

ORIGINAL TEXT

ROMEO returns.

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

JULIET appears in a window above

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 is but sick and green,

And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off!

It is my lady. Oh, it is my love.

Oh, 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 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 eye in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.

Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand

That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me!

MODERN TEXT

ROMEO returns.

ROMEO

It's easy for someone to joke about scars if they've never been cut.

JULIET enters on the balcony.

But wait, what's that light in the window over there? It is

the east, and Juliet is the sun. Rise up, beautiful sun,

and kill the jealous moon. The moon is already sick and

pale with grief because you, Juliet, her maid, are more

beautiful than she. Don't be her maid, because she is

jealous. Virginity makes her look sick and green. Only

fools hold on to their virginity. Let it go. Oh, there's my

lady! Oh, it is my love. Oh, I wish she knew how much I

love her. She's talking, but she's not saying anything. So

what? Her eyes are saying something. I will answer

them. I am too bold. She's not talking to me. Two of the

brightest stars in the whole sky had to go away on

business, and they're asking her eyes to twinkle in their

places until they return. What if her eyes were in the sky

and the stars were in her head?—The brightness of her

cheeks would outshine the stars the way the sun

outshines a lamp. If her eyes were in the night sky, they

would shine so brightly through space that birds would

start singing, thinking her light was the light of day. Look

how she leans her hand on her cheek. Oh, I wish I was

the glove on that hand so that I could touch that cheek.

JULIET

Oh, my!

ROMEO

(aside) She speaks.

O, speak again, bright angel! For thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
Unto the white, upturnèd, wondering 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.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO

(aside) Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not 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 word would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name, which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

ROMEO

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

JULIET

What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?

ROMEO

(to himself) She speaks. Oh, speak again, bright angel. You
are as glorious as an angel tonight. You shine above me,
like a winged messenger from heaven who makes mortal
men fall on their backs to look up at the sky, watching the
angel walking on the clouds and sailing on the air.

JULIET

(not knowing ROMEO hears her) Oh, Romeo, Romeo, why
do you have to be Romeo? Forget about your father and
change your name. Or else, if you won't change your name,
just swear you love me and I'll stop being a Capulet.

ROMEO

(to himself) Should I listen for more, or should I speak now?

JULIET

(still not knowing ROMEO hears her) It's only your name
that's my enemy. You'd still be yourself even if you stopped
being a Montague. What's a Montague anyway? It isn't a
hand, a foot, an arm, a face, or any other part of a man. Oh,
be some other name! What does a name mean? The thing
we call a rose would smell just as sweet if we called it by
any other name. Romeo would be just as perfect even if he
wasn't called Romeo. Romeo, lose your name. Trade in
your name—which really has nothing to do with you—and
take all of me in exchange.

ROMEO

(to JULIET) I trust your words. Just call me your love, and I
will take a new name. From now on I will never be Romeo
again.

JULIET

Who are you? Why do you hide in the darkness and listen
to my private thoughts?

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 not yet drunk a hundred words

Of that tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.

Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?

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,

And the place death, considering who thou art,

If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,

For stony limits cannot hold love out,

And what love can do, that dares love attempt.

Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.

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 against their enmity.

JULIET

I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO

I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,

And but thou love me, let them find me here.

ROMEO

I don't know how to tell you who I am by telling you a

name. I hate my name, dear saint, because my name is

your enemy. If I had it written down, I would tear up the

paper.

JULIET

I haven't heard you say a hundred words yet, but I

recognize the sound of your voice. Aren't you Romeo? And

aren't you a Montague?

ROMEO

I am neither of those things if you dislike them.

JULIET

Tell me, how did you get in here? And why did you come?

The orchard walls are high, and it's hard to climb over

them. If any of my relatives find you here they'll kill you

because of who you are.

ROMEO

I flew over these walls with the light wings of love. Stone

walls can't keep love out. Whatever a man in love can

possibly do, his love will make him try to do it. Therefore

your relatives are no obstacle.

