

Romeo Meets Juliet

ORIGINAL TEXT

ROMEO

(taking JULIET's hand) If I profane with my unworhiest hand

This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

95 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this,

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO

100 Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

MODERN TEXT

ROMEO

(taking JULIET's hand) Your hand is like a holy place that my hand is unworthy to visit. If you're offended by the touch of my hand, my two lips are standing here like blushing pilgrims, ready to make things better with a kiss.

The first fourteen lines Romeo and Juliet speak together form a sonnet.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you don't give your hand enough credit. By holding my hand you show polite devotion. After all, pilgrims touch the hands of statues of saints. Holding one palm against another is like a kiss.

ROMEO

Don't saints and pilgrims have lips too?

JULIET

Yes, pilgrim—they have lips that they're supposed to pray with.

ROMEO

O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do. They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

105 Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

Kisses her

Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged.

JULIET

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO

Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged!

110 Give me my sin again.

ROMEO

Well then, saint, let lips do what hands do. I'm praying for you to kiss me. Please grant my prayer so my faith doesn't turn to despair.

JULIET

Saints don't move, even when they grant prayers.

ROMEO

Then don't move while I act out my prayer.

He kisses her.

Now my sin has been taken from my lips by yours.

JULIET

Then do my lips now have the sin they took from yours?

ROMEO

Sin from my lips? You encourage crime with your sweetness. Give me my sin back.

ORIGINAL TEXT

JULIET

You kiss by th' book.

NURSE

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

JULIET moves away

ROMEO

What is her mother?

NURSE

Marry, bachelor,

Her mother is the lady of the house,

And a good lady, and a wise and virtuous.

¹¹⁵ I nursed her daughter that you talked withal.

I tell you, he that can lay hold of her

Shall have the chinks.

ROMEO

(aside) Is she a Capulet?

O dear account! My life is my foe's debt.

BENVOLIO

(to ROMEO) Away, begone. The sport is at the best.

ROMEO

¹²⁰ Ay, so I fear. The more is my unrest.

CAPULET

Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone.

We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.—

Is it e'en so? Why, then, I thank you all.

I thank you, honest gentlemen. Good night.—

¹²⁵ More torches here!—Come on then, let's to bed.

Ah, sirrah, by my fay, it waxes late.

I'll to my rest.

All but JULIET and NURSE move to exit

MODERN TEXT

JULIET

You kiss like you've studied how.

NURSE

Madam, your mother wants to talk to you.

JULIET moves away

ROMEO

Who is her mother?

NURSE

Indeed, young man, her mother is the lady of the

house. She is a good, wise, and virtuous lady. I

nursed her daughter, whom you were just talking

to. Let me tell you, the man who marries her will

become very wealthy.

ROMEO

(to himself) Is she a Capulet? Oh, this is a heavy

price to pay! My life is in the hands of my enemy.

BENVOLIO

(to ROMEO) Come on, let's go. Right when things are the most fun is the best time to leave.

ROMEO

Yes, but I'm afraid I'm in more trouble than ever.

CAPULET

No gentlemen, don't get ready to go now. We have

a little dessert coming up. *(they whisper in his ear)*

Is that really true? Well, then, I thank you both. I

thank you, honest gentlemen. Good night. Bring

more torches over here! Come on, let's all get to

bed. *(to his COUSIN)* Ah, my man, I swear, it's

getting late. I'm going to get some rest.

Everyone except JULIET and NURSE begins to exit.

JULIET

Come hither, Nurse. What is yond gentleman?

NURSE

The son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET

130 What's he that now is going out of door?

NURSE

Marry, that, I think, be young Petruchio.

JULIET

What's he that follows here, that would not dance?

NURSE

I know not.

JULIET

Go ask his name.—If he be married.

135 My grave is like to be my wedding bed.

NURSE

His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of your great enemy.

JULIET

(aside) My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

140 Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathèd enemy.

NURSE

What's this? What's this?

JULIET

A rhyme I learned even now
Of one I danced withal.

One calls within "Juliet!"

NURSE

Anon, anon!
Come, let's away. The strangers all are gone.

Exeunt

JULIET

Come over here, nurse. Who is that gentleman?

NURSE

He is the son and heir of old Tiberio.

JULIET

Who's the one who's going out the door right now?

NURSE

Well, that one, I think, is young Petruchio.

JULIET

Who's the one following over there, the one who wouldn't dance?

NURSE

I don't know his name.

JULIET

Go ask. *(the nurse leaves)* If he's married, I think I'll die rather than marry anyone else.

NURSE

(returning) His name is Romeo. He's a Montague.
He's the only son of your worst enemy.

JULIET

(to herself) The only man I love is the son of the only man I hate! I saw him too early without knowing who he was, and I found out who he was too late! Love is a monster for making me fall in love with my worst enemy.

NURSE

What's this? What's this?

JULIET

Just a rhyme I learned from somebody I danced with at the party.

Somebody calls, "Juliet!" from offstage.

NURSE

Right away, right away. Come, let's go. The strangers are all gone.

They exit.

Enter **CHORUS**

CHORUS

Now old desire doth in his deathbed lie,
And young affection gapes to be his heir.
That fair for which love groaned for and would die

With tender Juliet matched, is now not fair.

5 Now Romeo is beloved and loves again,

Alike bewitchèd by the charm of looks,
But to his foe supposed he must complain,
And she steal love's sweet bait from fearful
hooks.

Being held a foe, he may not have access

10 To breathe such vows as lovers use to swear.

And she as much in love, her means much less

To meet her new beloved anywhere.

But passion lends them power, time means, to
meet,

Tempering extremities with extreme sweet.

Exit

*The **CHORUS** enters.*

CHORUS

Now Romeo's old feelings of desire are dying, and a new desire is eager to take their place. Romeo groaned for the beautiful Rosaline and said he would die for her, but compared with tender Juliet, Rosaline doesn't seem beautiful now. Now someone loves Romeo, and he's in love again—both of them falling for each others' good looks. But he has to make his speeches of love to a woman who's supposed to be his enemy. And she's been hooked by someone she should fear. Because he's an enemy, Romeo has no chance to see Juliet and say the things a lover normally says. And Juliet's just as much in love as he, but she has even less opportunity to meet her lover. But love gives them power, and time gives them the chance to meet, sweetening the extreme danger with intense pleasure.

*The **CHORUS** exits.*