

Act Three

SCENE 1 *A public place.*

Act Two ends with the joyful Romeo and Juliet secretly married. Their happiness, however, is about to end abruptly. In this scene, Mercutio, Benvolio, and Romeo meet Tybalt on the street. Tybalt insults Romeo, but Romeo, who has just returned from his wedding, remains calm. Mercutio, on the other hand, is furious with Tybalt, and they begin to fight. As Romeo tries to separate them, Tybalt stabs Mercutio, who later dies. Romeo then challenges Tybalt, kills him, and flees. The prince arrives and demands an explanation. He announces that Romeo will be killed if he does not leave Verona immediately.

[Enter Mercutio, Benvolio, Page, and Servants.]

Benvolio. I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire.

The day is hot, the Capulets abroad,

And if we meet, we shall not scape a brawl,

For now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring.

5 **Mercutio.** Thou art like one of those fellows that, when he enters the confines of a tavern, claps me his sword upon the table and says "God send me no need of thee!" and by the operation of the second cup draws him on the drawer, when indeed there is no need.

10 **Benvolio.** Am I like such a fellow?

Mercutio. Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy mood as any in Italy; and as soon moved to be moody, and as soon moody to be moved.

Benvolio. And what to?

15 **Mercutio.** Nay an there were two such, we should have none shortly, for one would kill the other. Thou! why, thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more or a hair less in his beard than thou hast. Thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes.

20 What eye but such an eye would spy out such a quarrel? Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat; and yet thy head hath been beaten as addle as an egg for quarreling. Thou hast quarreled with a man for coughing in the street, because he hath wakened thy dog that hath lain asleep in the sun. Didst

25 thou not fall out with a tailor for wearing his new doublet before Easter? with another for tying his new shoes with old riband? And yet thou wilt tutor me from quarreling!

3–4 we shall . . . stirring: We shall not avoid a fight, since the heat makes people ill-tempered.

7–8 by the . . . drawer: feeling the effects of a second drink, is ready to fight (**draw on**) the waiter who's pouring the drinks (**drawer**).

12–13 as soon moved . . . to be moved: as likely to get angry and start a fight.

15–27 Mercutio teases his friend by insisting that Benvolio is quick to pick a fight, though everyone knows that Benvolio is gentle and peace loving.

25 doublet: jacket.

26 riband: ribbon or laces.

Mercutio and Tybalt duel in the 2004 coproduction of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and Second City.



Benvolio. An I were so apt to quarrel as thou art, any man should buy the fee simple of my life for an hour and a quarter.

30 **Mercutio.** The fee simple? O simple!

[Enter Tybalt and others.]

Benvolio. By my head, here come the Capulets. A

Mercutio. By my heel, I care not.

Tybalt. Follow me close, for I will speak to them. Gentlemen, good den. A word with one of you.

35 **Mercutio.** And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something; make it a word and a blow.

Tybalt. You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, an you will give me occasion.

Mercutio. Could you not take some occasion without giving?

40 **Tybalt.** Mercutio, thou consortest with Romeo.

Mercutio. Consort? What, dost thou make us minstrels? An thou make minstrels of us, look to hear nothing but discords. Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance. Zounds, consort!

45 **Benvolio.** We talk here in the public haunt of men.

Either withdraw unto some private place

And reason coldly of your grievances,

Or else depart. Here all eyes gaze on us.

Mercutio. Men's eyes were made to look, and let them gaze.

50 I will not budge for no man's pleasure, I.

[Enter Romeo.]

Tybalt. Well, peace be with you, sir. Here comes my man.

Mercutio. But I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery.

Marry, go before to field, he'll be your follower!

Your worship in that sense may call him man.

55 **Tybalt.** Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford No better term than this: thou art a villain.

Romeo. Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee Doth much excuse the appertaining rage To such a greeting. Villain am I none.

60 Therefore farewell. I see thou knowst me not. B

Tybalt. Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries That thou hast done me; therefore turn and draw.

Romeo. I do protest I never injured thee, But love thee better than thou canst devise

28–29 An I... quarter: If I picked fights as quickly as you do, anybody could own me for the smallest amount of money.

A TRAGEDY

As you read lines 31–79, think about the play's mounting **conflict**. Ask yourself: Who is responsible for starting this sword fight? Cite evidence to support your viewpoint.

40–44 consortest: keep company with. Tybalt means "You are friends with Romeo." Mercutio pretends to misunderstand him, assuming that Tybalt is insulting him by calling Romeo and him a **consort**, a group of traveling musicians. He then refers to his sword as his **fiddlestick**, the bow for a fiddle.

45–48 What does Benvolio want Tybalt and Mercutio to do?

51–54 When Romeo enters, Mercutio again pretends to misunderstand Tybalt. By **my man**, Tybalt means "the man I'm looking for." Mercutio takes it to mean "my servant." (**Livery** is a servant's uniform.) He assures Tybalt that the only place Romeo would follow him is to the dueling field.

