

ROMEO AND JULIET

Translated Into Modern English

SJ Hills

and

William Shakespeare

Faithfully Translated
into Performable Modern English
Side by Side with Original Text

Includes Stage Directions



THE TRAGEDY OF ROMEO & JULIET

Book 8 in a series of 42



PREFACE

When we studied Shakespeare at school we had to flick back and forth to the notes at the back of the book to understand a confusing line, words we were not familiar with, expressions lost in time, or even current or political references of Shakespeare's time.

What if the text was rewritten to make each line clear without looking up anything?

There are plenty of modern translations just for this. But they are cumbersome to read, no flow, matter of fact translations (and most this author has found are of varying inaccuracy, despite being approved by exam boards).

As a writer and producer of drama, I wanted not only to translate the play faithfully line by line, but also to include the innuendos, the political satire, the puns and the bawdy humour in a way which would flow and bring the work to life for students, actors prepping for a performance or lovers of the work to enjoy today, faithful to the feel and meaning of the original script and language without going into lengthy explanations for a modern day audience.

A faithful line-by-line translation into modern phrasing that flows, along with additional staging directions making the play interesting to read, easy to understand, and very importantly, an invaluable study aid.

For me it all started at about eight or nine years of age. I was reading a comic which contained the story of Macbeth serialized in simple comic strip form. I could not wait to see what happened next so I rushed out to the public library to get a copy of the book. Of course, when I got it home I didn't even recognise it as being the same story. It made no sense to me, being written in 'Olde English' and often using 'flowery' language. I remember thinking at the time that one day I should write my version of the story for others to understand.

Years went by and I had pretty much forgotten my idea. Then quite by chance I was approached by Encyclopaedia Britannica to produce a series of dramatised classic dramas as educational aids for children learning English as a second language. Included in the selection was Romeo And Juliet which I was to condense down to fifty minutes using modern English.

This brought flooding back the memories of being eight years old again, reading my comic and planning my modern version of Shakespeare. In turn it also led me to the realisation that even if a reader could understand English well, this did not mean they could fully understand and enjoy Shakespeare. I could understand English, yet I did not fully understand some of Shakespeare's text without serious research. So what hope did a person whose first language was not English have?

After some investigation, I discovered there was a great desire around the world to understand the text fully without the inconvenience of referring to footnotes or sidelines, or worse still, the internet. How can one enjoy the wonderful drama with constant interruption? I was also surprised to discover the desire was equally as great in English speaking countries as ones whose first language was not English.

The final kick to get me started was meeting fans of Shakespeare's works who knew scripts off by heart but secretly admitted to me that they did have trouble fully understanding the meaning of some lines. Although they knew the storyline well they could miss some of the subtlety and innuendo Shakespeare was renowned for. It is hardly surprising in this day and age as many of the influences, trends, humour, beliefs and current affairs of Shakespeare's time are not valid today.

I do not pretend my work is any match for the great master, but I do believe in the greater enjoyment for all. These great works deserve to be understood by all, Shakespeare himself wrote for all levels of audience, he would even aim his work to suit a particular audience at times – for example changing historical facts if he knew a member of royalty would be seeing his play and it would cause them any embarrassment, or of course to curry favour with a monarch by the use of flattery.

I have been as faithful as possible with my version, but the original, iambic pentameter, (the tempo and pace the lines were written for), and other Elizabethan tricks of the trade that Shakespeare was so brilliant at are not included unless vital to the text and meaning. For example, rhyming couplets to signify the end of a scene, for in Shakespeare's day there were no curtains, no lights and mostly static scenery, so scene changes were not so obvious, these couplets, though not strictly necessary, are included to maintain the feel of the original.

This makes for a play that sounds fresh to today's listening audience. It is also a valuable educational tool; English Literature courses often include a section on translating Shakespeare. I am often asked the meaning of a particular line, sometimes scholars argue over the meaning of particular lines. I have taken the most widely agreed version and the one which flows best with the story line where there is dispute, and if you read this translation before reading the original work or going to see a stage version, you will find the play takes on a whole new meaning, making it infinitely more enjoyable.

SJ Hills. London. 2018

ACT I SCENE II

THE STREETS OF VERONA. SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

OLD CAPULET AND COUNT PARIS ARE TALKING TOGETHER WHILE
A SERVANT OF THE CAPULET HOUSEHOLD STANDS IN ATTENDANCE.