JULIET

If they see you, they'll murder you.

ROMEO

Alas, one angry look from you would be worse than twenty

of your relatives with swords. Just look at me kindly, and

I'm invincible against their hatred.

JULIET

I'd give anything to keep them from seeing you here.

ROMEO

The darkness will hide me from them. And if you don't love

me, let them find me here. I'd rather they killed me than

My life were better ended by their hate
Than death proroguèd, wanting of thy love.

have to live without your love.

JULIET

By whose direction found'st thou out this place?

JULIET

Who told you how to get here below my bedroom?

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 would adventure for such merchandise.

JULIET

Thou know'st 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.
Fain would I dwell on form. Fain, fain deny
What I have spoke. But farewell compliment!
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.
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo. But else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light.
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more coying to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was 'ware,
My true love's passion. Therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

ROMEO

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops—

ROMEO

Love showed me the way—the same thing that made me
look for you in the first place. Love told me what to do, and I
let love borrow my eyes. I'm not a sailor, but if you were
across the farthest sea, I would risk everything to gain you.

JULIET

You can't see my face because it's dark out. Otherwise,
you'd see me blushing about the things you've heard me
say tonight. I would be happy to keep up good manners
and deny the things I said. But forget about good manners.
Do you love me? I know you'll say "yes," and I'll believe
you. But if you swear you love me, you might turn out to be
lying. They say laughs when lovers lie to each other. Oh
Romeo, if you really love me, say it truly. Or if you think it's
too easy and quick to win my heart, I'll frown and play hard-
to-get, as long as that will make you try to win me, but
otherwise I wouldn't act that way for anything. In truth,
handsome Montague, I like you too much, so you may think
my behavior is loose. But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove
myself more faithful than girls who act coy and play hard-to-
get. I should have been more standoffish, I confess, but you
overheard me talking about the love in my heart when I
didn't know you were there. So excuse me, and do not
assume that because you made me love you so easily my
love isn't serious.

ROMEO

Lady, I swear by the sacred moon above, the moon that
paints the tops of fruit trees with silver—

JULIET

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

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.

ROMEO

If my heart's dear love—

JULIET

Well, do not swear. Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract tonight.
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
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 flower 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?

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.

JULIET

Don't swear by the moon. The moon is always changing.
Every month its position in the sky shifts. I don't want you
to turn out to be that inconsistent too.

ROMEO

What should I swear by?

JULIET

Don't swear at all. But if you have to swear, swear by your
wonderful self, which is the god I worship like an idol, and
then I'll believe you.

ROMEO

If my heart's dear love—

JULIET

Well, don't swear. Although you bring me joy, I can't take
joy in this exchange of promises tonight. It's too crazy. We
haven't done enough thinking. It's too sudden. It's too
much like lightning, which flashes and then disappears
before you can say, "it's lightning." My sweet, good night.
Our love, which right now is like a flower bud in the
summer air, may turn out to be a beautiful flower by the
next time we meet. I hope you enjoy the same sweet
peace and rest I feel in my heart.

ROMEO

Oh, are you going to leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET

What satisfaction could you possibly have tonight?

ROMEO

I would be satisfied if we made each other true promises
of love.

JULIET

I pledged my love to you before you asked me to. Yet I
wish I could take that promise back, so I had it to give

ROMEO

Wouldst thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?

again.

ROMEO

You would take it back? Why would you do that, my love?

JULIET

But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have.
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep. The more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.

***NURSE** calls from within*

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

*Exit **JULIET**, above*

ROMEO

O blessèd, blessèd night! I am afeard,
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering sweet to be substantial.

*Enter **JULIET**, above*

JULIET

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
If that thy bent 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
And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

NURSE

(from within) Madam!

JULIET

I come, anon.—But if thou mean'st not well,
I do beseech thee—

JULIET

Only to be generous and give it to you once more. But I'm
wishing for something I already have. My generosity to you
is as limitless as the sea, and my love is as deep. The
more love I give you, the more I have. Both loves are
infinite.

