceremony

religious wording again

I should go to bed

complete 100!

And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

**Nurse.** [*Within*] Madam!

**Juliet.** I come anon.—But if thou meanest not well,  
I do beseech thee—

**Nurse.** [*Within*] Madam!

**Juliet.** By and by<sup>25</sup> I come.—

To cease thy strife<sup>26</sup> and leave me to my grief.  
Tomorrow I will send.

**Romeo.** So thrive my soul—

**Juliet.** A thousand times good night! [*Exit.*]

**Romeo.** A thousand times the worse, to want thy light!  
Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books;  
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.

[*Enter Juliet again.*]

**Juliet.** Hist! Romeo, hist! O for a falconer's voice  
To lure this tassel gentle<sup>27</sup> back again!

Bondage is hoarse<sup>28</sup> and may not speak aloud,  
Else would I tear the cave where Echo<sup>29</sup> lies  
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine  
With repetition of "My Romeo!"

**Romeo.** It is my soul that calls upon my name.  
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,  
Like softest music to attending ears!

**Juliet.** Romeo!

**Romeo.** My sweet?

**Juliet.** What o'clock tomorrow  
Shall I send to thee?

**Romeo.** By the hour of nine.

**Juliet.** I will not fail. 'Tis twenty year till then.  
I have forgot why I did call thee back.

**Romeo.** Let me stand here till thou remember it.

**Juliet.** I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,  
Rememb'ring how I love thy company.

**Romeo.** And I'll stay, to have thee still forget,  
Forgetting any other home but this.

**Juliet.** 'Tis almost morning. I would have thee gone—  
And yet no farther than a wanton's<sup>30</sup> bird,  
That lets it hop a little from his hand,  
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,<sup>31</sup>  
And with a silken thread plucks it back again,  
So loving-jealous of his liberty.

**Romeo.** I would I were thy bird.

25. **By and by** at once.

26. **strife** *n.* efforts.

27. **tassel gentle** male falcon.

28. **Bondage is hoarse** Being bound in by my family restricts my speech.

29. **Echo** In classical mythology, the nymph Echo, unable to win the love of Narcissus, wasted away in a cave until nothing was left of her but her voice.

30. **wanton's** spoiled, playful child's.

31. **gyves** (*jyvz*) *n.* chains.

to the nurse

> to Romeo

Romeo starts to walk away...

trying to quietly call Romeo back

you're so pretty!!! never remember

I don't want you to go because I love you too much

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Juliet.

Sweet, so would I.

Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing. foreshadowing?

Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow

185 That I shall say good night till it be morrow. [Exit.]

Romeo. Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast!

Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest!

Hence will I to my ghostly friar's<sup>32</sup> close cell,<sup>33</sup>

His help to crave and my dear hap<sup>34</sup> to tell. [Exit.]

32. ghostly friar's spiritual father's.

33. close cell small room.

34. dear hap good fortune.

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Scene iii • Friar Lawrence's cell.

→ Friar is like a priest  
cell = church

[Enter Friar Lawrence alone, with a basket.]

Friar. The gray-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,

Check'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light;

And fleckèd darkness like a drunkard reels

From forth day's path and Titan's burning wheels.

Now, ere the sun advance his burning eye

The day to cheer and night's dank dew to dry,

I must upfill this osier cage of ours

With baleful weeds and precious-juicèd flowers.

The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb.

What is her burying grave, that is her womb;

And from her womb children of divers kind

We sucking on her natural bosom find,

Many for many virtues excellent,

None but for some, and yet all different.

O, mickle<sup>1</sup> is the powerful grace<sup>2</sup> that lies

In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities;

For naught so vile that on the earth doth live

But to the earth some special good doth give;

Nor aught so good but, strained<sup>3</sup> from that fair use,

Revolts from true birth,<sup>4</sup> stumbling on abuse.

Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,

And vice sometime by action dignified.

[Enter Romeo.]

