

# Romeo and Juliet Act 1 Notes

## Act 1 Prologue

- Summary of the play
- Setting: Verona, Italy
- Old argument between two families causes fights/riots
- There are two "star-crossed lovers"
  - ill-fated
  - not meant to be together
    - *"From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;"*
- Only the deaths of Romeo and Juliet can end the argument
  - They are the "star-crossed" lovers
- The play should take two hours to perform

## Act 1, Scene 1

- Capulet servants boast about fighting Montagues (enemy)
- Capulet servant insults/ bites his thumb at Montague servant which starts a fight (riot)
- Benvolio arrives and tries to break up fight
  - **Benvolio:** *Part, fools!  
Put up your swords; you know not what you do.*
- Tybalt provokes Benvolio into fighting
  - **Tybalt:** *What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the word,  
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee:  
Have at thee, coward!*
- Prince Escalus arrives, stops fight, and sentences the family that starts the next fight/riot to death.
  - **Prince:** *If ever you disturb our streets again,  
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace*
- Lord Montague and wife and Lord Capulet both appear at the scene
  - Lord Capulet is most interested in fighting
  - Lady Montague & Lady Capulet encourage their husbands not to fight
- Romeo's parents (the Montagues) and Benvolio discuss Romeo's mood.
  - **Lord Montague:** *Away from the light steals home my heavy son,  
And private in his chamber pens himself,  
Shuts up his windows, locks far daylight out  
And makes himself an artificial night:*
  - Benvolio has seen Romeo wandering around.
  - He sees that Romeo wants to be left alone; so, he doesn't bother him.
- Romeo tells Benvolio that he is depressed
  - Romeo loves Rosaline. (Romeo is obsessed with her.)
  - Rosaline wants nothing to do with him; she has sworn off love and men to become a nun
- Benvolio wants Romeo to look at other girls to date

# Romeo and Juliet Act 1 Notes

## Act 1, Scene 2

- Count Paris, who is 21, asks Lord Capulet if he can marry Juliet.
- Capulet would like Paris to wait 2 years
- [All of Juliet's siblings are dead]
- Capulet will agree to the marriage only if Juliet also agrees. He tells Paris to begin wooing her
  - **Lord Capulet:** *But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart,  
My will to her consent is but a part;  
An she agree, within her scope of choice  
Lies my consent and fair according voice.*
- Benvolio and Romeo find out about the Capulets' party.
  1. Romeo reads the guest list for an illiterate servant.
  2. Rosaline is invited to the party. *Romeo is interested in going now!*
- Benvolio talks Romeo into crashing the party.
  1. Benvolio wants Romeo to compare Rosaline to other girls.
  2. He thinks Romeo will realize that there are other women in the world.
- **Benvolio:** *Go thither; and, with unattainted eye,  
Compare her face [Rosaline's] with some that I shall show,  
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.*

## Act 1, Scene 3

- Lady Capulet goes to see Juliet about marrying Paris.
  - **Lady Capulet:** *Well, think of marriage now; younger than you,  
Here in Verona, ladies of esteem,  
Are made already mothers: by my count,  
I was your mother much upon these years  
That you are now a maid. Thus then in brief:  
The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.*
- Nurse rambles on and on; says Juliet will be 14 in 2 weeks. She speaks crude comments about Juliet, showing her lower class
- Juliet says that she hasn't thought about marriage at all.
  - It does not appear she wants to marry Paris
  - but she is obedient to her mother's wishes.
  - **Juliet to Lady Capulet:** *I'll look to like, if looking liking move;  
But no more deep will I endart mine eye  
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.*
- Nurse thinks that marrying Paris would be a good idea.
- Juliet agrees to meet Paris at the party and consider his offer of marriage.

## Act 1, Scene 4

- Romeo, Benvolio, Mercutio, and friends are on their way to crash the party.
  1. Romeo doesn't want to go as he is still depressed.
  2. Says he will not dance.
- The guys are wearing masks at the party to hide their identities.
- Mercutio tries to cheer Romeo up by talking about his dream.

## Romeo and Juliet Act 1 Notes

- Romeo fears that something bad is going to come of this night; i.e. he might die.
  - **Romeo:** *I fear, too early; for my mind misgives  
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars  
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date  
With this night's revels and expire the term  
Of a despised life closed in my breast  
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.* FORESHADOWING
- **Mercutio's Queen Mab Monologue:**
- Queen Mab = an imaginary fairy who brings dreams of people's fantasies & fears to them as they sleep
- Romeo says he listens to his dreams
- Mercutio uses the Queen Mab speech to tell Romeo to ignore his dreams; dreams are nonsense– he gives many examples

### Act 1, Scene 5

- Lord Capulet welcomes all to his party.
- Romeo sees Juliet across the room and falls in 'love' with Juliet. (Rosaline who?)
  - **Romeo:** *O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear*
- Tybalt, who is a hothead, overhears Romeo talking about Juliet and instantly wants to kill him.
  - **Tybalt:** *Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,/ A villain that is hither come in spite,  
To scorn at our solemnity this night* FORESHADOWING
- Lord Capulet stops Tybalt from fighting in his house and warns him to calm down or to leave the party.
  - Lord Capulet reminds Tybalt that Romeo is behaving
- Romeo and Juliet meet but do not exchange names.
- They instantly fall in "love."
  - Romeo worships Juliet with religious devotion
  - Saints and prayers are referenced in their dialogue
- As people are leaving, Nurse tells Romeo who Juliet is. She is a Capulet and his enemy.
  - **Romeo to Nurse:** *Is she a Capulet?  
O dear account! my life is my foe's debt.*
- Nurse also identifies Romeo for Juliet. He is a Montague and her enemy.
  - **Juliet to Nurse:** *Go ask his name: if he be married.  
My grave is like to be my wedding bed.*
  - **Juliet to Nurse:** *My only love sprung from my only hate!  
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!  
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,  
That I must love a loathed enemy.*
- Both Romeo and Juliet are depressed at these discoveries. *Now what?*