*The **NURSE** calls from offstage.*

I hear a noise inside. Dear love, goodbye—Just a minute,
good Nurse. Sweet Montague, be true. Stay here for a
moment. I'll come back.

***JULIET** exits.*

ROMEO

Oh, blessed, blessed night! Because it's dark out, I'm
afraid all this is just a dream, too sweet to be real.

***JULIET** enters on her balcony.*

JULIET

Three words, dear Romeo, and then it's good night for real.
If your intentions as a lover are truly honorable and you
want to marry me, send me word tomorrow. I'll send a
messenger to you, and you can pass on a message telling
me where and when we'll be married. I'll lay all my fortunes
at your feet and follow you, my lord, all over the world.

NURSE

(offstage) Madam!

JULIET

(to the NURSE) I'll be right there! *(to ROMEO)* But if you
don't have honorable intentions, I beg you—

NURSE

(from within) Madam!

JULIET

By and by, I come.—

To cease thy strife and leave me to my grief.

Tomorrow will I send.

ROMEO

So thrive my soul—

JULIET

A thousand times good night!

Exit JULIET, above

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.

Moves to exit Reenter JULIET, above

JULIET

Hist! Romeo, hist!—Oh, for a falconer's voice,

To lure this tassel-gentle back again!

Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud,

Else would I tear the cave where Echo 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 nyas?

JULIET

What o'clock tomorrow

Shall I send to thee?

ROMEO

By the hour of nine.

NURSE

(offstage) Madam!

JULIET

Alright, I'm coming!—I beg you to stop trying for me and

leave me to my sadness. Tomorrow I'll send the messenger.

ROMEO

My soul depends on it—

JULIET

A thousand times good night.

JULIET exits.

ROMEO

Leaving you is a thousand times worse than being near you. A lover goes toward his beloved as enthusiastically as a schoolboy leaving his books, but when he leaves his girlfriend, he feels as miserable as the schoolboy on his way to school.

ROMEO starts to leave. JULIET returns, on her balcony.

JULIET

Hist, Romeo! Hist! Oh, I wish I could make a falconer's call, so I could bring my little falcon back again. I'm trapped in my family's house, so I must be quiet. Otherwise I would rip open the cave where. I would make her repeat his name until her voice grew more hoarse than mine by repeating, "My Romeo!"

ROMEO

My soul is calling out my name. The sound of lovers calling each others names through the night is silver-sweet. It's the sweetest sound a lover ever hears.

JULIET

Romeo!

ROMEO

My baby hawk?

JULIET

What time tomorrow should I send a messenger to you?

ROMEO

By nine o'clock.

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,
Remembering how I love thy company.

ROMEO

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

JULIET

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

ROMEO

I would I were thy bird.

JULIET

Sweet, so would I.
Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing.
Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.

Exit JULIET, above

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 close cell,
His help to crave and my dear hap to tell.

Enter FRIAR LAWRENCE, with a basket

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The gray-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,
Checkering the eastern clouds with streaks of light,
And fleckled darkness like a drunkard reels
From forth day's path and Titan's fiery wheels.
Now, ere the sun advance his burning eye,

JULIET

I won't fail. From now until then seems like twenty years. I
have forgotten why I called you back.

ROMEO

Let me stand here until you remember your reason.

JULIET

I'll forget it, and you'll have to stand there forever. I'll only
remember how much I love your company.

ROMEO

I'll keep standing here, even if you keep forgetting. I'll
forget that I have any home besides this spot right here.

JULIET

It's almost morning. I want to make you go, but I'd only let
you go as far as a spoiled child lets his pet bird go. He lets
the bird hop a little from his hand and then yanks him back
by a string.

ROMEO

I wish I was your bird.

JULIET

My sweet, so do I. But I would kill you by petting you too
much. Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet
sorrow that I'll say good night until tonight becomes
tomorrow.

JULIET exits.