Within the infant rind<sup>5</sup> of this weak flower

Poison hath residence and medicine power;<sup>6</sup>

For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;<sup>7</sup>

Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.<sup>8</sup>

Two such opposèd kings encamp them still<sup>9</sup>

In man as well as herbs—grace and rude will;

And where the worser is predominant,

Full soon the canker<sup>10</sup> death eats up that plant.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark examples of full rhyme at the ends of lines in the Friar's opening speech.

QUESTION: Why does Shakespeare have the Friar speak in rhymed verse?

INCLUDE: How does the use of rhyme add to the portrayal of the Friar's character?

main point of this speech is to know that he's good with plants

1. mickle adj. great.

2. grace n. divine power.

3. strained v. turned away.

4. Revolts . . . birth conflicts with its real purpose.

5. infant rind tender skin.

6. and medicine power and medicinal quality has power.

7. with . . . part with that quality—odor—revives each part of the body.

8. stays . . . heart kills (stops the working of the five senses along with the heart).

9. still adv. always.

10. canker n. destructive caterpillar.

Friar's opinion of Romeo?

I always imagine him at like a raised garden bed weeding & pruning during this speech

11. **Benedicite!** God bless you!

12. **distemperèd head** troubled mind.

13. **unstuffed** *adj.* not filled with cares.

14. **distemp'ature** illness.

Friar seems to have previously told Romeo to get over Rosaline

15. **physic** (FIHZ ihk) *n.* medicine.

16. **My . . . foe** my plea also helps my enemy (Juliet, a Capulet).

17. **and . . . drift** and simple in your speech.

18. **Riddling . . . shrift** a confusing confession will get you uncertain forgiveness. The Friar means that unless Romeo speaks clearly, he will not get clear and direct advice.

19. **And . . . save** and we are united in every way, except for (save).

20. **brine** *n.* salt water (tears).

**Romeo.** Good morrow, father.

**Friar.** *Benedicite!*<sup>11</sup>

What early tongue so sweet saluteth me?

Young son, it argues a distemperèd head<sup>12</sup>

So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed.

Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye,

And where care lodges, sleep will never lie;

But where unbruised youth with unstuffed<sup>13</sup> brain

Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth reign,

Therefore thy earliness doth me assure

Thou art uproused with some distemp'ature;<sup>14</sup>

Or if not so, then here I hit it right—

Our Romeo hath not been in bed tonight.

**Romeo.** That last is true. The sweeter rest was mine.

**Friar.** God pardon sin! Wast thou with Rosaline?

**Romeo.** With Rosaline, my ghostly father? No.

I have forgot that name and that name's woe.

**Friar.** That's my good son! But where hast thou been then?

**Romeo.** I'll tell thee ere thou ask it me again.

I have been feasting with mine enemy,

Where on a sudden one hath wounded me

That's by me wounded. Both our remedies

Within thy help and holy physick<sup>15</sup> lies.

I bear no hatred, blessed man, for, lo,

My intercession likewise steads my foe.<sup>16</sup>

**Friar.** Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift.<sup>17</sup>

Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.<sup>18</sup>

**Romeo.** Then plainly know my heart's dear love is set

On the fair daughter of rich Capulet;

As mine on hers, so hers is set on mine,

And all combined, save<sup>19</sup> what thou must combine

By holy marriage. When and where and how

We met, we wooed, and made exchange of vow,

I'll tell thee as we pass; but this I pray,

That thou consent to marry us today.

**Friar.** Holy Saint Francis! What a change is here!

Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,

So soon forsaker? Young men's love then lies

Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.

Jesu Maria! What a deal of brine<sup>20</sup>

Hath washed thy sallow cheeks for Rosaline!

How much salt water thrown away in waste

To season love, that of it doth not taste!

The sun not yet thy sighs from heaven clears,

Thy old groans ring yet in mine ancient ears.

you're here really early, so either something is very wrong or you haven't been to bed yet...

what are you saying?

woah! what a change. Have you already forgotten Rosaline? This is not love but based on looks. you were literally just complaining about Rosaline not loving you.

