**ACT I**

**PROLOGUE**

Two households , both same in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene , From ancient grudge fracture to contemporary mutiny , Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean . From forth the fatal loins of these two foes A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life ; Whose misadventured piteous overthrows execute with their death bury their parents ' strife . The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love, And the continuance of their parents ' rage , Which , but their children's end, nought could remove , Is now the two hours ' traffic of our stage ; The which if you with patient ears attend , What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend .

**SCENE I. Verona. A public place.**

*Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, of the house of Capulet , armed with swords and bucklers*

**SAMPSON**

Gregory, o' my word , we'll not carry coals .

**GREGORY**

No, for then we should be colliers .

**SAMPSON**

I mean , an we be in choler, we'll draw .

**GREGORY**

Ay, while you live, draw your neck out o' the collar .

**SAMPSON**

I strike quickly , being moved .

**GREGORY**

But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

**SAMPSON**

A dog of the house of Montague moves me .

**GREGORY**

To move is to stir ; and to be valiant is to stand : therefore , if thou art moved , thou runn'st away .

**SAMPSON**

A dog of that house shall move me to stand : I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's .

**GREGORY**

That shows thee a weak slave ; for the weakest goes to the wall .

**SAMPSON**

True ; and therefore women , being the weaker vessels , are ever thrust to the wall : therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall , and thrust his maids to the wall .

**GREGORY**

The quarrel is between our masters and us their men .

**SAMPSON**

'Tis all one , I will show myself a tyrant : when I have fought with the men , I will be cruel with the maids , and chop off their heads .

**GREGORY**

The heads of the maids ?

**SAMPSON**

Ay, the heads of the maids , or their maidenheads ; take it in what sense thou wilt .

**GREGORY**

They must take it in sense that feel it .

**SAMPSON**

Me they shall feel while I am able to stand : and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh .

**GREGORY**

'Tis well thou art not fish ; if thou hadst , thou hadst been destitute John. Draw thy tool ! here comes two of the house of the Montagues .

**SAMPSON**

My naked weapon is out : quarrel , I will back thee .

**GREGORY**

How ! turn thy back and run?

**SAMPSON**

Fear me not.

**GREGORY**

No, marry ; I fear thee !

**SAMPSON**

Let us take the law of our sides ; let them begin .

**GREGORY**

I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.

**SAMPSON**

Nay , as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them ; which is a disgrace to them , if they bear it .

*Enter ABRAHAM and BALTHASAR*

**ABRAHAM**

Do you bite your thumb at us , sir?

**SAMPSON**

I execute bite my thumb , sir.

**ABRAHAM**

execute you bite your thumb at us , sir?

**SAMPSON**

[ Aside to GREGORY] Is the law of our side , if I say ay ?

**GREGORY**

No.

**SAMPSON**

No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you , sir, but I bite my thumb , sir.

**GREGORY**

Do you quarrel , sir?

**ABRAHAM**

Quarrel sir! no, sir.

**SAMPSON**

If you do, sir, I am for you : I serve as satisfying a man as you .

**ABRAHAM**

No better .

**SAMPSON**

Well , sir.

**GREGORY**

Say ' better :' here comes one of my master's kinsmen .

**SAMPSON**

Yes , better , sir.

**ABRAHAM**

You lie .

**SAMPSON**

Draw , if you be men . Gregory, remember thy swashing blow .

*They fight*

*Enter BENVOLIO*

**BENVOLIO**

Part, fools ! Put up your swords ; you know not what you do.

*Beats down their swords*

*Enter TYBALT*

**TYBALT**

What , art thou drawn among these heartless hinds ? Turn thee , Benvolio , look upon thy death .

**BENVOLIO**

I execute but keep the peace : put up thy sword , Or manage it to part these men with me .

**TYBALT**

What , drawn , and talk of peace ! I hate the word , As I hate hell , all Montagues , and thee : Have at thee , coward !

*They fight*

*Enter, several of both houses , who join the fray ; then enter Citizens , with clubs*

**First Citizen**

Clubs , bills , and partisans ! strike! beat them down ! Down with the Capulets ! down with the Montagues !

