

Romeo and Juliet in plain speak
Act 2, Scene 2

ROMEO: It's easy for someone to joke about scars if they've never been cut.

JULIET enters on the balcony.

But wait, what's that light in the window over there? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Rise up, beautiful sun, and kill the jealous moon. The moon is already sick and pale with grief because you, Juliet, her maid, are more beautiful than she.

Don't be her maid, because she is jealous. Virginity makes her look sick and green. Only fools hold on to their virginity. Let it go. Oh, there's my lady! Oh, it is my love. Oh, I wish she knew how much I love her. She's talking, but she's not saying anything. So what? Her eyes are saying something. I will answer them. I am too bold. She's not talking to me. Two of the brightest stars in the whole sky had to go away on business, and they're asking her eyes to twinkle in their places until they return. What if her eyes were in the sky and the stars were in her head?—The brightness of her cheeks would outshine the stars the way the sun outshines a lamp. If her eyes were in the night sky, they would shine so brightly through space that birds would start singing, thinking her light was the light of day. Look how she leans her hand on her cheek. Oh, I wish I was the glove on that hand so that I could touch that cheek.

JULIET: Oh, my!

ROMEO (to himself): She speaks. Oh, speak again, bright angel. You are as glorious as an angel tonight. You shine above me, like a winged messenger from heaven who makes mortal men fall on their backs to look up at the sky, watching the angel walking on the clouds and sailing on the air.

JULIET (not knowing ROMEO hears her): Oh, Romeo, Romeo, why do you have to be Romeo? Forget about your father and change your

name. Or else, if you won't change your name, just swear you love me and I'll stop being a Capulet.

ROMEO (to himself): Should I listen for more, or should I speak now?

JULIET (still not knowing ROMEO hears her): It's only your name that's my enemy. You'd still be yourself even if you stopped being a Montague. What's a Montague anyway? It isn't a hand, a foot, an arm, a face, or any other part of a man. Oh, be some other name! What does a name mean? The thing we call a rose would smell just as sweet if we called it by any other name. Romeo would be just as perfect even if he wasn't called Romeo. Romeo, lose your name. Trade in your name—which really has nothing to do with you—and take all of me in exchange.

ROMEO (to JULIET): I trust your words. Just call me your love, and I will take a new name. From now on I will never be Romeo again.

JULIET: Who are you? Why do you hide in the darkness and listen to my private thoughts?

ROMEO: I don't know how to tell you who I am by telling you a name. I hate my name, dear saint, because my name is your enemy. If I had it written down, I would tear up the paper.

JULIET: I haven't heard you say a hundred words yet, but I recognize the sound of your voice. Aren't you Romeo? And aren't you a Montague?

ROMEO: I am neither of those things if you dislike them.

JULIET: Tell me, how did you get in here? And why did you come? The orchard walls are high, and it's hard to climb over them. If any of my relatives find you here they'll kill you because of who you are.

ROMEO: I flew over these walls with the light wings of love. Stone walls can't keep love out.

Whatever a man in love can possibly do, his love will make him try to do it. Therefore your relatives are no obstacle.

JULIET: If they see you, they'll murder you.

ROMEO: Alas, one angry look from you would be worse than twenty of your relatives with swords. Just look at me kindly, and I'm invincible against their hatred.

JULIET: I'd give anything to keep them from seeing you here.

ROMEO: The darkness will hide me from them. And if you don't love me, let them find me here. I'd rather they killed me than have to live without your love.

JULIET: Who told you how to get here below my bedroom?

ROMEO: Love showed me the way—the same thing that made me look for you in the first place. Love told me what to do, and I let love borrow my eyes. I'm not a sailor, but if you were across the farthest sea, I would risk everything to gain you.

JULIET: You can't see my face because it's dark out. Otherwise, you'd see me blushing about the things you've heard me say tonight. I would be happy to keep up good manners and deny the things I said. But forget about good manners. Do you love me? I know you'll say "yes," and I'll believe you. But if you swear you love me, you might turn out to be lying. They say Jove laughs when lovers lie to each other. Oh Romeo, if you really love me, say it truly. Or if you think it's too easy and quick to win my heart, I'll frown and play hard-to-get, as long as that will make you try to win me, but otherwise I wouldn't act that way for anything. In truth, handsome Montague, I like you too much, so you may think my behavior is loose. But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove myself more faithful than girls who act coy and play hard-to-get. I should have been more standoffish, I confess,

but you overheard me talking about the love in my heart when I didn't know you were there. So excuse me, and do not assume that because you made me love you so easily my love isn't serious.

