

~~The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend. [Exit]~~

## START

[I.I] Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, ~~with swords and bucklers~~, of the house of Capulet.

SAMPSON Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.

GREGORY No, for then we should be colliers.

SAMPSON I mean, and we be in choler, we'll draw.

GREGORY Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.

SAMPSON I strike quickly, being moved.

GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMPSON A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand: therefore if thou art moved thou runn'st away.

SAMPSON A dog of that house shall move me to stand: I will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.

14 SD] *Capell*; no SD, Q2-4, Q1 Act 1, Scene 1 1.1] *Actus Primus. Scena Prima.* F; not in Q2-4, Q1 Location] *Capell* (after *Rowe*) 0 SD.1-2] Q2-4, F; Enter 2. *Scruing-men of the Capolets.* Q1 1 on] Q2-4; A F; of Q1; o' *Capell* 2 SH GREGORY] Q2-4, F; 2 Q1 (throughout scene) 3 SH SAMPSON] Q2-4, F; 1 Q1 (throughout scene) 3 and] Q2-4; if F; If Q1 4 Ay] *Rowe*; I Q2-4, F (not hereafter recorded unless ambiguous); Euer Q1 4 collar] F, Q1; choller Q2-3; Coller Q4 5 quickly,] F; quickly Q2-4, Q1 7 Montague] *Theobald* (from *Brooke*); *Mountague* Q2-4, F (the spelling in Q2 throughout, except *Montague* at 2.2.98); the *Mountagues* Q1 8-9 To...away.] *As prose*, Q1, *Pope*; two lines, ending stand / ...away Q2-4, F 8 stand] Q2-4, F; stand to it Q1 10-11 A...Montague's.] *As prose*, *Pope*; two lines, ending stand / ...*Moutagues* Q2-4, F; There's not a man of them I meete, but Ile take the wall of. Q1

14 miss prove inadequate in the performance. Compare Q1 'here we want'.

14 mend improve (in the future). Compare *MND* 5.1.429-30.

## Act 1, Scene 1

Location Verona. A public place.

0 SD.1 *swords and bucklers* 'Heavy swords and small shields were the ordinary weapons of servants; gentlemen wore rapier and dagger' (*Kittredge*).

0 SD.2 *house of Capulet* The followers of Capulet and Montague may have been distinguished by 'tokens' worn in their hats. See George Gascoigne, 'A devise of a Maske for the right honorable Viscount Mountacute' (*The Posies* (1575), p. 83): 'he shewed in his hat, / This token which the *Moutacutes* dyd beare alwaies, for that / They covet to be knowne from *Capels* where they passe / For auncient grutch which long ago, twene these two houses was'. See supplementary note.

1 carry coals submit passively to indignity or insult. Proverbial (Tilley T513, N69).

2 colliers (1) coal carriers; (2) term of abuse

(from the dirtiness of the trade and the reputation of colliers for cheating).

3 and if.

3 in...draw draw (our swords) in anger (with play, in 4, on 'draw...collar' = slip out of the hangman's noose).

4 while you live i.e. under any circumstance (with play on being 'dead' once hanged).

5-10 moved...stand to be moved = (1) to react emotionally, (2) to be forced to retreat; to stand = (1) to take a firm and courageous position under threat of attack, (2) to have an erection (25). Quibbles like these and the similar ones at lines 3-4 above are the stock-in-trade of servants or servant-clowns in Elizabethan drama. Compare *Feste* as Olivia's 'corrupter of words', *TN* 3.1.36.

10-11 take the wall assert social position or physical superiority. City streets, lacking pavements and slanted to a kennel (or channel) running down the centre, were the dumping grounds for refuse; the wall-side was therefore cleaner and safer and was claimed by people of rank or by anyone (like Sampson) who wanted to pick a fight.

GREGORY That shows thee a weak slave, for the weakest goes to the wall.

SAMPSON 'Tis true, and therefore women being the weaker vessels are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall. 15

GREGORY The quarrel is between our masters, and us their men.

SAMPSON 'Tis all one, I will show myself a tyrant: when I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids; I will cut off their heads. 20

GREGORY The heads of the maids?

SAMPSON Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads, take it in what sense thou wilt.

GREGORY They must take it in sense that feel it.

SAMPSON Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh. 25

GREGORY ~~'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor-John.~~ Draw thy tool, here comes of the house of Montagues.

*Enter two other SERVINGMEN, [one being ABRAM].*

SAMPSON My naked weapon is out. Quarrel, I will back thee.

GREGORY How, turn thy back and run? 30

14 'Tis true] Q2-4; True F; Thats true Q1 17 ] not in Q1 18 tyrant:] F; tyrant, Q2-4, Q1 19 civil] Q2-3, F; cruell Q4 19 I will] Q2-4; and F, Q1 21 maids?] F, Q1; maids. Q2-4 22 their] Q2-4, F; the Q1, Warburton 24 in] Q4, Q1; not in Q2-3, F 28 comes of] Q2-4, F; comes two of Q1 28 house of Montagues] Q2-4; House of the Mountagues F; two of the Mountagues Q1 28 SD one being ABRAM] Name supplied from following speech headings in Q2-4, F; Enter two Servingmen of the Mountagues. Q1 (Rowe introduced Balthasar as the second servingman) 29-30 ] not in Q1

12-13 weakest... wall In a fight the weakest were driven up against the wall (Tilley w15, w185); but here used with some suggestion that cowards may seek the wall as a safer place.

