Romeo and Juliet

By

William Shakespeare

Act 2, Scene 4
SCENE. A street.

(Enter BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO)

MERCUTIO
Where the devil should this Romeo be?
Came he not home to-night?

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

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

BENVOLIO
Tybalt, the kinsman of 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, I can tell you. O, he is the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing prick-song, keeps time, distance, and proportion; rests me his minim rest, one, two, and the third in your bosom: the very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist; 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 fantasticoes; these new tuners of accents! 'By Jesu, a very good blade! a very tall man! a very good whore!' Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these perdona-mi's, who stand so much on the new form, that they cannot at ease on the old bench? O, their bones, their bones!

(Enter ROMEO)
BENVOLIO
Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

MERCUTIO
Without his roe, like a dried herring: 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 be-rhyme her; Dido a dowdy; Cleopatra a gipsy; Helen and Hero hildings and harlots; Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose. Signior Romeo, bon jour! 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?

MERCUTIO
The ship, 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 court'sy.

MERCUTIO
Thou hast most kindly hit it.
ROMEO
  A most courteous exposition.

MERCUTIO
  Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

ROMEO
  Pink for flower.

MERCUTIO
  Right.

ROMEO
  Why, then is my pump well flowered.

MERCUTIO
  Well said: 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 sole singular.

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

MERCUTIO
  Come between us, good Benvolio; my wits faint.

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

MERCUTIO
  Nay, if thy wits run the wild-goose chase, I have
  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 any thing 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
And is it not well served in to a sweet goose?

MERCUTIO
O here's a wit of cheveril, 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 drivelling 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 desirtest me to stop in my tale against the hair.

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 no longer.

ROMEO
Here's goodly gear!

(Enter Nurse and PETER)

MERCUTIO
A sail, a sail!

BENVOLIO
Two, two; a shirt and a smock.

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 den, fair gentlewoman.

Nurse
Is it good den?

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!

ROMEO
One, gentlewoman, that God hath made for 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 of a worse.

Nurse
You say 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.
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, lady,'

(Exeunt MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO)

Nurse
Marry, farewell! 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 a' speak any thing against me, I'll take him down, an 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; I am none of his skains-mates. And thou must stand by too, and suffer every knave to use me at his pleasure?

PETER
I saw no man use you a 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! Pray you, sir, a word:
and as I told you, my young lady bade 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—

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 Laurence' cell
Be shrived and married. Here is for thy pains.

Nurse
No truly sir; not a penny.

ROMEO
Go to; I say you shall.
Nurse
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 tackleed 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 say'st thou, my dear nurse?

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

ROMEO
I 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:—O, 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.

(Exit Romeo)

Peter!

PETER
Anon!

Nurse
Peter, take my fan, and go before and apace.

(Exeunt)