ROMEO: Lady, I swear by the sacred moon above, the moon that paints the tops of fruit trees with silver—

JULIET: Don't swear by the moon. The moon is always changing. Every month its position in the sky shifts. I don't want you to turn out to be that inconsistent too.

ROMEO: What should I swear by?

JULIET: Don't swear at all. But if you have to swear, swear by your wonderful self, which is the god I worship like an idol, and then I'll believe you.

ROMEO: If my heart's dear love—

JULIET: Well, don't swear. Although you bring me joy, I can't take joy in this exchange of promises tonight. It's too crazy. We haven't done enough thinking. It's too sudden. It's too much like lightning, which flashes and then disappears before you can say, "it's lightning." My sweet, good night. Our love, which right now is like a flower bud in the summer air, may turn out to be a beautiful flower by the next time we meet. I hope you enjoy the same sweet peace and rest I feel in my heart.

ROMEO: Oh, are you going to leave me so unsatisfied?

JULIET: What satisfaction could you possibly have tonight?

ROMEO: I would be satisfied if we made each other true promises of love.

JULIET: I pledged my love to you before you asked me to. Yet I wish I could take that promise back, so I had it to give again.

ROMEO: You would take it back? Why would you do that, my love?

JULIET: Only to be generous and give it to you once more. But I'm wishing for something I already have. My generosity to you is as limitless as the sea, and my love is as deep. The more love I give you, the more I have. Both loves are infinite.

The NURSE calls from offstage.

I hear a noise inside. Dear love, goodbye—Just a minute, good Nurse. Sweet Montague, be true. Stay here for a moment. I'll come back.

JULIET exits.

ROMEO: Oh, blessed, blessed night! Because it's dark out, I'm afraid all this is just a dream, too sweet to be real.

JULIET enters on her balcony.

JULIET: Three words, dear Romeo, and then it's good night for real. If your intentions as a lover are truly honorable and you want to marry me, send me word tomorrow. I'll send a messenger to you, and you can pass on a message telling me where and when we'll be married. I'll lay all my fortunes at your feet and follow you, my lord, all over the world.

NURSE (offstage): Madam!

JULIET (to the NURSE): I'll be right there! (to ROMEO) But if you don't have honorable intentions, I beg you—

NURSE (offstage): Madam!

JULIET: Alright, I'm coming!—I beg you to stop trying for me and leave me to my sadness. Tomorrow I'll send the messenger.

ROMEO: My soul depends on it—

JULIET: A thousand times good night.

JULIET exits.

ROMEO: Leaving you is a thousand times worse than being near you. A lover goes toward his beloved as enthusiastically as a schoolboy leaving his books, but when he leaves his girlfriend, he feels as miserable as the schoolboy on his way to school.

ROMEO starts to leave. JULIET returns, on her balcony.

JULIET: Hist, Romeo! Hist! Oh, I wish I could make a falconer's call, so I could bring my little falcon back again. I'm trapped in my family's house, so I must be quiet. Otherwise I would rip open the cave where Echo sleeps. I would make her repeat his name until her voice grew more hoarse than mine by repeating, "My Romeo!"

ROMEO: My soul is calling out my name. The sound of lovers calling each others names through the night is silver-sweet. It's the sweetest sound a lover ever hears.

JULIET: Romeo!

ROMEO: My baby hawk?

JULIET: What time tomorrow should I send a messenger to you?

ROMEO: By nine o'clock.

JULIET: I won't fail. From now until then seems like twenty years. I have forgotten why I called you back.

ROMEO: Let me stand here until you remember your reason.

JULIET: I'll forget it, and you'll have to stand there forever. I'll only remember how much I love your company.

ROMEO: I'll keep standing here, even if you keep forgetting. I'll forget that I have any home besides this spot right here.

JULIET: It's almost morning. I want to make you go, but I'd only let you go as far as a spoiled child lets his pet bird go. He lets the bird hop a little from his hand and then yanks him back by a string.

ROMEO: I wish I was your bird.

JULIET: My sweet, so do I. But I would kill you by petting you too much. Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow that I'll say good night until tonight becomes tomorrow.

JULIET exits.

ROMEO: I hope you sleep peacefully. I wish I were Sleep and Peace, so I could spend the night with you. Now I'll go see my priest, to ask for his help and tell him about my good luck.

He exits.