14 weaker vessels Compare 1 Pet. 3.7 (G): 'Likewise ye housbands, dwell with them as men of knowledge, giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel.' Shakespeare here begins a series of bawdy *doubles entendres* carried on (15-20) in 'thrust', 'cut... heads', 'maidenheads', 'take it in sense', 'stand', 'piece of flesh', 'fish', 'tool' and 'naked weapon'. See Partridge, and E. A. M. Coleman, *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare*, 1974, for comment on these and other sexual puns.

17 quarrel... men i.e. we have no quarrel with women (Montagues or not).

19 civil Most eds. emend to 'cruel' (Q4), explaining 'civil' as a minim misprint (NS), but 'civil' may here be intended ironically, the

paradoxical civility proper to Sampson in his role as 'tyrant' (Dowden).

24 They... it i.e. those that feel it (sexual intercourse) must experience it as physical sensation; perhaps with play on 'incense' = set on fire.

27 fish With play on 'woman' or 'prostitute' (slang).

28 poor-John salted hake; cheap, lenten fare suggestive of sexual passivity, popularly associated with women ('weaker vessels', 'fish').

28 comes of the house A partitive genitive (OED Of prep. XIII 45); Williams compares *Ham.* 3.2.40-1 ('there be of them that will themselves laugh') and Num. 13.21, 24 (G; 13.20, 23 KJ). Until recently most eds., since Malone, have inserted Q1 'two' after 'comes', an easier reading. Ulrici suggests that the Q2 reading expresses contempt.

28 SD The identity of the second servingman is not known; Rowe suggested Balthasar, Romeo's servant, and has been followed by many eds.

SAMPSON Fear me not.

GREGORY No, marry, I fear thee!

SAMPSON Let us take the law of our sides, let them begin.

GREGORY I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.

SAMPSON Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them, which is  
disgrace to them if they bear it. 35

ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON I do bite my thumb, sir.

ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

SAMPSON [*Aside to Gregory*] Is the law of our side if I say ay? 40

GREGORY [*Aside to Sampson*] No.

SAMPSON No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my  
thumb, sir.

GREGORY Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM Quarrel, sir? No, sir. 45

SAMPSON But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as  
you.

ABRAM No better.

SAMPSON Well, sir. END

*Enter BENVOLIO.*

~~GREGORY [*Aside to Sampson*] Say 'better', here comes one of my  
master's kinsmen. 50~~

~~SAMPSON Yes, better, sir.~~

~~ABRAM You lie.~~

~~SAMPSON Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy washing blow.~~

*They fight.*

32 thee!] Q5; thee. Q2-4, F; thee, Q1 36 disgrace] Q2, Q1; a disgrace Q3-4, F 37 SH ABRAM] Q2-4, F; 1 Moun: Q1  
39 SH ABRAM] Q2-4, F; 2 Moun: Q1 (reading, I but i'st at vs?) 40 SD] Capell; no SD, Q2-4, F, Q1 41 SD] Capell; no  
SD, Q2-4, F, Q1 44-9 ] not in Q1 45 sir?] F; sir, Q2-4 46 But if] Q2-4; If F 48 better.] Q2-4; better? F  
50 SD] Capell; no SD, Q2-4, F, Q1 52-71 ] not in Q1, which substitutes a SD: They draw, to them enters Tybalt, they  
fight, to them the Prince, old Mountague, and his wife, old Capulet and his wife, and other Citizens and part them.  
52 sir] Q2-4; not in F 54 washing] Q2-3, F; swashing Q4, Pope

31 Fear me not i.e. don't worry about my support (backing). Gregory (32) pretends to take the words literally: 'Don't be afraid of me.'

32 marry indeed. (Weakened form of an oath using the name of the Virgin Mary.)

33 law of our sides Compare Porter, *Two Angry Women* (1598; MSR, 1877-8).

34 list wish, please.

35 bite...at A provocative, probably obscene gesture. Cotgrave (1611, sig. 3K1): 'faire la nique...to threaten or defie, by putting the thumbe

naile into the mouth, and with a jerke (from the upper teeth) make it to knacke'. There seems to have been some contemporary confusion between this phrase and 'to give the fico (or fig)'; see Cotgrave (sig. 2N3<sup>v</sup>) and Thomas Lodge, *Wits Miserie* (1596, sig. D4): 'Contempt...giving me the Fico with his thombe in his mouth' (*OED Fico* 3).

50 one i.e. Tybalt, who is seen approaching.

54 washing slashing with great force (*OED*, which cites 'washing blow' in Arthur Golding's translation (1567) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* v, 252).