57–59 I forgive your anger because I have reason to love you.

B CHARACTER

What **motive** does Romeo have for not wanting to fight Tybalt? Who else knows about this motive?

61 boy: an insulting term of address.

65 Till thou shalt know the reason of my love;
And so, good Capulet, which name I tender
As dearly as mine own, be satisfied.

66 **tender:** cherish.

Mercutio. O calm, dishonorable, vile submission!
Alla stoccata carries it away.

[*draws*]

70 Tybalt, you ratcatcher, will you walk?

Tybalt. What wouldst thou have with me?

Mercutio. Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives.
That I mean to make bold withal, and, as you shall use me
hereafter, dry-beat the rest of the eight. Will you pluck your
75 sword out of his pilcher by the ears? Make haste, lest mine be
about your ears ere it be out.

Tybalt. I am for you.

[*draws*]

Romeo. Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

Mercutio. Come, sir, your *passado*!

[*They fight.*]

80 **Romeo.** Draw, Benvolio; beat down their weapons.
Gentlemen, for shame! forbear this outrage!
Tybalt, Mercutio, the Prince expressly hath
Forbid this bandying in Verona streets.
Hold, Tybalt! Good Mercutio!

[*Tybalt, under Romeo's arm, thrusts Mercutio in, and flies with his Men.*]

Mercutio. I am hurt.

85 A plague o' both your houses! I am sped.
Is he gone and hath nothing?

Benvolio. What, art thou hurt?

Mercutio. Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, 'tis enough.
Where is my page? Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.

[*Exit Page.*]

Romeo. Courage, man. The hurt cannot be much.

90 **Mercutio.** No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church
door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Ask for me tomorrow, and you
shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this
world. A plague o' both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a
mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart, a rogue, a

68–70 Mercutio assumes that Romeo is afraid to fight. *Alla stoccata* is a move used in sword fighting; Mercutio is suggesting that Tybalt has won the battle of words with Romeo. Mercutio then dares Tybalt to step aside and fight (*walk*).

72–74 **nothing but . . . eight:** I intend to take one of your nine lives (as a cat supposedly has) and give a beating to the other eight.

79 **passado:** a sword-fighting maneuver.

80–84 Romeo wants Benvolio to help him stop the fight. They are able to hold back Mercutio.

83 **bandying:** fighting.

85 **A plague . . . sped:** I curse both the Montagues and the Capulets. I am destroyed.

90–96 Even as he lies dying, Mercutio continues to joke and make nasty remarks about Tybalt. He makes a pun on the word *grave*.

95 villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the devil came
you between us? I was hurt under your arm.

Romeo. I thought all for the best.

Mercutio. Help me into some house, Benvolio,
Or I shall faint. A plague o' both your houses! C
100 They have made worms' meat of me. I have it,
And soundly too. Your houses!

[Exit, supported by Benvolio.]

Romeo. This gentleman, the Prince's near ally,
My very friend, hath got this mortal hurt
In my behalf—my reputation stained
105 With Tybalt's slander—Tybalt, that an hour
Hath been my kinsman, O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
And in my temper softened valor's steel!

[Reenter Benvolio.]

Benvolio. O Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio's dead!
110 That gallant spirit hath aspired the clouds,
Which too untimely here did scorn the earth.

Romeo. This day's black fate on mo days doth depend;
This but begins the woe others must end.

[Reenter Tybalt.]

Benvolio. Here comes the furious Tybalt back again.
115 **Romeo.** Alive in triumph, and Mercutio slain?
Away to heaven respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!
Now, Tybalt, take the "villain" back again
That late thou gavest me, for Mercutio's soul
120 Is but a little way above our heads,
Staying for thine to keep him company.
Either thou or I, or both, must go with him. D

Tybalt. Thou, wretched boy, that didst consort him here,
Shalt with him hence.

Romeo. This shall determine that.
[They fight. Tybalt falls.]

125 **Benvolio.** Romeo, away, be gone!
The citizens are up, and Tybalt slain.
Stand not amazed. The Prince will doom thee death
If thou art taken. Hence, be gone, away!

C TRAGEDY

What curse does Mercutio repeat
three times in this scene? Explain
what this ominous curse might
foreshadow.

102–108 This gentleman . . . valor's steel: My friend has died protecting my
reputation against a man who has been
my relative for only an hour. My love for
Juliet has made me less manly and brave.

110 aspired: soared to.

112–113 This day's . . . must end: This
awful day will be followed by more of the
same.

116 respective lenity: considerate
mildness.

D CHARACTER

What drives Romeo to challenge
Tybalt to fight?

124 The sword fight probably goes on
for several minutes, till Romeo runs his
sword through Tybalt.