

Act 2 Scene 2

» CAPULET'S ORCHARD

Enter ROMEO

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
 But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
 It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
 Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
 Who is already sick and pale with grief
 That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
 Be not her maid, since she is envious;
 Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
 And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

[Enter JULIET above]

It is my lady, O, it is my love!
 O, that she knew she were!
 She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?
 Her eye discourses, I will answer it.
 I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks.
 Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
 Having some business, do entreat her eyes
 To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
 What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
 The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
 As daylight doth a lamp. Her eyes in heaven
 Would through the airy region stream so bright
 That birds would sing and think it were not night.
 See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.
 O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
 That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me.

ROMEO

She speaks.

O speak again, bright angel, for thou art
 As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
 As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
 Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
 Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
 When he bestrides the lazy-puffing clouds
 And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
 Deny thy father and refuse thy name,

1 *He jests ... wound:* he's mocking something he knows nothing about

2 *But soft:* but wait

5

8 *vestal livery:* virginal clothes

10

13 *Her eye discourses:* her eyes seem to say something

15

15 *Two ... return:* two of the most beautiful stars in the sky have gone away on business and asked Juliet's eyes to shine in their place till they return

20

18 *What if ... head?:* what if her eyes were in the sky and the stars in her head?

21 *the airy region:* space
stream: shine

25

28 *wingèd messenger:* angel

29 *white-upturned wondering eyes:* eyes turned upwards so their whites show

30

31 *bestrides:* walks on

32 *bosom:* surface

33 *wherefore:* why



Character Development

ROMEO

STATUS UPDATE

Romeo's romantic tendencies come to the fore in this scene. He describes Juliet's luminous beauty. (2-3) He offers to disown his family and his name for Juliet's sake. (50-1) He also calls Juliet by many different pet names, including 'bright angel', 'dear saint' and 'fair maid'. (26-61)

Romeo's recklessness is also evident in this scene. He risks his life by climbing the Capulet walls, but the idea that he could be killed barely registers with him. He is defiant in his attitude, saying that nothing can stop love: 'stony limits cannot hold love out'. (67) Romeo is so focused on Juliet and his love for her that he doesn't just ignore danger; he thinks he's impervious to it.

CONSIDER THIS

Though deliriously in love, Romeo still has a sense of foreboding, similar to his premonition before the party in Act 1 Scene 4. He can hardly believe his luck, and worries that his relationship with Juliet is too good to be true: 'I am afeared,/ Being in night, all this is but a dream,/ Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.' (139-141) Why do you think Shakespeare included this moment of foreshadowing in an otherwise very romantic scene?

JULIET

STATUS UPDATE

Though Juliet previously had no interest in marriage, she knows immediately that she wants to marry Romeo. She goes about getting what she wants in a methodical way. She's practical enough to know that their families will never consent to the marriage, and they'll have to turn their backs on their families. (34-6)

Though Romeo is very romantic, Juliet doesn't put too much faith in his elaborate declarations of love. When he tries to swear his love by the moon, she tells him there's no need: 'Do not swear at all'. (112) It's significant that she's the one who brings up marriage: 'If that thy bent of love be honourable,/ Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow'. (143-4) Actions are much more important to her than romantic words.

CONSIDER THIS

Juliet is mortified that Romeo overheard her confessing her 'true-love passion' for him. (104) She even regrets that she didn't play hard to get. (102) Are there similar unspoken rules around romance today? How do you think Juliet must be feeling, having laid her cards on the table?

Look Back at Act 2 Scene 3



FIRST ENCOUNTER

1. What is Friar Laurence doing before Romeo arrives?
2. Lines 9–26: What do we learn about the herbs and flowers that the Friar examines?
3. Lines 23–4: What comparison does Friar Laurence make between ‘man’ and ‘herbs’?
4. What is the first conclusion that Friar Laurence comes to when he hears that Romeo has not been in bed all night?
5. Can you identify the line where Friar Laurence tells Romeo to stop being so vague and just come out with what he wants to say?
6. Lines 63–4: What prompts the Friar to say that ‘young men’s love then lies/ Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes’?
7. List the various ways that Romeo expressed his sadness over Rosaline, according to Friar Laurence.
8. According to Romeo, what is the main difference between ‘her I love now’ and Rosaline? (81)
9. Despite his reservations, why does Friar Laurence eventually agree to marry Romeo and Juliet?