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75 Lo, here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit  
Of an old tear that is not washed off yet.  
If e'er thou wast thyself, and these woes thine,  
Thou and these woes were all for Rosaline.  
And art thou changed? Pronounce this sentence then:

30 Women may fall<sup>21</sup> when there's no strength<sup>22</sup> in men.

**Romeo.** Thou chidst me oft for loving Rosaline.

**Friar.** For doting,<sup>23</sup> not for loving, pupil mine.

**Romeo.** And badst<sup>24</sup> me bury love.

**Friar.** Not in a grave  
To lay one in, another out to have.

35 **Romeo.** I pray thee chide me not. Her I love now  
Doth grace<sup>25</sup> for grace and love for love allow.<sup>26</sup>  
The other did not so..

**Friar.** O, she knew well  
Thy love did read by rote, that could not spell.<sup>27</sup>  
But come, young waverer, come go with me.

30 In one respect I'll thy assistant be;

For this alliance may so happy prove  
To turn your households' rancor<sup>28</sup> to pure love.

**Romeo.** O, let us hence! I stand on<sup>29</sup> sudden haste.

**Friar.** Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast. [Exit all.]

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

Scene iv • A street.

[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 hardhearted wench, that  
Rosaline,  
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.** Any man that can write may answer a letter.

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

Romeo will go through with  
the duel

#### NOTES

21. **fall** v. be weak or inconstant.

22. **strength** n. constancy;  
stability.

23. **doting** v. being infatuated.

24. **badst** v. urged.

25. **grace** n. favor.

26. **allow** v. give.

27. **Thy . . . spell** your love recited  
words from memory with no  
understanding of them.

28. **rancor** n. hatred.

29. **stand on** insist on.

not so you could love someone  
else instead

Juliet loves  
me back..

motivation for marrying them

Romeo didn't go home  
last night

Rosaline is tormenting him

- Tybalt delivered a letter to  
Romeo's house demanding  
a duel as a consequence for  
crashing the Capulet  
party (Tybalt does  
NOT know about Juliet)

# Romeo is already dead from being in love with Rosaline

1. **blind bow-boy's butt-shaft** Cupid's blunt arrow.
2. **Prince of Cats** Tybalt, or a variation of it, is the name of the cat in medieval stories of Reynard the Fox.
3. **captain of compliments** master of formal behavior.
4. **as you sing pricksong** with attention to precision.
5. **rests . . . rests** observes all formalities.
6. **button** *n.* exact spot on the opponent's shirt.
7. **first house** finest school of fencing.
8. **the first and second cause** reasons that would cause a gentleman challenge another to a duel.
9. **passado! . . . punto reverso! . . . hay!** lunge . . . backhanded stroke . . . home thrust.
10. **The pox . . . accent** May the plague strike these absurd characters with their phony manners.
11. **these pardon-me's** these men who are always saying "Pardon me."
12. **Without . . . herring** worn out.
13. **numbers** *n.* verses of love poems.

**counterfeit** (KOWN tuh r fiht) *n.* something made to deceive

14. **slip** *n.* escape. Slip is also a term for a counterfeit coin.

15. **hams** *n.* hips.

**Mercutio.** Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead; stabbed with a white wench's black eye; run through the ear with a love song; the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft;<sup>1</sup> and is he a man to encounter Tybalt?

Lupid's arrow

**Benvolio.** Why, what is Tybalt?

**Mercutio.** More than Prince of Cats.<sup>2</sup> O, he's the courageous captain of compliments.<sup>3</sup> He fights as you sing pricksong<sup>4</sup>—keeps time, distance, and proportion; he rests his minim rests,<sup>5</sup> one, two, and the third in your bosom! The very butcher of a silk button,<sup>6</sup> a duelist, a duelist! A gentleman of the very first house,<sup>7</sup> of the first and second cause.<sup>8</sup> Ah, the immortal *passado!* The *punto reverso!* The hay!<sup>9</sup>

Tybalt is so good at swords that it looks like he's dancing gracefully

**Benvolio.** The what?

**Mercutio.** The pox of such antic, lispng, affecting fantasticoes—these new tuners of accent!<sup>10</sup> "By Jesu, a very good blade! A very tall man! A very good whore!" Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsir, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashionmongers, these pardon-me's,<sup>11</sup> who stand so much on the new form that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? O, their bones, their bones! [Enter Romeo.]

