

MERCUTIO MONOLOGUE

(Act I.iv) Mercutio, Romeo's friend, is a ringleader and a born entertainer, serving as a foil to Romeo's more serious and emotional character. Mercutio grabs everyone's attention with this famous, gradually hot-tempered monologue. Through fanciful description, humorous puns, and mockery, Mercutio is making the point that dreams are not at all significant. He says that Queen Mab has brought Romeo's dream (foreshadowing that it is not a good idea to attend the feast) and that it is not to be taken seriously. Queen Mab is a mythological figure who brings dreams to sleeping people.

**Please note that this is an abridged version from the original!*

MERCUTIO:

O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you.	1
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes In shape no bigger than an agate stone On the forefinger of an alderman, Drawn with a team of little atomies ¹	5
Over men's noses as they lie asleep; Not half so big as a round little worm Her chariot is an empty hazelnut, And in this state she gallops night by night Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;	10
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight; O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees; O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream, Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues, Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.	15
Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose, And then dreams he of smelling out a suit ² ; Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck, And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats, Of breaches, ambuscades, and then anon	20
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes, And being thus frightened, swears a prayer or two And sleeps again. This is that very Hag, When maids lie on their backs, That presses them and learns them first to bear,	25
Making them women of good carriage. This is she!	27

¹ **atomies:** little creatures

² **suit:** person who might want to buy his influence at court

ROMEO MONOLOGUE

(Act III.iii) Here Romeo learns that the Prince has banished Romeo from Verona. For Friar Laurence, Romeo's banishment is "mercy," but for Romeo, banishment is equivalent to death.

ROMEO:

'Tis torture, and not mercy: heaven is here, 1
Where Juliet lives; and every cat and dog
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
Live here in heaven and may look on her;
But Romeo may not: more validity¹, 5
More honourable state, more courtship² lives
In carrion-flies³ than Romeo: they my seize
On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand
And steal immortal blessing from her lips,
Who even in pure and vestal modesty, 10
Still blush, as thinking their own kisses sin⁴;
But Romeo may not; he is banished:
Flies may do this, but I from this must fly:
They are free men, but I am banished.
And say'st thou yet that exile is not death? 15
Hadst thou no poison mix'd, no sharp-ground knife,
No sudden mean of death, though ne'er so mean⁵,
But 'banished' to kill me?--'banished'?
O friar, the damned use that word in hell;
Howlings attend it: how hast thou the heart, 20
Being a divine, a ghostly confessor⁶,
A sin-absolver, and my friend profess'd,
To mangle me with that word 'banished'? 23

¹ **validity:** value

² **courtship:** opportunity to woo

³ **carrion-flies:** Romeo is referring to ordinary flies, which feast on carrion—rotten meat.

⁴ **...kisses sin:** as if they [Juliet's lips] think that their kissing [i.e., touching one another] is a sin

⁵ **sudden mean of death:** some quick means of death, no matter how contemptible.

⁶ **ghostly confessor:** spiritual counselor

JULIET MONOLOGUE

(Act II.v) In this monologue, Shakespeare depicts the youthful Juliet desperately impatient for news of Romeo. She comments on the swiftness of youth and love, contrasting them with the slowness of the old nurse, who cannot feel the youthful passion Juliet does.

JULIET:

The clock struck nine when I did send the nurse; 1
In half an hour she promised to return.
Perchance she cannot meet him: that's not so.
O, she is lame! love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams, 5
Driving back shadows over louring¹ hills:
Therefore do nimble-pinion'd doves draw love²,
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
Of this day's journey, and from nine till twelve 10
Is three long hours, yet she is not come.
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be as swift in motion as a ball³;
My words would bandy⁴ her to my sweet love,
And his⁵ to me: 15
But old folks, many feign⁶ as they were dead;
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead.
O God, she comes! 18

¹ **louring**: scowling.

² Swift-winged doves pull Venus [in her chariot]. Juliet is thinking of depictions in which doves and cupids hold the reins of Venus' chariot.

³ **ball**: Juliet probably has a tennis ball in mind, as can be seen from the next line.

⁴ **bandy**: throw back and forth

⁵ **his**: his words

⁶ **feign**: act as though

NURSE MONOLOGUE

(Act I.iii) In this monologue, Nurse, a longtime friend and caretaker to Juliet, reveals background information about the Nurse's position in the Capulet family. She exhibits complete ease with the issue of sexuality. In her earthiness, her bawdiness, and her frankness, she reminisces about a moment in Juliet's childhood.