ROMEO

I hope you sleep peacefully. I wish I were Sleep and
Peace, so I could spend the night with you. Now I'll go see
my priest, to ask for his help and tell him about my good
luck.

FRIAR LAWRENCE enters by himself, carrying a basket.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The smiling morning is replacing the frowning night.
Darkness is stumbling out of the sun's path like a drunk
man. Now, before the sun comes up and burns away the
dew, I have to fill this basket of mine with poisonous
weeds and medicinal flowers. The Earth is nature's

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.
Oh, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, 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 from that fair use
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometime by action dignified.

*Enter **ROMEO***

Within the infant rind of this small flower
Poison hath residence and medicine power.
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;
Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.
Two such opposèd kings encamp them still,
In man as well as herbs—grace and rude will.

And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.

ROMEO

Good morrow, Father.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Benedicite.

What early tongue so sweet saluteth me?
Young son, it argues a distempered head
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 brain
Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth reign.
Therefore thy earliness doth me assure
Thou art uproused by some distemperature.
Or if not so, then here I hit it right:
Our Romeo hath not been in bed tonight.

ROMEO

mother and also nature's tomb. Plants are born out of the Earth, and they are buried in the Earth when they die. From the Earth's womb, many different sorts of plants and animals come forth, and the Earth provides her children with many excellent forms of nourishment. Everything nature creates has some special property, and each one is different. Herbs, plants, and stones possess great power. There is nothing on Earth that is so evil that it does not provide the earth with some special quality. And there is nothing that does not turn bad if it's put to the wrong use and abused. Virtue turns to vice if it's misused. Vice sometimes becomes virtue through the right activity.

***ROMEO** enters.*

Inside the little rind of this weak flower, there is both poison and powerful medicine. If you smell it, you feel good all over your body. But if you taste it, you die. There are two opposite elements in everything, in men as well as in herbs—good and evil.

When evil is dominant, death soon kills the body like cancer.

ROMEO

Good morning, father.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

God bless you. Who greets me so early in the morning? Young man, something's wrong if you're getting out of bed this early. Every old man has worries, and worried men never get any sleep, but young men shouldn't have a care in the world. They should get to bed early and get plenty of sleep. Therefore, the fact that you're awake this early tells me you've been upset with some anxiety. If that's not the case, then this must be the answer: You, Romeo, have not been to bed tonight.

ROMEO

That last is true. The sweeter rest was mine.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

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 LAWRENCE

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 physic lies.
I bear no hatred, blessèd man, for, lo,
My intercession likewise steads my foe.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Be plain, good son, and homely in thy drift.
Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.

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 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 LAWRENCE

Holy Saint Francis, what a change is here!
Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear,
So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.
Jesu Maria, what a deal of brine
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 my ancient ears.
Lo, here upon thy cheek the stain doth sit

Your last guess is right. I enjoyed a sweeter rest than sleep.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

May God forgive you if you've sinned!—Were you with Rosaline?

ROMEO

With Rosaline, father? No, I have forgotten that girl and all the sadness she brought me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

That's good, my boy. But where have you been?

ROMEO

I'll tell you before you have to ask me again. I have been feasting with my enemy. Suddenly someone wounded me with love and was wounded with love by me. You have the sacred power to cure both of us. I carry no hatred, holy man, because my request will benefit my enemy.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Speak plainly, make your meaning clear, my son. A jumbled confession can only receive a jumbled absolution.

ROMEO

I love rich Capulet's daughter. I love her, and she loves me. We're bound to each other in every possible way, except we need you to marry us. I'll tell you more later about when and where we met, how we fell in love, and how we exchanged promises, but now I'm begging you: please, agree to marry us today.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Holy Saint Francis, this is a drastic change! Have you given up so quickly on Rosaline, whom you loved so much? Then young men love with their eyes, not with their hearts. Jesus and Mary, how many tears did you cry for Rosaline? How many salty tear-drops did you waste salting a love you never tasted? The sun hasn't yet melted away the fog you made with all your sighs. The groans you used to make are still ringing in my old ears. There's still a stain on your cheek from an old tear that hasn't been washed off yet. If you were ever yourself, and this sadness was yours, you and your sadness were all for Rosaline. And now

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:
Women may fall when there's no strength in men.

