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 William Shakespeare
 Excerpt
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ROMEO AND JULIET

The Prologue

Enter Chorus

Chorus. Two households, both alike in dignity,
 In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
 From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
 Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
 A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
 The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
 And the continuance of their parents' rage, 10
 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.
[exit

[I. I.] *Verona. A public place*

*'Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY of the house of
 CAPULET, with swords and bucklers'*

Sampson. Gregory, on 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 of collar.

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I. I. 6

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
10 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.* 'Tis 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
20 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; I will cut off their heads.*Gregory.* The heads of the maids?*Sampson.* Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maiden-
heads; 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.30 *Gregory.* 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst,
thou hadst been poor John. Draw thy tool; here comes
two of the house of Montagues.*Enter ABRAHAM and another serving man**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!

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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 40
as they list.

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

Abraham. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

Sampson. I do bite my thumb, sir.

Abraham. Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

(*Sampson.* 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. 50

Gregory. Do you quarrel, sir?

Abraham. Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

Sampson. But if you do, sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.

Abraham. No better.

Sampson. Well, sir.

'Enter BENVOLIO' on one side, TYBALT on the other

(*Gregory* [*seeing Tybalt*]). Say 'better': here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

Sampson. Yes, better, sir.

Abraham. You lie. 60

Sampson. Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy washing blow. [*'they fight'*]

Benvolio [*intervening from behind*]. Part, fools! Put up your swords; you know not what you do.

TYBALT comes up

Tybalt. What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?

Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death.

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6 ROMEO AND JULIET 1.1.67

Benvolio. I do 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,

70 As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee:
Have at thee, coward.

They fight. Enter several of both houses, joining in the fray. Then 'enter three or four Citizens with clubs or partisans', and an Officer

Officer. Clubs, bills, and partisans! Strike, beat
them down.

Down with the Capulets, down with the Montagues!

'Enter old CAPULET in his gown, and his wife'

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! Old Montague is come,
And flourishes his blade in spite of me.

'Enter old MONTAGUE and his wife'

Montague. Thou villain Capulet!—Hold me not, let
me go.

Lady Montague. Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek
a foe.

'Enter PRINCE ESCALUS, with his train'

80 *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

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1.1.84 ROMEO AND JULIET 7

With purple fountains issuing from your veins,
 On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
 Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground,
 And hear the sentence of your movéd prince.
 Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word
 By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
 Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets, 90
 And made Verona's ancient citizens
 Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments
 To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
 Cankered with peace, to part your cankered 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 farther pleasure in this case, 100
 To old Freetown, our common judgement-place.
 Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.
[all but Montague, Lady Montague, and Benvolio depart
Montague. Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?
 Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?
Benvolio. Here were the servants of your adversary
 And yours, close 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 about his head, and cut the winds, 110
 Who, nothing hurt withal, hissed 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 today?

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8 ROMEO AND JULIET I. I. 116

Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

Benvolio. Madam, an hour before the
 worshipped sun

Peered forth the golden window of the east,
 A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad,

120 Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
 That westward rooteth from this city's side,
 So early walking did I see 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 own,
 Which then most sought where most might not
 be found,

Being one too many by my weary self,
 Pursued my humour, not pursuing his,
 And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me.

130 *Montague.* Many a morning hath he there
 been seen,

With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
 Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;

But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
 Should in the farthest east begin to draw
 The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
 Away from light steals home my heavy son,
 And private in his chamber pens himself,
 Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
 And makes himself an artificial night:

140 Black and portentous must this humour prove,
 Unless good 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. Have you importuned him by
 any means?

1.1. 145 ROMEO AND JULIET 9

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 secret and so close,
 So far from sounding and discovery,
 As is the bud bit with an envious worm, 150
 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. See 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.

[*Montague and his wife depart*]

Benvolio. Good morrow, cousin.

Romeo. Is the day so young?

Benvolio. But new struck nine.

Romeo. Ay me, sad hours seem long. 160
 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.

Benvolio. In love?

Romeo. Out—

Benvolio. Of love?

Romeo. Out of her favour where I am in love.

Benvolio. Alas that Love, so gentle in his view,
 Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

Romeo. Alas that Love, whose view is muffled still, 170

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ROMEO AND JULIET

I. I. 171

Should without eyes see pathways to his will!
 Where shall we dine?—O me! What fray
 was here?

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all:
 Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:
 Why, then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
 O anything of nothing first create!
 O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
 Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
 Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire,
 sick health,

180 Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
 This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
 Dost thou not laugh?

Benvolio. No, coz, I rather weep.

Romeo. Good heart, at what?

Benvolio. At thy good heart's oppression.

Romeo. Why, such is love's transgression.

Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
 Which thou wilt propagate, to have it pressed
 With more of thine. This love that thou hast shown
 Doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs:
 190 Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
 Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears.
 What is it else? A madness most discreet,
 A choking gall and a preserving sweet.
 Farewell, my coz.

Benvolio. Soft, I will go along:
 And if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

Romeo. Tut, I have lost myself, I am not here,
 This is not Romeo, he's some other where.

Benvolio. Tell me in sadness, who is that you love?

Romeo. What, shall I groan and tell thee?

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1. 1. 199 ROMEO AND JULIET 11

- Benvolio.* Groan? Why no:
 But sadly tell me, who? 200
- Romeo.* Bid a sick man in sadness make his will—
 A word ill urged to one that is so ill.
 In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.
- Benvolio.* I aimed so near when I supposed
 you loved.
- Romeo.* A right good markman! And she's fair
 I love.
- Benvolio.* A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.
- Romeo.* Well, in that hit you miss. She'll not be hit
 With Cupid's arrow: she hath Dian's wit,
 And, in strong proof of chastity well armed,
 From Love's weak childish bow she lives unharmed. 210
 She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
 Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes,
 Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
 O, she is rich in beauty, only poor
 That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store.
- Benvolio.* Then she hath sworn that she will still
 live chaste?
- Romeo.* She hath, and in that sparing makes
 huge waste:
 For beauty, starved with her severity,
 Cuts beauty off from all posterity.
 She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair. 220
 To merit bliss by making me despair:
 She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow
 Do I live dead, that live to tell it now.
- Benvolio.* Be ruled by me; forget to think of her.
- Romeo.* O, teach me how I should forget to think.
- Benvolio.* By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
 Examine other beauties.
- Romeo.* 'Tis the way

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ROMEO AND JULIET

I. I. 228

To call hers (exquisite) in question more.
 These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,
 230 Being black, puts us in mind they hide the fair.
 He that is stricken blind cannot forget
 The precious treasure of his eyesight lost.
 Show me a mistress that is passing fair:
 What doth her beauty serve but as a note
 Where I may read who passed that passing fair?
 Farewell, thou canst not teach me to forget.
Benvolio. I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.
[they go]

[I. 2.] *The same; later in the day*

*'Enter CAPULET, County PARIS, and the CLOWN',
 servant to Capulet*

Capulet. But Montague is bound as well as I,
 In penalty alike; and 'tis not hard, I think,
 For men so old as we to keep the peace.

Paris. Of honourable reckoning are you both,
 And pity 'tis you lived at odds so long.
 But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?

Capulet. But saying o'er what I have said before:
 My child is yet a stranger in the world;
 She hath not seen the change of fourteen years:
 10 Let two more summers wither in their pride
 Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.

Paris. Younger than she are happy mothers made.

Capulet. And too soon marred are those so
 early made.
 Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she;
 She is the hopeful lady of my earth.
 But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart;