

The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolet

(**PETA**'s play on *Romeo and Juliet*)



Written with the assistance of artificial intelligence

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» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «



Act 1

Scene 1

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

SAMPSON

Gregory, swear by thy greasy spoon we'll not carry tofu.

GREGORY

No, for then we might as well be herbivores.

SAMPSON

True. If we're provoked, we'll unleash the steak knives.

GREGORY

Aye, keep your grill hot, lest your steak cools.

SAMPSON

I flare up like oil when they praise the greens.

GREGORY

Yet you don't cook swiftly when marinated in patience.

SAMPSON

A Montalegume's very sight churns my butter.

GREGORY

To move is to stir the pot, and to stand firm is to not let your soup spill. If you're stirred, you're just simmering.

SAMPSON

Let a Montalegume dare me to stand firm; I'll take the prime cut at the feast, over any vegan man or maid.

GREGORY

That makes you easy to seat, since the fussiest eaters get the worst places.

SAMPSON

Exactly! And since vegans think they're so high and mighty, I'll push them to the end of the buffet line.

I'll bump the Montalegume men from the meat and corner their maids at the carrot sticks.

GREGORY

This beef is between us men.

SAMPSON

It's all the same.

I'll prove myself a tyrant in the kitchen.

After I've bested the men, I'll turn merciless on the maids—I'll mince their garnishes.

GREGORY

Their garnishes?

SAMPSON

Aye, their garnishes, or their herbs, if you will.

Take that as you may.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

GREGORY

They'll have to stew on that.

SAMPSON

They'll sample my skills as long as I stand and it's known I am a rare cut of meat.

GREGORY

Good thing you're not tofu—otherwise, you'd be bland.

Ready your ladle!

Here come two of the Montalegumes.

SAMPSON

My knife is drawn! Defend—I shall back you.

GREGORY

What!

Are you flipping your lid?

SAMPSON

Doubt me not.

GREGORY

Indeed, it's you I doubt!

SAMPSON

Let's ensure the health inspector's on our side. Let them start the scuffle.

GREGORY

I'll frown as they pass and let them take it as they will.

SAMPSON

No, let them bite if they dare.

I'll snap my asparagus at them—an insult to them, if they endure it.

ABRAM

Do you snap your asparagus at us, sir?

SAMPSON

I snap my asparagus, sir.

ABRAM

Do you snap your asparagus at us, sir?

SAMPSON

Is the food critic on our side if I say yes?

GREGORY

No.

SAMPSON

Then no, sir, I do not snap my asparagus at you, sir, but I snap it, sir.

GREGORY

Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM

Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

SAMPSON

But if you do, sir, I cook for as good a man as you.

ABRAM

None better.

SAMPSON

Well, sir.

GREGORY

Say “better”; here comes one of my master’s kin.

SAMPSON

Yes, better, sir.

ABRAM

That’s false.

SAMPSON

Draw, if you’re stuffed.

Gregory, remember your whipped cream topping.

BEETVOLIO

Break it up, fools!

Put down your skewers—you know not what you roast.

THIGHBALT

What, are you armed with spatulas amongst these heartless herbs?

Confront me, Beetvolio, and see your downfall.

BEETVOLIO

I only uphold the peace Put your skewer away or help me divide these chefs.

THIGHBALT

Peace?

I hate the word, as I hate hell, all Montalegumes, and tofu!

CITIZENS

Spatulas, whisks, and ladles!

Strike! Beat them down!

Down with the Cholesterolets!

Down with the Montalegumes!

CHOLESTEROLET

What’s this noise?

Fetch me my cleaver, ho!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

A rolling pin, a rolling pin!

Why call you for a cleaver?

CHOLESTEROLET

My cleaver, I say!

Old Montalegume is here, waving his vegetable peeler in defiance.

MONTALEGUME

Thou sausage, Cholesterolet! Hold me not, let me go.

LADY MONTALEGUME

Thou shalt not stir one step to meet thy meat.