A CLOSER LOOK

Consider the following lines from the Friar’s speech:

- ‘In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will.’ (24)
- ‘Riddling confession finds but riddling shrift.’ (52)
- ‘Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast.’ (90)

Based on these statements, how would you describe the Friar’s outlook on life?



THINK ABOUT THEMES

1. SPEED AND HASTE

Romeo tells the Friar that he’s in a hurry to get married: ‘I stand on sudden haste.’ (89) However, the Friar advises Romeo to take things slowly, telling him that ‘they stumble that run fast.’ (90) Do you think it is always best to take things slow or are there times in life when haste is advisable?

2. LOVE: THINK-PAIR-SHARE

‘O, she knew well/ Thy love did read by rote, that could not spell.’ (83-4) Friar Laurence gives us one of the play’s few insights into Rosaline’s character. Based on these lines, what do you think was the extent of Romeo and Rosaline’s relationship? How seriously do you think Rosaline took Romeo?

Pair with a partner and discuss your answers, narrowing them down to two or three points. Now share your ideas with the rest of the class.



Act 2

Scene 3

SCENE SUMMARY

Friar Laurence is gathering herbs and flowers. He muses about how each plant has the potential to be healing or poisonous, good or bad, and how the same can be said of people. Romeo greets him and Friar Laurence asks if he has been up all night with Rosaline. Romeo tells him that he's now in love with Juliet and asks Friar Laurence to marry them. Friar Laurence is shocked that Romeo has switched his affections so suddenly, but agrees to marry them, hoping the marriage will heal the rift between the Montagues and Capulets.

SCENE ANALYSIS

LINES 1–26: FRIAR LAURENCE GATHERS HERBS

Friar Laurence, a Franciscan priest and Romeo's friend and mentor, is out early in the morning gathering medicinal herbs and flowers. He thinks about nature's diversity, and about the various uses for each plant. He remarks to himself that there's no plant so bad that it doesn't have at least one benefit: 'For naught so vile that on the earth doth live/ But to the earth, some special good doth give'. (13-4)

The reverse is also true – every healing plant can be put to dangerous use. He examines a flower that contains both a remedy and a poison. It reminds him of human nature, which has the potential for both good and evil: 'Two such opposed kings encamp them still/ In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will'. (23-4)

LINES 27–60: ROMEO ASKS A FAVOUR

Romeo arrives, and Friar Laurence is surprised to see him. He wonders if Romeo is up so early be-

Lady Capulet

Lady Capulet is Juliet's mother. Throughout the play we get a sense that she has a rather uncomfortable relationship with her daughter. She is eager that Juliet marry the nobleman Paris and gets angry when Juliet refuses. Although Lady Capulet often comes across as a cold-hearted, vengeful person, especially when her nephew Tybalt is killed, she shows genuine love for Juliet towards the end of the play.

FORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HER DAUGHTER

Lady Capulet does not seem to have a close and loving relationship with Juliet. She speaks to her daughter in very formal terms: 'Tell me, daughter Juliet,/ How stands your disposition to be married?' (1.3.65-6) The rather blunt, cold manner in which she addresses Juliet can be contrasted with the Nurse, who always speaks to Juliet with warmth and affection.

Lady Capulet seems to feel more comfortable speaking to her daughter when the Nurse is present. When she talks to Juliet about Paris's proposal, she tells the Nurse to give them privacy, then calls her back: 'Nurse, give leave awhile,/ We must talk in secret. Nurse, come back again.' (1.3.8-9) We get the feeling that Lady Capulet feels awkward about being alone with her daughter.

Lady Capulet also approaches Juliet's proposed marriage like a business transaction. She asks Juliet if she consents to be married in a businesslike fashion: 'Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?' (1.3.97) Juliet's desires and emotions don't really come into it.

AN EAGER MATCHMAKER


Lady Capulet tries hard to convince Juliet to marry Paris, whom she considers a suitable match. Juliet

is only thirteen and hasn't thought about marriage yet, but Lady Capulet pressures her to accept Paris's proposal. She stresses that many high-ranking girls of Juliet's age get married: 'Younger than you,/ Here in Verona, ladies of esteem,/ Are made already mothers.' (1.3.70-2) She also emphasises Paris's good looks: 'Verona's summer has not such a flower.' (1.3.78)

Lady Capulet seems eager for Juliet to follow in her footsteps in being married at an early age. As she points out, she was already a mother by the time she was Juliet's age: 'I was your mother much upon these years/ That you are now a maid.' (1.3.73-4)