**Benvolio.** Here comes Romeo! Here comes Romeo!

**Mercutio.** Without this roe, like a dried herring.<sup>12</sup> O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers<sup>13</sup> that Petrarch flow'd in. Laura, to his lady, was 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 gray eye or so, but not to the purpose. Signior Romeo, *bonjour!* there's a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.

Love has made him tired and not like Romeo

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

**Mercutio.** The slip,<sup>14</sup> sir, the slip. Can you not conceive?

**Romeo.** 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.<sup>15</sup>

**Romeo.** Meaning, to curtsy.

**Mercutio.** Thou hast most kindly hit it.

**Romeo.** A most courteous exposition.

why'd you leave us at the party?

play on words with curtsy & courtesy

**Mercutio.** Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

**Romeo.** Pink for flower.

**Mercutio.** Right.

**Romeo.** Why, then is my pump<sup>16</sup> well-flowered.

**Mercutio.** 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.<sup>17</sup>

**Romeo.** O single-soled jest, solely singular for the singleness!<sup>18</sup>

**Mercutio.** Come between us, good Benvolio! My wits faints.

**Romeo.** Swits and spurs, swits and spurs; or I'll cry a match.<sup>19</sup>

**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.** 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 sweeting;<sup>20</sup> it is a most sharp sauce.

**Romeo.** And is it not, then, well served in to a sweet goose?

**Mercutio.** O, here's a wit of cheveril,<sup>21</sup> that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad!

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

**Mercutio.** 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<sup>22</sup> that runs lolling<sup>23</sup> up and down to hide his bauble<sup>24</sup> in a hole.

**Benvolio.** Stop there, stop there!

**Mercutio.** Thou desirest me to stop in my tale against the hair.<sup>25</sup>

**Benvolio.** Thou wouldst else have made thy tale large.

**Mercutio.** O, 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<sup>26</sup> no longer.

**Romeo.** Here's goodly gear!<sup>27</sup>

[Enter Nurse and her Man, Peter.]

A sail, a sail!

## NOTES

16. **pump** *n.* shoe.

17. **when . . . singular** the jest will outwear the shoe and will then be all alone.

18. **O . . . singleness!** O thin joke, unique for only one thing—weakness!

19. **Swits . . . match** Drive your wit harder to beat me or else I will claim victory in this match of word play.

20. **sweeting** *n.* kind of apple.

21. **cheveril** *n.* easily stretched kid leather.

22. **natural** *n.* idiot.

23. **lolling** *v.* with tongue hanging out.

24. **bauble** *n.* toy.

25. **the hair** natural inclination.

26. **occupy the argument** talk about the matter.

27. **goodly gear** good stuff for joking (Romeo sees Nurse approaching).

battle of  
the wits  
using word  
play of  
words that  
sound  
similar

my bestie, you're back  
and in a better mood!

Look at these  
two that we can  
make fun of!  
(not realizing Juliet sent them).

28. A shirt and a smock a man and a woman.

**Mercutio.** Two, two! A shirt and a smock.<sup>28</sup>

**Nurse.** Peter!

**Peter.** Anon.

**Nurse.** My fan, Peter.

**Mercutio.** Good Peter, to hide her face; for her fan's the fairer face. *her face is ugly*

**Nurse.** God ye good morrow, gentlemen.

**Mercutio.** God ye good-den, fair gentlewoman.

**Nurse.** Is it good-den? *afternoon?*

**Mercutio.** 'Tis no less. I tell ye; for the bawdy hand of the dial is now upon the prick of noon. *inappropriate joke about the clock*

**Nurse.** Out upon you! What a man are you!

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

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

**Romeo.** 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<sup>29</sup> of a worse.

*teasing her*

**Nurse.** You say well.

**Mercutio.** Yea, is the worst well? Very well took,<sup>30</sup> i' faith! Wisely, wisely.

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

**Benvolio.** She will endite him to some supper. *-she's going to trap him in a date*

**Mercutio.** 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.

*[He walks by them and sings.]*

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.