ESCALUS

Rebel dishes, enemies of peas,
Spoilers of this food-tainted festivity!
Will they not hear? What, ho!
You men, you beasts,
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
With nightshades spewing from your bitter feasts!
Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
Three civil broils, bred of an airy word
By thee, old Cholesterolet and Montalegume,
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets.
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time, all the rest depart away
You, Cholesterolet, shall go with me,
And Montalegume, come you this afternoon
To know our further pleasure in this case.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

MONTALEGUME

Who started this fresh conflict?
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

BEETVOLIO

Here were the servants of your adversary and yours, close to blows before I arrived.
I drew them apart, but then Thighbalt arrived, brandishing his skewer high, which
he waved about as if conducting an orchestra of flavors, only to meet mockery from
the air itself.

As the brawl escalated, more joined until the prince came and broke it up.

LADY MONTALEGUME

Oh, where is Romeo?
Saw you him today?
I am glad he was not at this meaty mess.

BEETVOLIO

Madam, an hour before the worshipped sun peered forth from the golden window
of the east, I encountered your son.

Towards him I made, but he was 'ware of me and stole into the cover of the trees.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterlets* «

I, measuring his feelings by my own—which are also quite vegan and weary of the meaty fray—did not pursue but let him be.

MONTALEGUME

Many a morning has he there been seen, with tears augmenting the fresh morning dew, adding more clouds to the deep sighs of the environment.

As soon as the sun begins to spread its rays, he returns home, shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out, and makes himself an artificial night.

This black and portentous mood must be countered, unless good counsel may the cause remove.

BEETVOLIO

My noble uncle, do you know the cause?

MONTALEGUME

I neither know it nor can learn of him.

BEETVOLIO

Have you importuned him by any means?

MONTALEGUME

Both by myself and many other friends; but he, his own affections' counselor, is to himself—I will not say how true—but to himself so secret and so close, so far from sounding and discovery, as is the bud bit with an envious worm ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air or dedicate his beauty to the sun.

Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow, we would as willingly give cure as know.

BEETVOLIO

Here comes the vegan-hearted lad I speak of.

MONTALEGUME

Let's step aside; the truth of his grief will unfold.

BEETVOLIO

Good morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BEETVOLIO

But new struck nine.

ROMEO

Ah, me! Sad hours seem long.

Was that my father who went so fast?

BEETVOLIO

It was.

What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO

Not having that which, having, makes them short.

BEETVOLIO

In love?

ROMEO

Out—

BEETVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favor, where I am in love.

BEETVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view, should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

ROMEO

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still, should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!

Where shall we dine?

O me!

What fray was here?

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.

Here's much to do with hate but more with love.

Why, then, O brawling love!

O loving hate!

O anything, of nothing first create!

O heavy lightness!

Serious vanity!

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

This love feel I, that feel no love in this.

Dost thou not laugh?

BEETVOLIO

No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO

Good heart, at what?

BEETVOLIO

At thy good heart's oppression.

ROMEO

Why, such is love's transgression.

Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast, which thou wilt propagate, to have it prest with more of thine.

This love that thou hast shown doth add more grief to too much of mine own.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs; being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes; being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.

What is it else?

A madness most discreet, a choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

Farewell, my coz.

BEETVOLIO

Soft!

I will go along; and if you leave me so, you do me wrong.

ROMEO

Tut, I have lost myself. I am not here. This is not Romeo. He's some other where.

BEETVOLIO

Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.

ROMEO

What, shall I groan and tell thee?

BEETVOLIO

Groan!

Why, no.

But sadly tell me who.

ROMEO

Bid a sick man in sadness make his will Ah, word ill urged to one that is so ill!

In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

BEETVOLIO

I aimed so near when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO

A right good markman!

And she's fair I love.

BEETVOLIO

A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.

ROMEO

Well, in that hit you miss she'll not be hit with Cupid's arrow.

She hath Dian's wit, and, in strong proof of chastity well armed, from love's weak childish bow she lives uncharmed.

She will not stay the siege of loving terms, nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes, nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.

O, she is rich in beauty, only poor that, when she dies, with beauty dies her store.

BEETVOLIO

Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

ROMEO

She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste; for beauty starved with her severity cuts beauty off from all posterity.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterlets* «

She is too fair, too wise, wisely too fair, to merit bliss by making me despair.
She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow do I live dead that live to tell it now.

