

# Romeo and Juliet

## Act II, Scene 1

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Romeo** — a romantic, sensitive, and passionate young man, probably 16 or 17 years old

**Juliet** — a romantic young girl, approximately 14 years old

### MINOR CHARACTERS

**Benvolio** — a Montague and companion to Romeo

**Mercutio** — a Montague and companion to Romeo

**EXTRA** — Nurse

This scene, the balcony scene, is one of the most famous in all of Shakespeare's works. Though containing only two characters, its passion, spontaneity, and romantic declaration make it stand alone in audience appeal. According to Thomas Marc Parrot, professor of English at Princeton University, "No other play, no other passage, seems to have appealed so strongly to the college youth of the 17th century, and what was true then has remained true ever since. In all the fluctuating phases of taste and judgment in succeeding centuries, *Romeo and Juliet* has survived as the supreme expression of the supreme and characteristic passion of youth, the passion of instinctive, romantic, world-forgetting love. The play is the work of Shakespeare's youth, his first utterance in the field of romantic tragedy, and it has remained ever since the poem best loved by romantic youth."

The basic story line, up to this point, is as follows: the setting is Verona, Italy, in the 14th century. The town's two prominent families, the Capulets and the Montagues, are in the midst of a serious feud. Romeo, a Montague, has (earlier in the story) confessed his love-sick heart to his cousin Benvolio. His romantic involvement with another woman has recently been severed, and Benvolio, hoping to ease his pain by finding him another lover, invites him to a masquerade ball in order to "examine other beauties." The problem, however, is that the ball is being held at the home of the Capulets.

It is there that Romeo spots Juliet and, as the saying goes, falls instantly in love with her. He speaks with her, and it becomes apparent that she, too, is equal in attraction to him. They kiss, but do so

discreetly because of the social situation and setting. However, they discover that they belong to the families of their "great enemy" — he is a Montague and she is a Capulet.

This scene takes place later that evening. After the ball, Romeo aimlessly wanders the streets cursing his fate. (He says, in Act I, Scene 5, "Is she a Capulet? O dear account! My life is my foe's debt!") He finds himself outside the walls of the Capulet orchard; boldly, he climbs the wall and leaps down within the Capulet property.

Then, he sees her: it is Juliet walking out onto her balcony. At first he hides to hear her speak. After he listens to his "bright angel" confess her love and devotion for him, he emerges from his hiding place and climbs up the balcony to her. It is there that they dedicate themselves to one another and pledge the faith of undying love.

It is essential that this scene is performed honestly, spontaneously, and with passion. Don't overplay it with melodramatic movements, nor should it be underplayed by not incorporating touching and playful passion. Remember, these are two teenagers that are engulfed in overwhelming emotions that, at the present time, they are too enamored with to control.

1 To be consorted with the hum'rous night.  
 2 Blind is his love and best befits the dark.  
 3 MERCUTIO: If love be blind love cannot hit the mark.  
 4 Now will he sit under a medlar tree  
 5 And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit  
 6 As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.  
 7 O Romeo, that she were — O that she were  
 8 An open-arse or thou a pop'rin pear.  
 9 Romeo, good night. I'll to my truckle-bed,  
 10 This field-bed is too cold for me to sleep.  
 11 Come, shall we go?  
 12 BENVOLIO: Go then, for 'tis in vain  
 13 To seek him here that means not to be found. (*Exit*  
 14 *BENVOLIO and MERCUTIO*)  
 15 ROMEO: He jests at scars that never felt a wound.  
 16 But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?  
 17 It is the East and Juliet is the sun.  
 18 Arise fair Sun and kill the envious Moon,  
 19 Who is already sick and pale with grief  
 20 That thou her maid art far more fair than she.  
 21 Be not her maid, since she is envious,  
 22 Her vestal liv'ry is but sick and green,  
 23 And none but fools do wear it, cast it off. (*Enter JULIET*  
 24 *at the window*)  
 25 It is my lady! O it is my love!  
 26 O that she knew she were!  
 27 She speaks yet she says nothing, what of that?  
 28 Her eye discourses, I will answer it.  
 29 I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks.  
 30 Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
 31 Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
 32 To twinkle in their spheres till they return.  
 33 What if her eyes were there, they in her head?  
 34 The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars  
 35 As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven

1 Would through the airy region stream so bright  
 2 That birds would sing and think it were not night.  
 3 See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!  
 4 O that I were a glove upon that hand  
 5 That I might touch that cheek.  
 6 JULIET: Ay me!  
 7 ROMEO: She speaks.  
 8 O speak again, bright angel, for thou art  
 9 As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,  
 10 As is a winged messenger of Heaven  
 11 Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes  
 12 Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him  
 13 When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds  
 14 And sails upon the bosom of the air.  
 15 JULIET: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
 16 Deny thy father and refuse thy name;  
 17 Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love  
 18 And I'll no longer be a Capulet.  
 19 ROMEO: Shall I hear more or shall I speak at this?  
 20 JULIET: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy,  
 21 Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.  
 22 What's Montague? it is nor hand nor foot  
 23 Nor arm nor face, O be some other name  
 24 Belonging to a man.  
 25 What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
 26 By any other word would smell as sweet.  
 27 So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
 28 Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
 29 Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
 30 And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
 31 Take all myself.  
 32 ROMEO: I take thee at thy word.  
 33 Call me but Love and I'll be new baptiz'd,  
 34 Henceforth I never will be Romeo.  
 35 JULIET: What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night

