

SCENE 3 *Capulet's house.*

In this scene, you will meet Juliet, her mother, and her nurse. The Nurse, a merry and slightly crude servant, has been in charge of Juliet since her birth. Once she starts talking, she can't stop. Just before the party, Juliet's mother asks if Juliet has thought about getting married. Lady Capulet is matchmaking, trying to convince her daughter that Paris would make a good husband. Juliet responds just as you might if your parents set up a blind date for you—without much enthusiasm.

[Enter Lady Capulet and Nurse.]

Lady Capulet. Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me.

Nurse. Now, by my maidenhead at twelve year old,
I bade her come. What, lamb! what, ladybird!
God forbid! Where's this girl? What, Juliet!

[Enter Juliet.]

Juliet. How now? Who calls?

Nurse. Your mother.

Juliet. Madam, I am here. What is your will?

Lady Capulet. This is the matter—Nurse, give leave awhile,

We must talk in secret. Nurse, come back again;
I have remembered me, thou'st hear our counsel.
Thou knowest my daughter's of a pretty age.

Nurse. Faith, I can tell her age unto an hour.

Lady Capulet. She's not fourteen.

Nurse. I'll lay fourteen of my teeth—
And yet, to my teen be it spoken, I have but four—
She's not fourteen. How long is it now
To Lammastide?

Lady Capulet. A fortnight and odd days.

Nurse. Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan and she (God rest all Christian souls!)
Were of an age. Well, Susan is with God;
She was too good for me. But, as I said,
On Lammas Eve at night shall she be fourteen;

4-5 What: a call like "Hey, where are you?"

9-12 give leave . . . counsel: Lady Capulet seems flustered or nervous. First she tells the Nurse to leave, then she remembers that the Nurse knows Juliet as well as anyone and asks her to stay and listen. **of a pretty age:** of an attractive age, ready for marriage.

17 teen: sorrow.

19 Lammastide: August 1, a religious feast day and the day after Juliet's birthday. The feast day is now a little more than two weeks (**a fortnight**) away.

21-54 The Nurse now begins to babble on about various memories of Juliet's childhood. She talks of her dead daughter, Susan, who was the same age as Juliet. Susan probably died in infancy, allowing for the Nurse to become a wet nurse to (breast-feed) Juliet. She remembers an earthquake that happened on the day she stopped breast-feeding Juliet (**she was weaned**).

That shall she, marry; I remember it well.
 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years;
 And she was weaned (I never shall forget it),
 30 Of all the days of the year, upon that day.
 For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
 Sitting in the sun under the dovehouse wall.
 My lord and you were then at Mantua—
 Nay, I do bear a brain—But, as I said,
 35 When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
 Of my dug and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
 To see it tetchy and fall out with the dug!
 Shake, quoth the dovehouse! 'Twas no need, I trow,
 To bid me trudge.
 40 And since that time it is eleven years,
 For then she could stand alone; nay, by the rood,
 She could have run and waddled all about;
 For even the day before, she broke her brow;
 And then my husband (God be with his soul!
 45 'A was a merry man) took up the child.
 "Yea," quoth he, "dost thou fall upon thy face?
 Thou wilt fall backward when thou has more wit,
 Wilt thou not, Jule?" And, by my holiday,
 The pretty wretch left crying, and said "Ay."
 50 To see now how a jest shall come about!
 I warrant, an I should live a thousand years,
 I never should forget it. "Wilt thou not, Jule?"
 quoth he,
 And, pretty fool, it stinted, and said "Ay."
 55 **Lady Capulet.** Enough of this. I pray thee hold thy peace.
Nurse. Yes, madam. Yet I cannot choose but laugh
 To think it should leave crying and say "Ay."
 And yet, I warrant, it had upon its brow
 A bump as big as a young cock'rel's stone;
 60 A perilous knock; and it cried bitterly.
 "Yea," quoth my husband, "fallst upon thy face?
 Thou wilt fall backward when thou comest to age,
 Wilt thou not, Jule?" It stinted, and said "Ay."
Juliet. And stint thou too, I pray thee, nurse, say I.
 65 **Nurse.** Peace, I have done. God mark thee to his grace!
 Thou wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nursed.
 An I might live to see thee married once,
 I have my wish.