OLD CAPULET

So Montague has been fined the same as me. You'd think that men as old as us could learn to keep the peace.

COUNT PARIS

You are both honourable men, Mr Capulet, it's a pity you've lived at odds with each other for so long.

But anyway, my Lord, what about my proposal?

OLD CAPULET

As I have said before, Count Paris, my daughter is still not wise to the ways of the world. She has yet to reach her fourteenth year.

*Let two more summers pass us in their pride
Before she'll be ready to be a bride.*

COUNT PARIS

There are happy mothers younger than she is.

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.
*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.*

**Note: In Shakespeare's day, 18-20 was the average age women married, not 13. Shakespeare married at 18, his already pregnant bride was 26. Juliet's mother apparently married at 13 and was 14 when she gave birth to Juliet. Perhaps Shakespeare made Juliet 13 to emphasise her defiance against her parents, or simply because his own daughter, Susanna, was 13 at the time and he had experience of the stubbornness at this age. In Brooke's poem, which Shakespeare borrowed heavily from, Juliet was 16. There is belief that Susanna could read in an age where only boys were educated at school, she wouldn't have seen the play performed in London, so perhaps she was able to read it.*

If a woman was unmarried at 26 it was difficult to find a husband, especially when she was a lowly milk maid, so it's possible Shakespeare was seduced into marriage with the encouragement of Anne Hathaway's parents to further their interests and hers, it was an unlikely match.

Romeo and Juliet Translated

OLD CAPULET

And they are marred by having children
so young. She is my only child still living,
so she is my world, my future.

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.

**Note: Old Capulet's words suggest he has lost other children and therefore Juliet is special to him and his last hope to further the family line. We will discover later that Romeo is also the only child of the rival Montagues – which adds extra dimension to the story. Before vaccines and penicillin it was common for children to die before they reached eleven, Shakespeare lost his own son Hamnet at the age of eleven.*

OLD CAPULET

So woo her, noble Paris, win her heart.
My giving her consent is just a part;
I did agree that when she makes her choice
I'd give consent with fair and ruling voice.
Tonight I hold my customary feast.
To which I did invite many a guest,
All dear to me, and you are one as well,
One more most welcome, makes my numbers
swell.
To look on at my humble house tonight,
Heavenly bodies radiating light.
Some comfort for young lusty men to bring
Now we've left the soft delights of Spring.
Though winter nears you still can find delight
Among fresh female buds you'll see tonight.
So see and hear them all, then choose the best,
The one whose merits stand out from the rest.
And mine is one among many on view,
But as your number one? That's up to you.
Come, walk with me...

CAPULET

But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart;
My will to her consent is but a part;
And, she agreed, within her scope of choice
Lies my consent and fair according voice.
This night I hold an old accustomed feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest,
Such as I love, and you among the store,
One more most welcome, makes my number more.
At my poor house look to behold this night
Earth-treading stars that make dark heaven light.
Such comfort as do lusty young men feel
When well-apparelled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads, even such delight
Among fresh female buds shall you this night
Inherit at my house. Hear all, all see,
And like her most whose merit most shall be;
Which on more view of many, mine, being one,
May stand in number, though in reckoning none.
Come, go with me.

OLD CAPULET HANDS THE WAITING SERVANT A PIECE OF PAPER.

OLD CAPULET (CONT'D)

(to Servant) ...Now go, boy, walk about
Through fine Verona, seek the good folk out
Named upon this list, and at their leisure,
Invite 'em to my house for evening's pleasure.

CAPULET

Go, sirrah, trudge about
Through fair Verona; find those persons out
Whose names are written there, and to them say
My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.

Act I Scene II – The Streets Of Verona, Sunday Afternoon

OLD CAPULET AND COUNT PARIS EXIT, LEAVING THE SERVANT PETER, (COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS 'CLOWN') STANDING ALONE, LOOKING AT THE PAPER AND SCRATCHING HIS HEAD.

HE TURNS THE PAPER IN HIS HAND, OBVIOUSLY UNABLE TO READ, AND JOKINGLY MAKES UP NAMES THAT ARE WRITTEN DOWN AND MIXES UP THE ITEMS OF THEIR TRADE. A 'LAST' BEING A SHOEMAKER'S SHOE HOLDER.