ROMEO

Thou chid'st me oft for loving Rosaline.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

For doting, not for loving, pupil mine.

ROMEO

And badest me bury love.

you've changed? Then repeat this after me: you can't
expect women to be faithful when men are so unreliable.

ROMEO

You scolded me often for loving Rosaline.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I scolded you for obsessing about her, not for loving her,
my student.

ROMEO

And you told me to bury my love.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

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

ROMEO

I pray thee, chide not. Her I love now
Doth grace for grace and love for love allow.
The other did not so.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Oh, she knew well
Thy love did read by rote, that could not spell.
But come, young waverer, come, go with me,
In one respect I'll thy assistant be,
For this alliance may so happy prove
To turn your households' rancor to pure love.

ROMEO

Oh, let us hence. I stand on sudden haste.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Wisely and slow. They stumble that run fast.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I didn't tell you to get rid of one love and replace her with
another.

ROMEO

Please, I beg you, don't scold me. The girl I love now
returns my love. The other girl did not love me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Oh, she knew very well that you were acting like you were
in love without really knowing what love means. But come
on, inconsistent young man, come with me. I'll help you
with your secret wedding. This marriage may be lucky
enough to turn the hatred between your families into pure
love.

ROMEO

Let's get out of here. I'm in a rush.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Go wisely and slowly. Those who rush stumble and fall.

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

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

Why, that same pale hard-hearted 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.

MERCUTIO

Alas, poor Romeo! He is already dead, stabbed with a
white 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 time, distance, and proportion. He rests
his minim rests—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

The what?

MERCUTIO

The pox of such antic, lisping, affecting fantasmines,
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

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

He's tougher than the. He does everything by the book. He
fights like you sing at a recital, paying attention to time,
distance, and proportion. He 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. *passado*—the forward thrust—
the *punto reverso*—the backhand thrust—and the *hai*—the
thrust that goes straight through.

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

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

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.— Signior Romeo, *bonjour!* There’s a French salutation to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.

ROMEO

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

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.

ROMEO

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

MERCUTIO

The slip, 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.

ROMEO

Meaning “to curtsy”?

MERCUTIO

Thou hast most kindly hit it.

ROMEO

A most courteous exposition.

MERCUTIO

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

In other words “important business” made you flex your buttocks.

ROMEO

You mean do a curtsy?

MERCUTIO

You’ve hit the target, sir.

ROMEO

That’s a very polite and courteous explanation.

MERCUTIO

Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

ROMEO

Pink for flower.

MERCUTIO

Right.

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

ROMEO

The pink flower.

MERCUTIO

Right.

ROMEO

Why, then is my pump well flowered.

ROMEO

Well, then my pump is well decorated with flowers.

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.

ROMEO

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

MERCUTIO

Come between us, good Benvolio. My wits faints.

ROMEO

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

MERCUTIO

Nay, if our wits run the wild-geese chase, I am done, for thou hast more of the wild-geese 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. It is a most sharp sauce.

ROMEO

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-geese 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

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

[Romeo implies that Mercutio is only good for jokes.](#)

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

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!

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.

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, 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

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

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!

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 in.

BENVOLIO

Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO

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

A SAIL, A SAIL!

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

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

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.

NURSE

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

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.

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

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

LUSTY HAND

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

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

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

NURSE

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

BENVOLIO

She will indite him to some supper.

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.

(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.

(speaks)

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

ROMEO

I will follow you.

MERCUTIO

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

NURSE

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

CONFIDENCE

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.

BENVOLIO

She will indite him to some dinner party.

INDITE

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

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

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

MERCUTIO

[GOODBYE, OLD LADY. GOODBYE, LADY, LADY, LADY.](#)

[Mercutio mockingly sings a romantic song to the Nurse.](#)

[Goodbye, old lady. Goodbye, lady, lady, lady.](#)

*Exeunt **MERCUTIO** and **BENVOLIO***

NURSE

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

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

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

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 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—

***BENVOLIO** and **MERCUTIO** exit.*

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

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

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

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

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,
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?

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

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

PROTEST

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

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

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

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 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 good to hear it.

ROMEO

Commend me to thy lady.

NURSE

Ay, a thousand times.—Peter!

PETER

Anon!

NURSE

Before and apace.

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.
 Oh, she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,
 Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
 Driving back shadows over louring hills.

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

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.

JULIET

I sent the Nurse at nine o'clock. Maybe she can't find him.
 That can't be. Oh, she's slow! Love's messengers should
 be thoughts, which fly ten times faster than sunbeams.
 They should be strong enough to push shadows over the
 dark hills. That's the way doves carry Venus so fast, and
 that's why Cupid has wings that let him fly as fast as the

Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love
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.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be as swift in motion as a ball.
My words would bandy her to my sweet love,
And his to me.
But old folks, many feign 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 look'st 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.

NURSE

I am aweary. Give me leave awhile.
Fie, how my bones ache! What a jaunt have I!

JULIET

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

NURSE

Jesu, what haste! Can you not stay awhile?
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.

wind. Now it's noon. That's three hours since nine o'clock,
but she hasn't come back. If she was young and
passionate, she'd move as fast as a ball. My words would
bounce her to my sweet love, and his words would bounce
her back to me. But a lot of old people act like they're
already dead—sluggish, slow, fat, and colorless, like lead.

*The **NURSE** and **PETER** enter.*

Oh my God, here she comes! Oh sweet Nurse, what news
do you bring? Have you spoken to him? Send your man
away.

NURSE

Peter, wait for me at the gate.

***PETER** exits.*

JULIET

Now, good sweet Nurse—Oh Lord, why do you look so
sad? Even if the news is sad, tell me with a smile on your
face. If the news is good, you're ruining the sweet news by
playing a trick with a sour face like that.

NURSE

I am tired. Leave me alone for a minute. Oh my, my bones
ache so much. I've been running all over the place.

JULIET

I wish you had my bones, and I had your news. Come on
now, I beg you, speak, good Nurse, speak.

NURSE

Sweet Jesus, you're in such a hurry! Can't you wait for a
moment? Don't you see that I'm out of breath?

JULIET

How can you be out of breath when you have enough
breath to tell me that you're out of breath? The excuse you
make to delay the news is longer than the news itself. Is
the news good or bad? Answer that question. Tell me if it's
good or bad, and I'll wait for the details. Tell me so I can be
satisfied. Is it good or bad?

Let me be satisfied. Is 't good or bad?

NURSE

Well, you have made a simple 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 did I 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' t' other side. Ah, my back, my back!
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,
To catch my death with jaunting up and down!

JULIET

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

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?

JULIET

Where is my mother? Why, she is within.
Where should 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? Marry, come up, I trow.
Is this the poultice for my aching bones?
Henceforward do your messages yourself.

JULIET

Here's such a coil. Come, what says Romeo?

NURSE

Well, you have made a foolish choice. You don't know how to pick a man. Romeo? No, not him, though his face is more handsome than any man's, and his legs are prettier, and as for his hands and feet and body, they're not much to speak of, and yet they're beyond compare. He's not the most polite man in the world, but, believe me, he's gentle as a lamb. Well, do what you want. Be good. Have you had lunch yet?

JULIET

No, I haven't had lunch. Everything you told me I already knew. What does he say about our marriage? What about that?

NURSE

Lord, what a headache I've got! My head is pounding. It feels like it'll break into twenty pieces. My back aches too—
(JULIET *rubs her back*) Ooh, on the other side—ah, my poor aching back! Curse your heart for sending me running all over town. I could get sick and die.

JULIET

Believe me, I'm sorry you're in pain. Sweet, sweet, sweet Nurse, tell me, what did my love Romeo say?

