

## Act 1 The Capulets and the Montagues

### Scene 1 The town square in Verona

[Sampson and Gregory arrive, carrying swords.]

SAMPSON: If I meet any of those Montague dogs today, I'm ready to attack them.

GREGORY: Well, get your sword out then. Here come two of Montague's servants.

[Abram and Balthasar arrive.]

SAMPSON: I'll make a rude face at them and make them angry.

ABRAM: Are you making a rude face at us, sir?

SAMPSON [to Gregory]: Is the law on our side if I say 'yes'?

GREGORY: No, it isn't.

SAMPSON [to Abram]: No, I'm not making a rude face at you, sir.

But . . . I *am* making a rude face.

GREGORY: Are you trying to start a fight with us, sir?

ABRAM: Start a fight, sir? No, sir.

SAMPSON: Well, if you *do* want to start a fight, I'm ready for you.

My master is a good man – as good as yours.

[Benvolio arrives from one side, and Tybalt from the other.]

ABRAM: Not a *better* man?

GREGORY [to Sampson]: Say 'better'. Here comes one of our master's relatives.

SAMPSON [to Abram]: He's a better man, sir.

ABRAM: You're lying!

SAMPSON: Take out your swords! Let's fight them, Gregory!

[Sampson and Gregory get out their swords and start fighting.]

BENVOLIO: Stop fighting, you stupid men! Put your swords away. You don't know what you're doing.

TYBALT [*getting out his sword*]: So you're in this fight too, Benvolio? Turn, and prepare to die!

BENVOLIO: I'm only trying to keep the peace. Put your sword away. Or use it to stop these men fighting.

TYBALT: Your sword is out, but you talk about peace? I hate that word, as I hate all Montagues. [*attacking him*] Take this!

[*Tybalt and Benvolio fight. Three or four townspeople of Verona walk past and start fighting too.*]

TOWNSPEOPLE: Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

[*Lord Capulet and his wife arrive.*]

LORD CAPULET: What's all this noise? [*to Sampson*] Go and bring me my long sword!

LADY CAPULET: Why are you calling for a sword?

[*Lord Montague and his wife arrive.*]

LORD CAPULET: Bring me my sword, I say! Here's old Montague. He has *his* sword out, ready to fight.

LORD MONTAGUE [*to his wife*]: Don't hold me back!

LADY MONTAGUE [*holding him*]: You're not going to fight.

[*Prince Escalus arrives with his servants.*]

PRINCE: Enemies of peace, throw your swords to the ground! This is the third time, Capulet and Montague, that fighting between your families has broken the peace of our streets. Go home, everybody. Come with me now, Capulet. Come and see me later, Montague.

[*All leave except Lord and Lady Montague and Benvolio.*]

LORD MONTAGUE: Who started this fight? Speak, Benvolio. Were you here when it began?

BENVOLIO: Your servants and Capulet's servants were fighting. I tried to stop them, but then angry Tybalt started fighting too. More and more people came and joined us. Then the Prince came and stopped everything.

LADY MONTAGUE: Have you seen Romeo today? I'm very glad he wasn't at this terrible fight.

BENVOLIO: Madam, an hour before the sun came up, I went for a walk. I saw Romeo walking near the west side of the city. But he ran away and hid in a wood.

LORD MONTAGUE: People have often seen him there early in the morning, looking very sad. But when the sun comes up, my son goes home. He shuts himself in his room.

BENVOLIO: My noble uncle, do you know the reason?

LORD MONTAGUE: I and many other friends have asked him, but he keeps it a secret. We can't help him until we learn the reason for his sadness.

[*Romeo arrives.*]

BENVOLIO: Here he comes. I'll find out what his problem is.

LORD MONTAGUE: I hope he tells you the true reason. [*to his wife*] Let's go, Madam.

[*Lord and Lady Montague leave.*]

BENVOLIO: Good morning, cousin.

ROMEO: Is it still so early?

BENVOLIO: It's only about nine o'clock.

ROMEO: Ah, sad hours pass slowly. Was that my father who hurried away from here?

BENVOLIO: Yes. What sadness makes your hours long, Romeo? Are you in love?

ROMEO: Yes, but I love a lady who doesn't love me. [*looking around*] But what terrible fight has happened here? No, don't tell me – I've heard it all before. Hate is the reason for this fight, but I'm suffering more from love.

BENVOLIO: I'm very sorry that you're so unhappy. Tell me, who are you in love with?

ROMEO: I love a beautiful woman called Rosaline. But she isn't interested in me.

BENVOLIO: Listen to me – forget about her.

ROMEO: Oh, tell me how I *can* forget about her!

BENVOLIO: Use your eyes. Look at other beautiful women.

ROMEO: If I compare other beautiful women with her, I only think about her more.

BENVOLIO: I can teach you how to forget her.

[*Romeo and Benvolio leave.*]

## Scene 2 *A street near the Capulets' house*

[*Lord Capulet and Paris arrive with Peter, Capulet's servant.*]

LORD CAPULET: But Montague has had to promise to keep the peace too. That isn't difficult for old men like us.

PARIS: You are both men from noble families. It's a pity you have been enemies for so long. But now, sir, what do you say to my hopes of marrying your daughter, Juliet?

LORD CAPULET: The same thing as I have said before. My daughter is very young – not yet fourteen. She won't be ready for marriage for two more years.

PARIS: There are happy mothers who are younger than she is.

LORD CAPULET: Yes, but that isn't a good thing. All my other children have died; Juliet is my only hope. But win her heart, Paris. If she agrees to marry you, I'll agree to it too. Tonight I'm having a party for my dearest friends. You're very welcome to join us. You'll see ladies as beautiful as stars lighting up the dark sky. See them all, listen to them all. Then you can decide if you still prefer Juliet. [*giving a paper to Peter*] Go and find the people on this list. Invite them to my party this evening.

[*Lord Capulet and Paris leave.*]

PETER: Find the people on this list! How can I do that? I can't read their names. I'll have to ask somebody.

[*Romeo and Benvolio arrive.*]

BENVOLIO: I tell you, find a new love and forget your old one. A new pain or sadness will drive the old pain away.

ROMEO: The pain of my love is more serious than that. [*to Peter*]  
Good evening.

PETER: Good evening. [*showing him the paper*] Can you read, sir?

ROMEO: Yes, I can read. [*reading the paper*] 'Signor\* Martino and his wife and daughters. Signor Anselm and his beautiful sisters. Signor Placentio and his lovely daughters. Mercutio and his brother Valentine. My uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters. The beautiful Rosaline. Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt.'  
A nice group of people. Where are they invited to?

PETER: To my master's house. My master is the great rich Capulet. If you aren't one of the Montague family, come too. Have a drink with us. Goodbye! [*He leaves.*]

BENVOLIO: Your great love, Rosaline, is going to be at this party. Go there, and compare her to the other beautiful women of Verona. Then you'll see that she's ugly.

ROMEO: Another woman more beautiful than my love? There has never been anyone more beautiful in the world. I'll go to the party, but only to see Rosaline.

[*Romeo and Benvolio leave.*]

\*Signor: the Italian word for Mr