Note: The part of the Servant Peter would be played by a comic actor, who would often add additional topical jokes of their own into the performance. He speaks in prose. Will Kemp, a famous comic actor, played the part originally.

PETER

Huh - find the people whose names are written on this list!

It says the shoemaker should fiddle with his measure, and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil, and the painter with his nets, but I am sent to find the people whose names are written here, when I can't find the names of the people the writing person has written down. I must find me an educated man.

1ST SERVANT

Find them out whose names are written here! It is written that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil and the painter with his nets; but I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here writ. I must to the learned.*

RIGHT ON CUE, BENVOLIO AND ROMEO APPEAR, WALKING AND TALKING.

**Note: Peter has mixed up the tools of the trades to emphasise his confusion. A tailor would use a 'yard', a stick to measure cloth. By law cloth was sold by the yard, which was three feet by English standards. Around the world the length of a yard differed and it was not until 1959 that countries who used the yard measurement agreed to a standard length of 36 inches. (0.9144 metres). Football, cricket and golf still officially use yards, but most other sports had converted to metres by the end of the 20th Century. A 'last' is the foot shaped wooden block a shoemaker uses.*

PETER (CONT'D)

Perfect timing!

BENVOLIO

Tut, Romeo,
One fire burns out another fire's burning,
One pain is lessened by more agony.
Turning giddy's cured by backward turning.
Desperate grief quells a lesser tragedy.
So take a new infection in your eye,
And then the bitter sting of old will die.

1ST SERVANT

In good time!

BENVOLIO

Tut man, one fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessened by another's anguish.
Turn giddy, and be help by backward turning;
One desperate grief cures with another's languish.
Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die.

Romeo and Juliet Translated

ROMEO

The leaf of the plantain plant is good for that, Benvolio.

BENVOLIO

Good for what?

ROMEO

For your broken shin!

ROMEO

Your plantain leaf is excellent for that.

BENVOLIO

For what, I pray thee?

ROMEO

For your broken shin.

ROMEO PRETENDS TO KICK BENVOLIO IN THE SHIN.

BENVOLIO

Have you gone mad, Romeo?

ROMEO

Not mad, but bound like a madman in a straitjacket. Shut up in prison, deprived of food, whipped and tormented and....

BENVOLIO

Why, Romeo, art thou mad?

ROMEO

Not mad, but bound more than a madman is; Shut up in prison, kept without my food, Whipped and tormented and...

THEY STOP WALKING AS THEY REACH THE SERVANT (CLOWN), WHO IS LOOKING AT THEM HOPEFULLY AS IF TO CATCH THEIR ATTENTION.

ROMEO

(to Servant) Good afternoon, good fellow.

PETER

Good afternoon to you. If you please, sir, can you read?

ROMEO

Yes, my misfortune in my misery.

PETER

Perhaps you have learned to do that without a book, but, if you please, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO

Only if I recognise the letters and the language.

ROMEO

Good e'en, good fellow.

1ST SERVANT

God gi' good e'en. I pray, sir, can you read?

ROMEO

Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.

1ST SERVANT

Perhaps you have learned it without book. But, I pray, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO

Ay, if I know the letters and the language.

THE SERVANT WRONGLY BELIEVES THIS MEANS ROMEO CANNOT RECOGNISE WORDS AND LETTERS, JUST LIKE HIMSELF.

PETER

Well that is honest of you, sir. I bid you good day then.

1ST SERVANT

Ye say honestly. Rest you merry!

Act I Scene II – The Streets Of Verona, Sunday Afternoon

THE SERVANT TURNS TO LEAVE.

ROMEO
No, stay fellow. I can read.

ROMEO
Stay, fellow, I can read.

ROMEO TAKES THE PAPER FROM THE SERVANT AND READS IT ALOUD,
REACTING WITH FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF APPROVAL, DISAPPROVAL AND
SARCASM THROUGHOUT.

ROMEO
(reads)
*"Signor Martino, his wife and daughters.
Count Anselme and his beautiful sisters.
The lady widow of Utruvio.
Signor Placento and his lovely nieces.
Mercutio and his brother Valentine.
My cousin Capulet, his wife and daughters..."*

ROMEO
(reads)
*"Signor Martino and his wife and daughters.
County Anselme and his beauteous sisters.
The lady widow of Utruvio.
Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces.
Mercutio and his brother Valentine.
Mine uncle Capulet, his wife and daughters..."*

ROMEO EMPHASISES THE NAME 'ROSALINE' IN THE NEXT LINE,
AS SHE IS HIS CURRENT INFATUATION.

