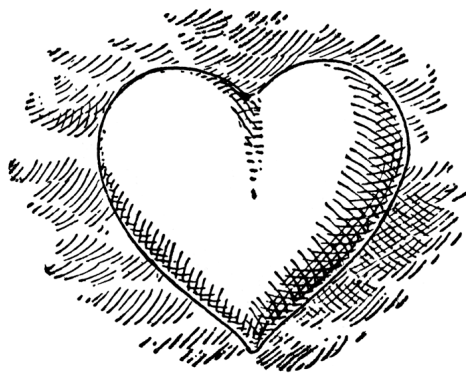


# ROMEO AND JULIET

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, lispings, 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 desirest 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 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 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)