**Please note that this is an abridged version from the original!*

NURSE

Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan¹ and she--God rest all Christian souls!
Were of an age². Well, Susan is with God;
She was too good for me: but, as I said, 5
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 wean'd,--I never shall forget it,--
Nay, I do bear a brain³.--but, as I said, 10
Since that time it is eleven years;
For then she could stand alone; nay, by the rood⁴,
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! 15
A' was a merry man--took up the child:
'Yea,' quoth he, 'dost thou fall upon thy face?
Thou wilt fall backward⁵ when thou hast more wit⁶;
Wilt thou not, Jule?' and, by my holidam⁷,
The pretty wretch left⁸ crying and said 'Ay.' 20
To see, now, how a jest⁹ shall come about!
I warrant, and I should live a thousand years,
I never should forget it: 'Wilt thou not, Jule?' quoth he;
And, pretty fool, it stinted¹⁰ and said 'Ay.' 24

¹ **Susan**: the name of the Nurse's daughter who has died

² **of an age**: Were of the same age

³ **bear a brain**: have a great memory

⁴ **rood**: by the cross (a mild oath)

⁵ **fall backward**: fall on your back [to make love].

⁶ **wit**: understanding

⁷ **holidam**: by my holy relic

⁸ **left**: stopped

⁹ **how a jest shall come about**: how something spoken in jest comes true. The Nurse's husband asked little Juliet if she would fall on her back when she was wiser, and she—not understanding the sexual meaning of the question—answered "Aye." That was the jest; now the jest has "come about," because it's time for Juliet to start thinking about a husband, and falling on her back with him.

¹⁰ **stinted**: stopped

JULIET MONOLOGUE

(Act IV.iii) The Nurse has helped prepare Juliet for her wedding. At Juliet's request, both the nurse and her mother leave her alone for the night. About to take the sleeping potion, Juliet expresses her last-minute doubts. What if the potion doesn't work? What if the Friar, fearing reprisal for marrying Romeo and Juliet, has actually given her poison? What if she should wake in the tomb before Romeo comes to get her? She especially dreads this last possibility, fearing that she will go mad or that Tybalt's ghost will appear. She recovers her courage and swallows the potion, saying that she drinks to Romeo.

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JULIET

Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again. 1
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins,
That almost freezes up the heat of life:
I'll call them back again to comfort me:
Nurse! What should she do here? 5
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.)
Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then to-morrow morning?
No, no: this shall forbid it: lie thou there. (*Laying down her dagger*) 10
What if it be a poison, which the friar
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is: and yet, methinks, it should not, 15
For he hath still been tried¹ a holy man.
How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point!
Shall I not, then, be stifled in the vault, 20
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
And madly play with my forefather's joints?
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud? 25
And, in this rage², with some great³ kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?
O, look! Methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit⁴ his body
Upon a rapier's point: stay, Tybalt, stay⁵! 30
Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee.

She falls upon her bed, within the curtains.

¹ **still:** always **been tried:** proved

² **rage:** insane fit

³ **great:** earlier by one or more generations, as in "great-grandfather."

⁴ **spit:** pierce

⁵ **Stay:** stop.

FRIAR MONOLOGUE

(Act IV.iii) The Nurse has helped prepare Juliet for her wedding. At Juliet's request, both the nurse and her mother leave her alone for the night. About to take the sleeping potion, Juliet expresses her last-minute doubts. What if the potion doesn't work? What if the Friar, fearing reprisal for marrying Romeo and Juliet, has actually given her poison? What if she should wake in the tomb before Romeo comes to get her? She especially dreads this last possibility, fearing that she will go mad or that Tybalt's ghost will appear. She recovers her courage and swallows the potion, saying that she drinks to Romeo.

**Please note that this is an abridged version from the original!*

FRIAR:

Hold thy desperate hand. ¹	1
Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art; Thy tears are womanish, thy wild acts denote The unreasonable ² fury of a beast. Unseemly woman is a seeming man! And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both! ³	5
Thou hast amazed me. By my holy order, I thought thy disposition better tempered. ⁴ Hast thou slain Tybalt? Wilt thou slay thyself? And slay thy lady that in thy life lives, By doing damnèd hate upon thyself?	10
Thy noble shape is but a form of wax, ⁵ Digressing from the valor of a man; What, rouse thee, man! Thy Juliet is alive, For whose dear sake thou wast but lately dead.	15
There art thou happy ⁶ . Tybalt would kill thee, But thou slewest Tybalt. There are thou happy too. The law, that threat'ned death, becomes thy friend And turns it to exile. There art thou happy. A pack of blessings light upon thy back;	20
Happiness courts thee in her best array; But, like a misbehaved and sullen wench, Thou pout'st upon thy fortune and thy love. Go, get thee to thy love, as was decreed ⁷ , Ascend her chamber, hence and comfort her.	25
Go before, nurse: commend me to thy lady; And bid her hasten all the house to bed, Which heavy sorrow makes them apt unto: Romeo is coming.	29

¹ **Hold:** stop. Romeo does something, perhaps pulls out a dagger, that shows he wants to kill himself.

² **unreasonable:** irrational.

³ **Unseemly woman in a seeming man... both:** unseemly woman dwelling within one who seems to be a man, or [even worse] unseemly beast dwelling within one who seems to be both a man and a woman.

⁴ **better temper'd:** stronger, more stable

⁵ **form of wax:** waxwork figure.

⁶ **happy:** fortunate.

⁷ **as was decreed:** as was already planned on and agreed to.