VENGEFUL

Lady Capulet's attitude gives us a clear idea of the bitterness and hatred that exists between the Capulets and the Montagues. When Tybalt dies she can think only of revenge, insisting that Romeo be killed to settle the score: 'I beg for justice, which thou, Prince, must give:/ Romeo slew Tybalt, Romeo must not live.' (3.1.171-2) She also claims that Benvolio is lying about what really happened at the fight: 'He is a kinsman to the Montague./ Affection makes him false; he speaks not true.' (3.1.167-8)



LADY CAPULET

Allegiance: House Capulet

RELATIONSHIPS:

Juliet (daughter), Capulet (husband), Tybalt (nephew), Nurse (employee)

LIKES: matchmaking, vengeance

DISLIKES: disobedient daughters, Montagues (especially Romeo)

LADY CAPULET'S TIMELINE

1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3
		#					
2.4	2.5	2.6	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5
							#
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3
				#			

KEY

- Appears
- Mentioned
- Dies
- #** Key scene

Poison

Poison is an important motif in *Romeo and Juliet*. Sometimes the characters refer to actual poison; other times, they use poison as a metaphor.

LITERAL POISON

In Act 3 Scene 3, Romeo asks Friar Laurence for poison: 'Hadst thou no poison mixed ...?' (3.3.44) Having taken refuge in the Friar's cell following Tybalt's death, Romeo learns that he's been banished from Verona. In his panicked, desperate state, Romeo claims he would rather kill himself than be parted from Juliet.

In Act 3 Scene 5, Lady Capulet threatens to have Romeo poisoned while he's in exile, in revenge for Tybalt's death. She plans to locate someone in Mantua who'll assassinate Romeo, presumably by slipping poison into his cup: 'give him such an unaccustomed dram,/ That he shall soon keep Tybalt company'. (3.5.90-1)

Juliet also drinks a poison of sorts – the potion given to her by the Friar. This substance, while not lethal, stops just short of death, leaving anyone who drinks it comatose and paralysed. Even the heart and lungs shut down for 42 hours: 'No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest.' (4.1.98) Indeed, before drinking it, Juliet worries that the potion might actually kill her. (4.3.24-7)

As soon as he decides to take his own life, Romeo doesn't leave anything to chance. He wants a poison that will kill him instantly. (5.1.59-65) The poison that he buys from the apothecary is so dangerous that the punishment for selling it is death. (5.1.66-7) The apothecary stresses that it will 'dispatch you straight', even if you had the strength of 'twenty men'. (5.1.79)

Romeo refers to the poison as a 'cordial' or refreshing drink because it will reunite him with Juliet in death: 'Come, cordial and not poison, go with me/ To Juliet's grave, for there I must use thee.' (5.1.85-6) He even toasts Juliet as he drinks it: 'Here's to my love.' (5.3.119) Juliet, of course, is actually still alive and only appears dead, but Romeo doesn't know this. The poison turns out to be very fast-acting: 'O true apothecary,/ Thy drugs are quick.' (5.3.119-20)



POISON AS SYMBOL OR METAPHOR

Benvolio uses the metaphor of poison as he urges Romeo to get over Rosaline by falling for someone else: 'Take thou some new infection to thy eye,/ And the rank poison of the old will die.' (1.2.48-9) Here, Benvolio refers to a medieval understanding of medicine, whereby one illness could drive another out of a person's body.

Friar Laurence is an expert on plants and their properties. He notes how the rind of one particular flower can be either poisonous or medicinal, depending on how it is consumed. (2.3.19-20) He regards this as a metaphor for human nature, noting that we all contain the potential for good and evil: 'Two such opposed kings encamp them still/ In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will'. (2.3.23-4)

In Act 3 Scene 2, Juliet initially misunderstands the Nurse and thinks that Romeo, rather than Tybalt, has been killed. She uses the metaphor of the 'cockatrice' to describe her distress. This was a mythical creature that could poison its victims simply by looking at them. Having Romeo's death confirmed, she says, would poison her just as surely as looking this deadly creature in the face: 'Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but "Ay"/ And that bare vowel "I" shall poison more/ Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice.' (3.2.45-7)

When he is paying the apothecary, Romeo describes money as a kind of poison: 'There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls'. (5.1.80) Gold, he says, poisons the souls of men, leaving them evil and corrupt. It destroys far more lives than the illegal 'compounds' or chemicals he's persuaded the apothecary to sell him: 'Doing more murder in this loathsome world/ Than these poor compounds'. (5.1.80-2) ●