*Enter CAPULET in his gown , and LADY CAPULET*

**CAPULET**

What noise is this ? Give me my long sword , ho!

**LADY CAPULET**

A crutch , a crutch ! why call you for a sword ?

**CAPULET**

My sword , I say ! obsolete Montague is come , And flourishes his blade in spite of me .

*Enter MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE*

**MONTAGUE**

Thou villain Capulet ,-- Hold me not, let me go.

**LADY MONTAGUE**

Thou shalt not stir a foot to seek a foe .

*Enter PRINCE, with Attendants*

**PRINCE**

Rebellious subjects , enemies to peace , Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel ,-- Will they not hear ? What , ho! you men , you beasts , That quench the fire of your pernicious rage With purple fountains issuing from your veins , On pain of torture , from those bloody hands Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground , And hear the sentence of your moved prince. Three civil brawls , bred of an airy word , By thee , old Capulet , and Montague , Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets , And made Verona's ancient citizens Cast by their grave beseeming ornaments , To wield obsolete partisans , in hands as obsolete , Canker'd with peace , to part your canker'd hate : If ever you disturb our streets again , Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace . For this time , all the rest depart away : You Capulet ; shall go along with me : And, Montague , come you this afternoon , To know our further pleasure in this case, To obsolete Free- town , our common judgment -place. Once more, on pain of death , all men depart .

*Exeunt all but MONTAGUE, LADY MONTAGUE, and BENVOLIO*

**MONTAGUE**

Who set this ancient quarrel new abroach ? Speak , nephew , were you by when it began ?

**BENVOLIO**

Here were the servants of your adversary , And yours , near fighting ere I did approach : I drew to part them : in the instant came The fiery Tybalt , with his sword prepared , Which , as he breathed defiance to my ears , He swung approximately his head and cut the winds , Who nothing hurt withal hiss'd him in scorn : While we were interchanging thrusts and blows , Came more and more and fought on part and part, Till the prince came , who parted either part.

**LADY MONTAGUE**

O, where is Romeo? saw you him to- day ? correct glad I am he was not at this fray .

**BENVOLIO**

Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun Peer'd forth the golden window of the east , A troubled mind drave me to walk overseas ; Where , underneath the grove of sycamore That westward rooteth from the city's side , So early walking did I observe your son: Towards him I made, but he was ware of me And stole into the covert of the wood : I, measuring his affections by my have , That most are busied when they're most alone , Pursued my humour not pursuing his, And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me .

**MONTAGUE**

Many a morning hath he there been seen , With tears augmenting the fresh morning dew . Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs ; But all so soon as the all-cheering sun Should in the furthest east begin to draw The shady curtains from Aurora's bed , 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: Black and portentous must this humour prove , Unless satisfying counsel may the cause remove .

**BENVOLIO**

My noble uncle , do you know the cause?

**MONTAGUE**

I neither know it nor can learn of him .

**BENVOLIO**

own you importuned him by any means ?

**MONTAGUE**

Both by myself and many other friends : But he, his own affections ' counsellor , Is to himself --I will not say how true -- But to himself so furtive and so close , So far from sounding and discovery , As is the bud bit with an envious worm , Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air, Or dedicate his beauty to the sun. Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow . We would as willingly give cure as know .

*Enter ROMEO*

**BENVOLIO**

observe , where he comes : so please you , step aside ; I'll know his grievance , or be much denied .

**MONTAGUE**

I would thou wert so happy by thy stay , To hear true shrift . Come , madam, let's away .

*Exeunt MONTAGUE and LADY MONTAGUE*

**BENVOLIO**

Good-morrow , cousin .

**ROMEO**

Is the day so young ?

**BENVOLIO**

But new struck nine .

**ROMEO**

Ay me ! sad hours seem long. Was that my father that went hence so fast?

**BENVOLIO**

It was . What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours ?

**ROMEO**

Not having that , which , having , makes them short