NURSE

Your love says, like an honorable gentleman, who is courteous, kind, handsome, and, I believe, virtuous— where is your mother?

JULIET

Where is my mother? Why, she's inside. Where else would she be? Your answer is so strange! "Your love says, like an honorable gentleman, 'Where is your mother?'"

NURSE

Oh holy Mary, mother of God! Are you this impatient? Come on, you're being ridiculous! Is this the cure for my aching bones? From now on, take care of your messages yourself.

JULIET

You're making such a fuss. Come on, what did Romeo say?

NURSE

Have you got leave to go to shrift today?

JULIET

I have.

NURSE

Then hie you hence to Friar Lawrence's cell.
 There stays a husband to make you a wife.
 Now comes the wanton 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.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

So smile the heavens upon this holy act
 That after-hours with sorrow chide us not.

ROMEO

Amen, amen. But come what sorrow can,
 It cannot countervail 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 LAWRENCE

These violent delights have violent ends
 And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
 Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey
 Is loathsome in his own deliciousness
 And in the taste confounds the appetite.
 Therefore love moderately. Long love doth so.
 Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.

*Enter JULIET, somewhat fast, and embraceth***ROMEO**

Here comes the lady. Oh, so light a foot
 Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint.
 A lover may bestride the gossamers

NURSE

Do you have permission to go out and take confession
 today?

JULIET

I do.

NURSE

Then hurry up and rush over to Friar Lawrence's cell.
 There's a husband there who's waiting to make you his
 wife. Now I see the blood rushing to your cheeks. You
 blush bright red as soon as you hear any news. Go to the
 church. I must go by a different path to get a rope ladder.
 Your love will use it to climb up to your window while it's
 dark. I do the drudge work for your pleasure. But soon
 you'll be doing a wife's work all night long. Go. I'll go to
 lunch. You go to Friar Lawrence's cell.

JULIET

Wish me luck. Thank you, dear Nurse.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

May the heavens be happy with this holy act of marriage,
 so nothing unfortunate happens later to make us regret it.

ROMEO

Amen, amen. But whatever misfortunes occur, they can't
 ruin the joy I feel with one look at her. All you have to do is
 join our hands with holy words, then love-destroying death
 can do whatever it pleases. It's enough for me if I can call
 her mine.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

These sudden joys have sudden endings. They burn up in
 victory like fire and gunpowder. When they meet, as in a
 kiss, they explode. Too much honey is delicious, but it
 makes you sick to your stomach. Therefore, love each
 other in moderation. That is the key to long-lasting love.
 Too fast is as bad as too slow.

JULIET enters in a rush and embraces **ROMEO**.

Here comes the lady. Oh, a footstep as light as hers will
 never endure the rocky road of life. Lovers are so light they
 can walk on a spiderweb floating on a summer breeze, and

That idles in the wanton summer air,
And yet not fall. So light is vanity.

JULIET

Good even to my ghostly confessor.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo shall thank thee, daughter, for us both.

yet not fall. That's how flimsy and unreal pleasure is.

JULIET

Good evening, my spiritual confessor.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo will thank you, my girl, for both of us.

JULIET

As much to him, else is his thanks too much.

JULIET

I'll give him equal thanks, so we're even.

ROMEO

Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy
Be heaped like mine, and that thy skill be more
To blazon it, 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,
Braggs of his substance, not of ornament.
They are but beggars that can count their worth.
But my true love is grown to such excess
I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Come, come with me, and we will make short work.
For, by your leaves, you shall not stay alone
Till holy church incorporate two in one.

Exeunt

ROMEO

Ah, Juliet if you're as happy as I am, and you're better with
words, tell me about the happiness you imagine we'll have
in our marriage.

JULIET

I can imagine more than I can say—I have more on my
mind than words. Anyone who can count how much he has
is poor. My true love has made me so rich that I can't count
even half of my wealth.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Come, come with me, and we'll do the job quickly. Because
if you don't mind, I'm not leaving you two alone until you're
united in marriage.

They exit.