ROMEO
*"My fair niece 'Rosaline', and her friend Livia!
Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt.
Lucio and the feisty Helena."*

ROMEO
*"My fair niece Rosaline, and Livia.
Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt.
Lucio and the lively Helena."*

ROMEO FOLDS THE PAPER AND HANDS IT BACK TO THE SERVANT,
NOW INTERESTED IN THE GATHERING.

ROMEO
A tempting gathering. Where are they meeting?

PETER
Up there.

ROMEO
A fair assembly. Whither should they come?

1ST SERVANT
Up.

THE SERVANT NODS OVER HIS SHOULDER AS IF INDICATING SOMEWHERE.

ROMEO
Up where?

PETER
For supper at our household.

ROMEO
Whither?

1ST SERVANT
To supper. To our house.

Romeo and Juliet Translated

ROMEO

Whose household?

PETER

My master's.

ROMEO

Indeed, I should have asked you that in the first place.

PETER

Now, before you ask I'll tell you. My master is the great, wealthy Capulet, and as long as you are not from the house of Montague, I invite you to come and enjoy a glass of wine. Good day to you!

ROMEO

Whose house?

1ST SERVANT

My master's.

ROMEO

Indeed, I should have asked you that before.

1ST SERVANT

Now I'll tell you without asking. My master is the great rich Capulet; and if you be not of the house of Montagues, I pray come and crush a cup of wine.* Rest you merry!

**Note: To crush a cup of wine is to empty it by drinking it all.*

THE SERVANT TURNS AND LEAVES.

BENVOLIO

So, the beautiful Rosaline, the girl you love so much, will be at Capulet's feast together with all the desirable beauties of Verona. You can go to the feast with an open mind.

*Compare her face with other girls on show,
You'll think your swan is no more than a crow.*

ROMEO

*Should the idol of devotion in my eye
Appear so false, then turn my tears to fires,
These eyes, though often drowned they never
die,
Like witches who won't drown, burn them as
liars.*

*One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match since all the world begun*

BENVOLIO

At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Supps the fair Rosaline, whom thou so loves,
With all the admired beauties of Verona.
Go thither, and with unattainted eye
*Compare her face with some that I shall show,
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow.*

ROMEO

*When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires;
And these, who often drowned could never die,
Transparent heretics be burnt for liars.*
One fairer than my love? The all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun.*

**Note: Heretics, or more commonly witches, were ducked in water on a ducking stool. If they survived the immersion in water they were deemed to be proven heretics and burned alive. The theory being that if they didn't drown, God had rejected their soul. A no win situation for the women.*

Act I Scene II – The Streets Of Verona, Sunday Afternoon

Historical: Though women were burnt at the stake in England, it was typically for treason (which included counterfeiting money), despite popular belief, women found guilty of witchcraft were all hanged in England, it was other countries that burnt witches. English public burnings were popular events, (men were not burnt for treason, they were hung, drawn and quartered). The burning of Phoebe Harris in 1786 for counterfeiting a single coin attracted an estimated 20,000 spectators in London. The last public burning in England was in 1789 after which legal changes banned its practice.

BENVOLIO

Tut.

*She looked so good with no one else close by,
Alone you weighed her beauty in your eye.
But in those glassy scales let there be weighed
Your lady's love against some other maid
That I will show you shining at this feast,
She'll scarce seem fine, the one you now think
best.*

ROMEO

*I'll go along, but not to see this sight,
To take pleasure in my true love's delight.*

BENVOLIO

*Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by,
Herself poised with herself in either eye;
But in that crystal scales let there be weighed
Your lady's love against some other maid
That I will show you shining at this feast,
And she shall scant show well that now seems best.*

ROMEO

*I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,
But to rejoice in splendour of mine own.**

**Note: The final rhyming couplet is not so obvious here as the previous lines had also been rhymed. However, Romeo would have delivered the line as if a final statement and then left the stage, which the audience would understand.*

Important Note: *The stage directions (between main text in capital letters) are included purely as the author's guide to understand the script better. Any director staging the play would have their own interpretation of the play and decide their own directions. These directions are not those of Shakespeare. You can change these directions to your own choosing or ignore them completely. For exam purposes these should be only regarded as guidance to the dialogue and should not be quoted in any studies or examinations.*



ACT I SCENE III

A ROOM IN CAPULET'S HOUSE. SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

LADY CAPULET AND JULIET'S NURSEMAID* ARE TALKING.