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

**Romeo.** I will follow you.

**Mercutio.** Farewell, ancient lady. Farewell, *[singing]* "Lady, lady,<sup>31</sup> lady." *[Exit Mercutio, Benvolio.]*

**Nurse.** I pray you, sir, what saucy merchant was this that

29. fault *n.* lack.

30. took *v.* understood.

**confidence** (KON fuh duhns) *n.*  
meeting, especially one held in secret

*bawd = woman who runs house of prostitutes*

31. "Lady . . . lady" line from an old ballad, "Chaste Susanna."

was so full of his ropery?<sup>32</sup>

**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. *talking about mercutio*

130 **Nurse.** And 'a<sup>33</sup> speak anything against me, I'll take him down, and 'a 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;<sup>34</sup> I am none of his skainsmates.<sup>35</sup> And thou must stand by too, and suffer every knave to use me at his pleasure! *upset by how rude mercutio was*

**Peter.** 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. *Peter says there was no reason to defend the nurse*

135 **Nurse.** Now, afore God, I am so vexed that every part about me quivers. Scurvy knave! Pray you, sir, a word; and, as I told you, my young lady bid me inquire you out. what she bid me say, I will keep to myself; but first let me tell ye, if ye should lead her in 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 double with her, truly it were an ill thing to be off'red to any gentlewoman, and very weak<sup>36</sup> dealing. *warns Romeo to treat Juliet right and not lead her on*

140 **Romeo.** Nurse, commend<sup>37</sup> me to thy lady and mistress. I protest unto thee—

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

145 **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. *trying to get him to call off the wedding*

**Romeo.** Bid her devise Some means to come to shrift<sup>38</sup> this afternoon; And there she shall at Friar Lawrence' cell Be shrived and married. Here is for thy pains. *THE PLAN*

**Nurse.** No, truly, sir; not a penny. *tries to pay her*

**Romeo.** Go to! I say you shall.

**Nurse.** This afternoon, sir? Well, she shall be there.

150 **Romeo.** 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.<sup>39</sup> Which to the high topgallant<sup>40</sup> of my joy Must be my convoy<sup>41</sup> in the secret night. *a rope ladder to get up into Juliet's room*

NOTES

32. **ropery** Nurse means "roguery," the talk and conduct of a rascal.

33. 'a he.

34. **flirt-gills** common girls.

35. **skainsmates** criminals; cutthroats.

36. **weak** *adj.* unmanly.

37. **commend** *v.* convey my respect and best wishes.

38. **shrift** *n.* confession.

39. **tackled stair** rope ladder.

40. **topgallant** *n.* summit.

41. **convoy** *n.* conveyance.

*so they can have a wedding night*

42. **quit** v. reward; pay you back for.

43. **Two . . . away** Two can keep a secret if one is ignorant, or out of the way.

44. **prating** adj. babbling.

45. **fain . . . aboard** eagerly seize Juliet for himself.

46. **had as lieve** would as willingly.

47. **clout** n. cloth.

48. **versal world** universe.

49. **dog's name** R sounds like a growl.

50. **sententious** Nurse means "sentences"—clever, wise sayings.

51. **Before, and apace** Go ahead of me, and quickly.

Farewell. Be trusty, and I'll quit<sup>42</sup> thy pains.  
Farewell. Commend me to thy mistress.

**Nurse.** Now God in heaven bless thee!

**Romeo.** What say'st thou, my dear nurse?

**Nurse.** Is your man secret? Did you ne'er hear say,  
Two may keep counsel, putting one away?<sup>43</sup>

**Romeo.** Warrant thee my man's as true as steel.

**Nurse.** Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady. Lord,  
Lord! When 'twas a little prating<sup>44</sup> thing—O, there is a  
nobleman in town, one Paris, that would fain lay knife  
aboard;<sup>45</sup> but she, good soul, had as lieve<sup>46</sup> 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 as any clout<sup>47</sup>  
in the versal<sup>48</sup> world. Doth not rosemary and Romeo  
begin both with a letter? - can't read

**Romeo.** Ay, nurse; what of that? Both with an R.

**Nurse.** Ah, mocker! That's the dog's name.<sup>49</sup> R is for the—  
No; I know it begins with some other letter; and she  
hath the prettiest sententious<sup>50</sup> of it, of you and rosemary,  
that it would do you good to hear it.

