

ACT 1, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

SAMPSON and **GREGORY**, servants of the Capulet family,
enter carrying swords and small shields.

SAMPSON

Gregory, I swear, we can't let them humiliate us. We won't take their garbage.

GREGORY

(teasing **SAMPSON**) No, because then we'd be garbage-men.

SAMPSON

What I mean is, if they make us angry we'll pull out our swords.

GREGORY

Maybe you should focus on pulling yourself out of trouble, Sampson.

SAMPSON

I hit hard when I'm angry.

GREGORY

But it's hard to make you angry.

Gregory continually implies that Sampson isn't as tough as he's acting.

SAMPSON

One of those dogs from the Montague house can make me angry.

GREGORY

Angry enough to run away. You won't stand and fight.

SAMPSON

A dog from that house will make me angry enough to take a stand. If I pass one of them on the street, I'll take the side closer to the wall and let him walk in the gutter.

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GREGORY

That means you're the weak one, because weaklings get pushed up against the wall.

SAMPSON

You're right. That's why girls get pushed up against walls—they're weak. So what I'll do is push the Montague men into the street and the Montague women up against the wall.

GREGORY

The fight is between our masters, and we men who work for them.

SAMPSON

It's all the same. I'll be a harsh master to them. After I fight the men, I'll be nice to the women—I'll cut off their heads.

GREGORY

→ "Maidenhead" =
virginity.

Cut off their heads? You mean their maidenheads?

SAMPSON

Cut off their heads, take their maidenheads—whatever. Take my remark in whichever sense you like.

GREGORY

The women you rape are the ones who'll have to "sense" it.

SAMPSON

They'll feel me as long as I can keep an erection. Everybody knows I'm a nice piece of flesh.

GREGORY

→ They're joking
about Sampson's
private parts.

It's a good thing you're not a piece of fish. You're dried and shriveled like salted fish.

ABRAM and another servant of the Montagues enter.

Pull out your tool now. These guys are from the house of Montague.

SAMPSON

I have my naked sword out. Fight, I'll back you up.

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GREGORY

How will you back me up—by turning your back and running away?

SAMPSON

Don't worry about me.

GREGORY

No, really. I *am* worried about you!

SAMPSON

Let's not break the law by starting a fight. Let them start something.

GREGORY

I'll frown at them as they pass by, and they can react however they want.

SAMPSON

→
*Biting the thumb
is a gesture of
disrespect.*

You mean however they dare. I'll bite my thumb at them. That's an insult, and if they let me get away with it they'll be dishonored. (SAMPSON *bites his thumb*)

ABRAM

Hey, are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMPSON

I'm biting my thumb.

ABRAM

Are you biting your thumb at us?

SAMPSON

(*aside to GREGORY*) Is the law on our side if I say yes?

GREGORY

(*aside to SAMPSON*) No.

SAMPSON

(*to ABRAM*) No, sir, I'm not biting my thumb at you, but I am biting my thumb.

GREGORY

Are you trying to start a fight?

ABRAM

Start a fight? No, sir.

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SAMPSON

If you want to fight, I'm your man. My employer is as good as yours.

ABRAM

But he's not better than mine.

SAMPSON

Well then.

BENVOLIO enters.

GREGORY

(speaking so that only SAMPSON can hear) Say "better."
Here comes one of my employer's relatives.

SAMPSON

(to ABRAM) Yes, "better," sir.

ABRAM

You lie.

SAMPSON

Pull out your swords, if you're men. Gregory, remember how to slash.

They fight.

BENVOLIO

(pulling out his sword) Break it up, you fools. Put your swords away. You don't know what you're doing.

TYBALT enters.

TYBALT

What? You've pulled out your sword to fight with these worthless servants? Turn around, Benvolio, and look at the man who's going to kill you.

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BENVOLIO

I'm only trying to keep the peace. Either put away your sword or use it to help me stop this fight.

TYBALT

What? You take out your sword and then talk about peace? I hate the word peace like I hate hell, all Montagues, and you. Let's go at it, coward!

BENVOLIO and TYBALT fight. Three or four CITIZENS of the watch enter with clubs and spears.

CITIZENS

Use your clubs and spears! Hit them! Beat them down! Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

CAPULET enters in his gown, together with his wife, LADY CAPULET.

CAPULET

What's this noise? Give me my long sword! Come on!

LADY CAPULET

A crutch, you need a crutch—why are you asking for a sword?

MONTAGUE enters with his sword drawn, together with his wife, LADY MONTAGUE.

CAPULET

I want my sword. Old Montague is here, and he's waving his sword around just to make me mad.

MONTAGUE

Capulet, you villain! *(his wife holds him back)* Don't stop me. Let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE

You're not taking one step toward an enemy.

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PRINCE ESCALUS *enters with his escort.*

PRINCE

(shouting at the rioters) You rebels! Enemies of the peace! Men who turn their weapons against their own neighbors—They won't listen to me?—You there! You men, you beasts, who satisfy your anger with fountains of each others' blood! I'll have you tortured if you don't put down your swords and listen to your angry prince. *(MONTAGUE, CAPULET, and their followers throw down their weapons)* Three times now riots have broken out in this city, all because of a casual word from you, old Capulet and Montague. Three times the peace has been disturbed in our streets, and Verona's old citizens have had to take off their dress clothes and pick up rusty old spears to part you. If you ever cause a disturbance on our streets again, you'll pay for it with your lives. Everyone else, go away for now. *(to CAPULET)* You, Capulet, come with me. *(to MONTAGUE)* Montague, this afternoon come to old Free-town, the court where I deliver judgments, and I'll tell you what else I want from you. As for the rest of you, I'll say this once more: go away or be put to death.

*Everyone exits except MONTAGUE,
LADY MONTAGUE, and BENVOLIO.*

MONTAGUE

Who started this old fight up again? Speak, nephew.
Were you here when it started?