JULIET IS THE ONLY CHILD OF THE CAPULETS.

ROMEO IS THE ONLY CHILD OF THE MONTAGUES.

**Note: In the time the play is set, a Nurse (or Nursemaid) was a woman who breastfed the child so the mother did not have to, and who would then be a nanny to the child once she was weaned. The nurse is a comic role.*

LADY CAPULET

Nurse, where is my daughter? Call her for me.

NURSE

I swear by my innocence as a twelve year old I called her.

(calling) Come lamb! Come sweetheart!

(to no one) God forbid! Where is that girl?

(shouts loudly) Juliet!

LADY CAPULET

Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me.

NURSE

Now, by my maidenhead* at twelve year old,

I bade her come. What, lamb! What, ladybird!

God forbid! Where's this girl? What, Juliet!

**Note: If she swears by her virginity (maidenhead) when she was last a virgin, then twelve is a very young age even in those days.*

JULIET

(off) Goodness me! Who is calling?

NURSE

Your mother.

JULIET

How now! Who calls?

NURSE

Your mother.

JULIET ENTERS THE ROOM.

JULIET

Mother, I am here. What is it you want?

LADY CAPULET

I have something to say. Nurse, leave us a while, we must talk in private.

JULIET

Madam, I am here. What is your will?

LADY CAPULET

This is the matter. Nurse, give leave awhile, We must talk in secret...

AS NURSE TURNS TO LEAVE LADY CAPULET
CHANGES HER MIND AND CALLS HER BACK.

Act I Scene III – A Room In Capulet's House - Sunday Afternoon

LADY CAPULET (CONT'D)

No wait, Nurse, come back, I have remembered, you should hear our conversation. You know my daughter is at a delicate age.

NURSE

Indeed ma'am, I can tell her age to the hour.

LADY CAPULET

She's not yet fourteen...

NURSE

I'll bet fourteen of my teeth - though I lost the teen and have only the four left - she's not fourteen. How long is it till the Lammastide festival?

LADY CAPULET

Nurse, come back again,
I have remembered me, thou's hear our counsel.
Thou knowest my daughter's of a pretty age.

NURSE

Faith, I can tell her age unto an hour.

LADY CAPULET

She's not fourteen.

NURSE

I'll lay fourteen of my teeth -
And yet, to my teen* be it spoken, I have but four
- She's not fourteen.* How long is it now
To Lammas-tide?*

**Note: Lammastide is 1st August, a harvest festival. 'Tide' was a Puritan term replacing the Catholic 'mass'. e.g. Christ-tide. This should have said Lam-tide, was the mistake deliberate? Probably as he next writes 'Lammas Eve'.*

'Teen' means sorrow, but used here to pun with fourteen.

This is the second mention of Juliet's age being almost fourteen. In Brooke's poem, which Shakespeare borrowed from, Juliet was almost sixteen, and in Paynter's novel (translated from Bardello's French) she was almost eighteen.

LADY CAPULET

A fortnight and the odd day or two.

NURSE

Even or odd, of all the days in the year, come the night of Lammas Eve she will be fourteen. Susan and her - God rest her soul! - were the same age. Well, Susan is with God now, she was too good for this world. But as I said, on Lammas Eve, that night she will be fourteen, that she will. Oh Lord, I remember it well. It is eleven years since the earthquake when she was weaned - I shall never forget it, of all the days of the year - because on that day I had rubbed a wormwood leaf on my tit to wean her. I was sitting in the sun under the dove-house wall. The master and yourself were then away at Mantua. Yes, my memory hasn't failed me yet!...

LADY CAPULET

A fortnight and odd days.

NURSE

Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan and she - God rest all Christian souls! -
Were of an age. Well, Susan is with God;
She was too good for me. But, as I said,
On Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen;
That shall she; marry, I remember it well.
'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years,
And she was weaned, I never shall forget it,
Of all the days of the year, upon that day;
For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
Sitting in the sun under the dovehouse wall;
My lord and you were then at Mantua.
Nay, I do bear a brain! -

NURSE PAUSES, FORGETTING WHAT SHE WAS SAYING.