**Romeo.** Commend me to thy lady.

**Nurse.** Ay, a thousand times. [Exit Romeo.] Peter!

**Peter.** Anon.

**Nurse.** Before, and apace.<sup>51</sup>

starts to walk away

Hark you, sir. wait!

can we trust your servant?

Juliet is so sweet — Paris wants to marry her which would be smarter/better

- rolls the R so it sounds like a growl

[Exit, after Peter.]

\*\*\*

soliloquy - when a character speaks and is alone on stage

Scene v • Capulet's orchard.

[Enter Juliet.]

**Juliet.** The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse;  
In half an hour she promised to return.  
Perchance she cannot meet him. That's not so.  
O, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,  
Which ten times faster glides than the sun's beams  
Driving back shadows over low'ring<sup>1</sup> hills.  
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love.<sup>2</sup>  
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.  
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill  
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve  
Is three long hours; yet she is not come.

The nurse is taking too long to come back with news

how long it's been

1. **low'ring** adj. darkening.

2. **Therefore . . . Love** therefore, "doves with quick wings pull the chariot of Venus, goddess of love."

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Had she affections and warm youthful blood,  
She would be as swift in motion as a ball;  
My words would bandy her<sup>3</sup> to my sweet love,  
And his to me.

she's old and that  
must be why she's  
taking so long

3. bandy her send her rapidly.

4. feign v. act.

But old folks, many feign<sup>4</sup> as they were dead—  
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.  
[Enter Nurse and Peter.]

O God, she comes! O honey nurse, what news?  
Hast thou met with him? Send thy man away.

**Nurse.** Peter, stay at the gate.

[Exit Peter.]

**Juliet.** Now, good sweet nurse—O Lord, why lookest thou sad?  
Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily;  
If good, thou shamest the music of sweet news  
By playing it to me with so sour a face.

Tell me! why do you  
look sad?

**Nurse.** I am aweary, give me leave<sup>5</sup> awhile.  
Fie, how my bones ache! What a jaunce<sup>6</sup> have I!

I'm tired

5. give me leave excuse me; give me a moment's rest.

6. jaunce n. rough trip.

**Juliet.** I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news.  
Nay, come, I pray thee speak. Good, good nurse, speak.

I'd give you my youth  
if you'd tell me the  
news

**Nurse.** Jesu, what haste? Can you not stay a while?  
Do you not see that I am out of breath?

**Juliet.** How art thou out of breath when thou hast breath  
To say to me that thou art out of breath?

The excuse that thou dost make in this delay  
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.

Is thy news good or bad? Answer to that.  
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance.<sup>7</sup>  
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

7. stay the circumstance wait for the details.

8. simple adj. foolish; simpleminded.

**Nurse.** Well, you have made a simple<sup>8</sup> choice; you know  
not how to choose a man. Romeo? No, not he. Though  
his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all  
men's; and for a hand and a foot, and a body, though  
they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare.  
He is not the flower of courtesy, but, I'll warrant him,  
as gentle as a lamb. Go thy ways, wench; serve God.  
What, have you dined at home?

**Juliet.** No, no. But all this I did know before.  
What says he of our marriage? What of that?

**Nurse.** Lord, how my head aches! What a head have I!  
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.

My back a<sup>9</sup> t'other side—ah, my back, my back!  
Beshrew<sup>10</sup> your heart for sending me about  
To catch my death with jauncing up and down!