1           So stumblest on my counsel?  
 2 **ROMEO:** By a name  
 3           I know not how to tell thee who I am.  
 4           My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself  
 5           Because it is an enemy to thee.  
 6           Had I it written, I would tear the word.  
 7 **JULIET:** My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words  
 8           Of thy tongue's utt'ring, yet I know the sound.  
 9           Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?  
 10 **ROMEO:** Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike.  
 11 **JULIET:** How cam'st thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?  
 12           The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,  
 13           And the place death, considering who thou art,  
 14           If any of my kinsmen find thee here.  
 15 **ROMEO:** With Love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,  
 16           For stony limits cannot hold Love out,  
 17           And what Love can do, that dares Love attempt.  
 18           Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.  
 19 **JULIET:** If they do see thee they will murther thee.  
 20 **ROMEO:** Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye  
 21           Than twenty of their swords, look thou but sweet  
 22           And I am proof against their enmity.  
 23 **JULIET:** I would not for the world they saw thee here.  
 24 **ROMEO:** I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,  
 25           And but thou love me, let them find me here.  
 26           My life were better ended by their hate  
 27           Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.  
 28 **JULIET:** By whose direction found'st thou out this place?  
 29 **ROMEO:** By Love, that first did prompt me to inquire.  
 30           He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.  
 31           I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far  
 32           As that vast shore wash'd with the farthest sea,  
 33           I should adventure for such merchandise.  
 34 **JULIET:** Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,  
 35           Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek

1           For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.  
 2           Fain would I dwell on form — fain, fain deny  
 3           What I have spoke. But farewell compliment.  
 4           Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say "Ay,"  
 5           And I will take thy word. Yet if thou swear'st  
 6           Thou mayst prove false — at lovers' perjuries  
 7           They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,  
 8           If thou dost love pronounce it faithfully —  
 9           Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,  
 10           I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,  
 11           So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.  
 12           In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,  
 13           And therefore thou mayst think my havior light,  
 14           But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
 15           Than those that have more cunning to be strange.  
 16           I should have been more strange, I must confess,  
 17           But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,  
 18           My true-love passion. Therefore pardon me,  
 19           And not impute this yielding to light love,  
 20           Which the dark night hath so discovered.  
 21 **ROMEO:** Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow,  
 22           That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops —  
 23 **JULIET:** O swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,  
 24           That monthly changes in her circl'd orb,  
 25           Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.  
 26 **ROMEO:** What shall I swear by?  
 27 **JULIET:** Do not swear at all,  
 28           Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,  
 29           Which is the god of my idolatry,  
 30           And I'll believe thee.  
 31 **ROMEO:** If my heart's dear love —  
 32 **JULIET:** Well, do not swear. Although I joy in thee  
 33           I have no joy of this contract tonight.  
 34           It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,  
 35           Too like the lightning; which doth cease to be

1 Ere one can say "It lightens." Sweet, good night.  
 2 This bud of love by Summer's rip'ning breath  
 3 May prove a beauteous flow'r when next we meet.  
 4 Good night, good night! As sweet repose and rest  
 5 Come to thy heart as that within my breast.  
 6 ROMEO: O wilt thou leave me so unsatisfy'd?  
 7 JULIET: What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?  
 8 ROMEO: Th' exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.  
 9 JULIET: I gave thee mine before thou didst request it,  
 10 And yet I would it were to give again.  
 11 ROMEO: Wouldst thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?  
 12 JULIET: But to be frank and give it thee again.  
 13 And yet I wish but for the thing I have,  
 14 My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
 15 My love as deep — the more I give to thee  
 16 The more I have, for both are infinite.  
 17 I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu — (*NURSE calls*  
 18 *within.*)  
 19 Anon, good Nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.  
 20 Stay but a little, I will come again. (*Exit JULIET*)  
 21 ROMEO: O blessed blessed night! I am afeard,  
 22 Being in night, all this is but a dream  
 23 Too flatt'ring sweet to be substantial. (*Enter JULIET*)  
 24 JULIET: Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.  
 25 If that thy bent of love be hon'orable,  
 26 Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow  
 27 By one that I'll procure to come to thee  
 28 Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite,  
 29 And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay  
 30 And follow thee my lord throughout the world.  
 31 NURSE: (*Within*) Madam!  
 32 JULIET: I come, anon. But if thou mean'st not well,  
 33 I do beseech thee —  
 34 NURSE: (*Within*) Madam!  
 35 JULIET: By and by I come.

1 — To cease thy strife and leave me to my grief.  
 2 Tomorrow will I send.  
 3 ROMEO: So thrive my soul.  
 4 JULIET: A thousand times good night. (*Exit JULIET*)  
 5 ROMEO: A thousand times the worse to want thy light!  
 6 Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books,  
 7 But love from love toward school with heavy looks. (*Enter*  
 8 *JULIET again.*)  
 9 JULIET: Hist Romeo, hist! O for a falkner's voice  
 10 To lure this tassel-gentle back again.  
 11 Bondage is hoarse and may not speak aloud,  
 12 Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies  
 13 And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine  
 14 With repetition of my Romeo.  
 15 ROMEO: It is my soul that calls upon my name.  
 16 How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,  
 17 Like softest music to attending ears.  
 18 JULIET: Romeo —  
 19 ROMEO: My dear?  
 20 JULIET: What a clock tomorrow  
 21 Shall I send to thee?  
 22 ROMEO: By the hour of nine.  
 23 JULIET: I will not fail, 'tis twenty year till then.  
 24 I have forgot why I did call thee back.  
 25 ROMEO: Let me stand here till thou remember it.  
 26 JULIET: I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,  
 27 Rememb'ring how I love thy company.  
 28 ROMEO: And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,  
 29 Forgetting any other home but this.  
 30 JULIET: 'Tis almost morning. I would have thee gone,  
 31 And yet no farther than a wanton's bird  
 32 That lets it hop a little from his hand,  
 33 Like a poor pris'ner in his twisted gyves,  
 34 And with a silken threed plucks't back again,  
 35 So loving-jealous of his liberty.