NURSE (CONT'D)

...But as I was saying, the youngster tasted the wormwood on my nipple and found it bitter. Pretty little fool, you should have seen her tantrum at my tit!

Shake! went the dovehouse. There was no need telling me to shake a leg and hie out of there...

That was eleven years ago, for she could stand on her own then. - No, by heavens, she could run and waddle about, because just the day before, she cut her forehead. Then my husband - God rest his soul, he was a jolly man! - he picked up the child and said 'Why do you fall on your face? (*bawdy*) You will fall on your back when you have more sense, won't you Jule?' And by all that's holy, the pretty wretch stopped her crying and said 'Aye'.

To see now the jest about to come true. I tell you, if I live to be a thousand years I shall never forget it.

(*laughing*) 'Won't you Jule?' he said, and the pretty little fool stopped crying and said 'Aye'.

NURSE

- but, as I said,

When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
Of my dug and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
To see it tetchy and fall out with the dug.

'Shake!' quoth the dovehouse.* 'Twas no need, I
trow,

To bid me trudge.

And since that time it is eleven years;

For then she could stand high-lone. Nay, by th'
rood,

She could have run and waddled all about;
For even the day before she broke her brow,
And then my husband - God be with his soul!
A' was a merry man - took up the child.

'Yea' quoth he 'dost thou fall upon thy face?
Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more
wit,

Wilt thou not, Jule?' And, by my holidam,
The pretty wretch left crying and said 'Ay'.

To see now how a jest shall come about!

I warrant, an I should live a thousand years
I never should forget it. 'Wilt thou not, Jule?'
quoth he,

And, pretty fool, it stinted and said 'Ay'.

**Note: The earthquake most likely refers to one in England in 1580, suggesting the play was being written in 1591. There was a much larger one in Italy in 1570.*

LADY CAPULET

Enough of this. Please be quiet, Nurse.

NURSE

(*laughing too much*) Yes ma'am, yet I cannot help but laugh, to think she should stop crying and say 'Aye'. Yet, I tell you she had upon her forehead, a bump as big as a young cockerel's testicle. A terrible knock, she cried bitterly. 'You', said my husband, 'Fall on your face? You will fall on your back when you come of age, won't you Jule?' She just shut up and said 'Aye'.

LADY CAPULET

Enough of this; I pray thee hold thy peace.

NURSE

Yes, madam. Yet I cannot choose but laugh
To think it should leave crying and say 'Ay'.

And yet, I warrant it had upon it brow
A bump as big as a young cockerel's stone,
A perilous knock; and it cried bitterly.

'Yea' quoth my husband 'fall'st upon thy face?
Thou wilt fall backward when thou com'st to age,
Wilt thou not, Jule?' It stinted and said 'Ay'

Act I Scene III – A Room In Capulet's House - Sunday Afternoon

JULIET

And you will shut up too, I beg you, Nurse, says 'I'.

JULIET

And stint thou too, I pray thee, Nurse, say I.*

**Note: Juliet puns on nurse's repetition of the word 'Aye' (old word for yes).*

NURSE

(*stopping herself laughing*) I will, I'm done. God marked you with his grace! You were the prettiest baby that I ever nursed, and that I might live to see you married has always been my wish.

LADY CAPULET

Yes, marrying is the very subject I came to talk about. So tell me, Juliet, what are your thoughts about getting married?

JULIET

(*surprised*) It is an honour that I have no thoughts of as yet.

NURSE

'An hon-our'! Had I not been your only nurse I would have said you sucked wisdom from my teat.

NURSE

Peace, I have done. God mark thee to his grace! Thou wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nursed. An I might live to see thee married once, I have my wish.

LADY CAPULET

Marry, that 'marry' is the very theme I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet, How stands your dispositions to be married?

JULIET

It is an honour that I dream not of.

NURSE

An honour!* Were not I thine only nurse I would say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat.*

**Note: Nurse pronounces 'honour' as a bawdy, 'on her'*

More humour from Nurse, she is saying in effect, she would like to say that Juliet sucked wisdom from her breast, but Nurse knows she is a foolish woman who talks a lot about nothing in her flights of bawdy fancy. She often gets words wrong to comedic effect, trying to sound educated when she clearly is not, uses old fashioned curses, and is surprisingly bawdy for one whose job it is to raise a child.

