ACT 2, SCENE 4

[A street, noon. **BENVOLIO & MERCUTIO**]

**MERCUTIO**
Where the devil should this Romeo be?
Came he not home last night?

**BENVOLIO**
Not to his father's. I spoke with his man.

**MERCUTIO**
Ah, that same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline,
Torments him so, that he will sure run mad.

**BENVOLIO**
Tybalt, the kinsman of old Capulet,
Hath sent a letter to his father's house.

**MERCUTIO**
A challenge, on my life.
I bet my life it's a challenge to fight

**BENVOLIO**
Romeo will answer it.

**MERCUTIO**
Any man that can write may answer a letter.

**BENVOLIO**
Nay, he will answer the letter's master, Tybalt
how he dares, being dared.

**MERCUTIO**
Alas poor Romeo, he is already dead, stabbed with
a white wench's black eye, shot through the ear with
a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with
the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft. And is he a man
to encounter Tybalt?

**BENVOLIO**
Why, what is Tybalt?

**MERCUTIO**
More than Prince of Cats [I can tell you].

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1. America
2. love
3. day
4. man, master
5. letter's master, Tybalt
6. kinsman, nephew, Romeo's
7. wench's, bull's-eye, cut
8. pin, bull's-eye, cut
9. blind bow-boy's, bull's-eye, cut
10. wand
Excerpt from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 4

O, he's the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing prick-song, keeps time, distance, and proportion. He rests his minim rests, one, two, and the third in your bosom; the very butcher of a silk button; a duelist, a duelist, a gentleman of the very first house of the first and second cause. Ah, the immortal passado! The punto reverso! The hay!—

**BENVOLIO**

2.4.28

The what?

**MERCUTIO**

2.4.29

The pox of such antic, lisping, affecting fantasticoes¹, these new tuners of accents: "By Jesu, a very good blade! A very tall man! A very good whore!" Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, these pardon-me's, who stand so much on the new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench?

O, their bones, their bones!

*Romeo enters*

**BENVOLIO**

2.4.38

[not in 1]

Here comes Romeo, [here comes Romeo]².

**MERCUTIO**

2.4.39

Without his roe, like a dried herring. O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in, Laura to his lady was a kitchen-wench (marry, she had a better love to be-rhyme her), Dido a dowdy, Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings and harlots. Thisbe a grey eye or so, but not to the purpose.—Signor Romeo, bonjour!

¹ fantasticoes: these new tuners of accents

² [not in 1]
Excerpt from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 4

There's a French salutation to your French *slop*.  
You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.48  
Good *morrow* to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.50  
The slip, sir, the slip. Can you not *conceive*?  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.51  
Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was *great*, and  
in such a case as mine a man may *strain* courtesy.  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.54  
That's as much as to say such a case as yours  
constrains a man to *bow in the hams*.  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.56  
Meaning, to curtsy.  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.57  
Thou hast most kindly hit it.  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.58  
A most courteous *exposition*.  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.59  
Nay, I am the *very pink* of courtesy.  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.60  
"Pink" for flower?  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.61  
Right.  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.62  
[Why,] then is my *pump* well *flowered!*  

**MERCUTIO**  
2.4.63  
Sure wit! Follow me this jest now thou hast worn  
out thy *pump*, that when the single sole of it is worn,  
the jest may *remain*, after the wearing, solely singular!  

**ROMEO**  
2.4.67  
O *single-soled jest*, solely singular for the singleness!
Excerpt from Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 4

MERCUTIO

Come between us, good Benvolio. My wits faint. stop us, my wit is tired

ROMEO

Switch and spurs, switch and spurs, or I'll cry a match! bring it on, declare victory

MERCUTIO

Nay, if our² wits run the wild-goose chase, I am done, thy¹
for thou hast more of the wild goose in one of thy wits
than, I am sure, I have in my whole five. Was I with
you there for the goose? goose joke

ROMEO

Thou wast never with me for anything when thou wast
not there for the goose! as a fool

MERCUTIO

I will bite thee by the ear for that jest! on

ROMEO

Nay, good goose, bite not!

MERCUTIO

Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting: it is a most sharp sauce. apple

ROMEO

And is it not [then]² well served into a sweet goose? isn't a sharp sauce served with

MERCUTIO

O, here's a wit of cheveril, that stretches from an
baby goat leather
inch narrow to an ell broad!
forty five inches

ROMEO

I stretch it out for that word "broad", which added
to the goose, proves thee far and wide a broad goose! a big fat goose