- complete change  
of subject

complaining  
about  
aches to stall

**Juliet.** I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.  
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

**QUESTION:** Why does Shakespeare allow the Nurse to take so long to answer Juliet's question?

**CONCLUDE:** What is the effect of the Nurse's digressions?

9. a on.  
10. Beshrew shame on.

Teasing  
Juliet by  
withholding  
the information

Are you sure  
Romeo is the  
best choice?  
He's pretty,  
but still...

Juliet is exasperated

- 11. **hot** *adj.* impatient; hot-tempered.
- 12. **Marry . . . trow** Indeed, cool down, I say.
- 13. **poultice** *n.* remedy.
- 14. **coil** *n.* disturbance.

15: **wanton** *adj.* excited.

**Nurse.** Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous—Where is your mother?

Final stall/change of subject

**Juliet.** Where is my mother? Why, she is within. Where would she be? How oddly thou repliest! "Your love says, like an honest gentleman, 'Where is your mother?'"

**Nurse.** O God's Lady dear! Are you so hot?<sup>11</sup> Marry come up, I trow.<sup>12</sup> Is this the poultice<sup>13</sup> for my aching bones? Henceforth do your messages yourself.

chides Juliet

**Juliet.** Here's such a coil!<sup>14</sup> Come, what says Romeo?

**Nurse.** Have you got leave to go to shrift today?

**Juliet.** I have.

**Nurse.** Then hie you hence to Friar Lawrence' cell; There stays a husband to make you a wife.

Now comes the wanton<sup>15</sup> blood up in your cheeks:

They'll be in scarlet straight at any news.

Hie you to church: I must another way, To fetch a ladder, by the which your love Must climb a bird's nest soon when it is dark.

I am the drudge, and toil in your delight: But you shall bear the burden soon at night. Go; I'll to dinner; hie you to the cell.

**Juliet.** Hie to high fortune! Honest nurse, farewell.

Finally tells Juliet the plan

[Exit all.]

❖ ❖ ❖

Scene vi • Friar Lawrence's cell.

[Enter Friar Lawrence and Romeo.]

**Friar.** So smile the heavens upon this holy act That afterhours with sorrow chide us not!<sup>1</sup>

**Romeo.** Amen, amen! But come what sorrow can, It cannot countervail<sup>2</sup> the exchange of joy That one short minute gives me in her sight. Do thou but close our hands with holy words, Then love-devouring death do what he dare— It is enough I may but call her mine.

**Friar.** These violent delights have violent ends And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,<sup>3</sup> Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey

violent = quick, strong, passionate

really famous line & very important

1. **That . . . not!** that the future does not punish us with sorrow.

2. **countervail** *v.* equal.

3. **powder** *n.* gunpowder.



^ Friar Lawrence weds Romeo and Juliet, while the Nurse looks on.

Is loathsome in his own deliciousness  
 And in the taste confounds<sup>4</sup> the appetite.  
 Therefore love moderately; long love doth so;  
 Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.

[Enter Juliet.]

Here comes the lady. O, so light a foot  
 Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint.<sup>5</sup>

A lover may bestride the gossamers<sup>6</sup>  
 That idles in the wanton summer air,  
 And yet not fall; so light is vanity.<sup>7</sup>

**Juliet.** Good even to my ghostly confessor.

**Friar.** Romeo shall thank thee, daughter, for us both.

**Juliet.** As much to him,<sup>8</sup> else is his thanks too much.

**Romeo.** Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy  
 Be heaped like mine, and that thy skill be more  
 To blazon it,<sup>9</sup> then sweeten with thy breath  
 This neighbor air, and let rich music's tongue  
 Unfold the imagined happiness that both  
 Receive in either by this dear encounter.

**Juliet.** Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,  
 Brags of his substance, not of ornament.<sup>10</sup>

## NOTES

4. **confounds** *v.* destroys.

5. **flint** *n.* stone.

6. **gossamers** *n.* spider webs.

7. **vanity** *n.* foolish things that cannot last.

8. **As . . . him** the same greeting to him.

9. **and . . . it** and if you are better to proclaim it.

10. **Conceit . . . ornament**  
 Understanding does not need to be dressed up in words.

They get married off stage