LADY CAPULET

Well start thinking about marriage now. There are ladies here in Verona younger than you, ladies of high esteem, who are already mothers. By my reckoning, I was your mother pretty much when I was the age you are now, and you are still unmarried. Anyway, in short, the valiant Count Paris seeks you for his bride.

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.

**Note: Her mother could be lying to appear younger, because if she wasn't, that makes her married and a mother at the age of thirteen.*

Romeo and Juliet Translated

NURSE

(*excited*) What a man, young lady! Such a man in all the world, why he is... (*struggles to find words*) a man above men.

NURSE

A man, young lady! Lady, such a man
As all the world - why, he's a man of wax.*

**Note: 'Man of wax' – a perfect figure carved from wax, a waxwork. Later on the Friar will refer to Romeo as a wax figure suggesting he has no substance*

LADY CAPULET

He is the pick of the bunch in Verona this summer.

NURSE

Aye, he's a flower, a fine flower indeed.

LADY CAPULET

What do you say? Can you love this gentleman?

LADY CAPULET

Verona's summer hath not such a flower.

NURSE

Nay, he's a flower; in faith, a very flower.

LADY CAPULET

What say you, can you love the gentleman?

WITHOUT PAUSING FOR AN ANSWER LADY CAPULET FOLLOWS ON WITH AN ELABORATE FANTASY AS IF SHE HAD PREPARED A SPEECH FOR THIS MOMENT.

LADY CAPULET (CONT'D)

Tonight you shall see him at our feast.
Study the face of young Paris like you
would a fine book, read what great
delights are written there with beauty's
pen.

*Examine every feature written there,
See how each one compliments the other,
And anything found missing in this prize
Find written in the footnote of his eyes.
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
To make complete he only lacks a cover.
Plain fish within the sea, to gain much pride
Among the pretty fish they choose to hide.
That book in many's eyes does share the glory
That with gold rings completes the golden
story.*

*Together you'll share all he does possess
And having him, better yourself no less.*

NURSE

No less indeed, bigger in fact.

LADY CAPULET

This night you shall behold him at our feast;
Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen.

*Examine every married lineament,
And see how one another lends content;
And what obscured in this fair volume lies
Find written in the margent of his eyes.
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
To beautify him only lacks a cover.
The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride
For fair without the fair within to hide.
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story;
So shall you share all that he doth possess
By having him, making yourself no less.*

NURSE

No less; nay, bigger:...

Act I Scene III – A Room In Capulet’s House - Sunday Afternoon

NURSE MIMES A PREGNANT STOMACH.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Women grow by men.

NURSE
...women grow by men

LADY CAPULET IGNORES NURSE AND CARRIES ON.

LADY CAPULET
(to Juliet) Now quickly.
On liking Paris's love, what do you see?

JULIET
*I'll see if looking sets likings in me,
But my eye I would no further it consent
Be smitten, than you give it your assent.*

LADY CAPULET
Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

JULIET
*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.**

**Note: This is prophetic as she will disobey her parents and do just the opposite.*

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR INTERRUPTS THE CONVERSATION.

THE DOOR OPENS AND PETER, THE COMIC SERVANT,
ENTERS LOOKING STRESSED.

PETER
(stressed, dramatic) Ma'am. The guests
have arrived and supper is served. You
are called for, my young lady is asked for,
the Nurse is being cursed in the kitchen,
and everywhere is madness. I have to
serve dinner, please come right away.

PETER
Madam, the guests are come, supper served up,
you called, my young lady asked for, the Nurse
cursed in the pantry, and everything in
extremity. I must hence to wait; I beseech you
follow straight.

LADY CAPULET DISMISSES HIM.

LADY CAPULET
We'll follow you...

LADY CAPULET
We follow thee.

PETER EXITS.

LADY CAPULET TURNS TO JULIET.

LADY CAPULET (CONT'D)
Juliet, the Count awaits.

LADY CAPULET
Juliet, the County stays.

Romeo and Juliet Translated

NURSE

*Go, girl. (bawdy) For happy days, seek
happy nights!*

NURSE

Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

Note: For reasons which are never explained, Paris does not make an appearance at the Capulet's feast, and nor does Rosaline, clearing the way for Romeo to meet Juliet.