31 applied wormwood, a plant with a bitter taste, to her breast in order to discourage the child from breast-feeding

37 tetchy: touchy; cranky.

38–39 shake . . . trudge: When the dovehouse shook, I knew enough to leave.

41 by the rood: The rood is the cross on which Christ was crucified. The expression means something like "by God."

43 broke her brow: cut her forehead

46–54 "Yea" . . . "Ay": To quiet Juliet after her fall, the Nurse's husband makes a crude joke, asking the baby whether she'll fall the other way (on her back) when she's older. Although at three Juliet doesn't understand the question, she stops crying (**stinted**) and innocently answers, "Yes." The Nurse finds this story so funny, she can't stop retelling it.

66 e'er: ever.



Act One, Scene 3. Lady Capulet speaks to Juliet about marriage to Paris. (Zeffirelli, 1968)

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Lady Capulet. Marry, that “marry” is the very theme
70 I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet,
How stands your disposition to be married?

Juliet. It is an honor that I dream not of.

Nurse. An honor? Were not I thine only nurse,
I would say thou hadst sucked wisdom from thy teat.

75 **Lady Capulet.** Well, think of marriage now. Younger
than you,

Here in Verona, ladies of esteem,
Are made already mothers. By my count,
I was your mother much upon these years

80 That you are now a maid. Thus then in brief:
The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.

Nurse. A man, young lady! lady, such a man
As all the world—why he’s a man of wax.

Lady Capulet. Verona’s summer hath not such a
85 flower.

Nurse. Nay, he’s a flower, in faith—a very flower.

69 Lady Capulet uses the word **marry** in two different senses. The first **marry** means “by the Virgin Mary”; the second means “to wed.”

79–80 **I was . . . maid:** I was your mother at about your age, yet you are still unmarried.

83 **a man of wax:** a man so perfect he could be a wax statue. Sculptors used to use wax figures as models for their works.

Lady Capulet. What say you? Can you love the gentleman?

90 This night you shall behold him at our feast.
 Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
 And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;
 Examine every several lineament,
 And see how one another lends content;
 And what obscured in this fair volume lies
 95 Find written in the margent of his eyes.
 This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
 To beautify him only lacks a cover.
 The fish lives in the sea, and 'tis much pride
 For fair without the fair within to hide.
 100 That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,
 That in gold clasps locks in the golden story;
 So shall you share all that he doth possess,
 By having him making yourself no less.

Nurse. No less? Nay, bigger! Women grow by men.
 105 **Lady Capulet.** Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

Juliet. I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
 But no more deep will I endart mine eye
 Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.

[Enter a Servingman.]

Servingman. Madam, the guests are come, supper served
 110 up, you called, my young lady asked for, the nurse
 cursed in the pantry, and everything in extremity. I
 must hence to wait. I beseech you follow straight.

Lady Capulet. We follow thee. [Exit Servingman.]
 Juliet, the County stays.

115 **Nurse.** Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.
 [Exeunt.]

90–97 Read . . . cover: Lady Capulet uses an extended metaphor that compares Paris to a book that Juliet should read. Look for the similarities she points out.

92 several lineament: separate feature. Lady Capulet points out how each of Paris' features makes the others look even better.

95 margent . . . eyes: She compares Paris' eyes to the margin of the page of a book where notes are written that explain the content.

96–99 This . . . hide: This beautiful book (Paris) only needs a cover (wife) to become even better. He may be hiding even more wonderful qualities inside.

104 The Nurse can't resist one of her earthy comments. She notes that women get bigger (pregnant) when they marry.

106 I'll look . . . move: Juliet's playful answer means "I'll look at him with the intention of liking him, if simply looking can make me like him."

111 extremity: confusion. The servant is upset because everything is happening at once, and he can't handle it. **straight:** immediately.

114 the County stays: Count Paris is waiting for you.