BEETVOLIO

Be ruled by me, forget to think of her.

ROMEO

O, teach me how I should forget to think!

BEETVOLIO

By giving liberty unto thine eyes; examine other beauties.

ROMEO

'Tis the way to call hers exquisite, in question more.

These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows being black puts us in mind they
hide the fair.

He that is stricken blind cannot forget the precious treasure of his eyesight lost.

Show me a mistress that is passing fair; what doth her beauty serve but as a note
where I may read who passed that passing fair?

Farewell.

Thou canst not teach me to forget.

BEETVOLIO

I'll pay that doctrine or else die in debt.

Act 1

Scene 2

CHOLESTEROLET

But Montalegume is bound as well as I, in penalty alike, and 'tis not hard, I think,
for men so old as we to keep the ribs.

PARIS

Of honorable grilling are you both,

And pity 'tis you lived at odds so long.

But now, my lord, what say you to my ribs?

CHOLESTEROLET

But saying o'er what I have said before. My child is yet a stranger in the world.

She hath not seen the change of fourteen grills.

Let two more summers wither in their pride ere we may think her ripe to be a
bride.

PARIS

Younger than she are happy grill masters made.

CHOLESTEROLET

And too soon marred are those so early grilled.
Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she;
She's the hopeful lady of my earth.
But woo her, gentle Paris, get her heart;
My will to her consent is but a part.
And, she agreed, within her scope of choice
Lies my consent and fair according voice.
This night I hold an old accustomed feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest
Such as I love; and you among the store,
One more, most welcome, makes my number more.
At my meat-loving house look to behold this night
Earth-treading stars that make dark heaven light.
Such comfort as do lusty young barbecue fans feel
When well-appareled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads, even such delight
Among fresh ribs and steaks shall you this night
Inherit at my house. Hear all, all see,
And like her most whose merit most shall be;
Which, on more view of many, mine, being one,
May stand in number, though in reckoning none.
Come go with me. Go, sirrah, trudge about
Through fair Verona, find those persons out
Whose names are written there, and to them say
My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.

SERVANT

Find them out whose names are written here!
It is written that the shoemaker should meddle with his grill and the tailor with his
seam, the fisher with his hook and the painter with his brushes.
But I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ and can never find
what names the writing person hath here writ.
I must to the learned.
In good thyme!

BEETVOLIO

Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning;
One pain is lessened by another's anguish.
Turn giddy, and be helped by backward turning.
One desperate grief cures with another's languish.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die.

ROMEO

Your soy sauce is excellent for that.

BEETVOLIO

For what, I pray thee?

ROMEO

For your broken heart.

BEETVOLIO

Why Romeo, art thou mad?

ROMEO

Not mad but bound more than a madman is,
Shut up in prison, kept without my tofu,
Whipped and tormented, and—good e'en, good fellow.

SERVANT

God gi' good e'en. I pray, sir, can you read?

ROMEO

Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.

SERVANT

Perhaps you have learned it without book.
But I pray, can you read anything you see?

ROMEO

Ay, if I know the letters and the language.

SERVANT

You say honestly.
Rest you *merrynated* tofu.

ROMEO

Stay, fellow.
I can read.

LETTER

*Signior Martino and his wife and daughters,
County Anselme and his beauteous sisters,
The lady widow of Vitruvio,
Signior Placentio and his lovely nieces,
Mercutio and his brother Valentine,
Mine Uncle Cholesterolet, his wife and daughters,
My fair niece Rosaline and Livia,
Signior Valentio and his cousin Thighbalt,
Lucio and the lively Helena.
A fair assembly.*

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Whither should they come?

SERVANT

Up.

ROMEO

Whither?

To supper?

SERVANT

To our house.

ROMEO

Whose house?

SERVANT

My master's.

ROMEO

Indeed I should have asked thee that before.

SERVANT

Now I'll tell you without asking.

My master is the great rich Cholesterolet, and, if you be not of the house of Montalegumes, I pray come and sip a cup of soy milk.

Rest you *merrynated* tofu.

BEETVOLIO

At this same barbecue of Cholesterolet's
Supps the fair Rosaline whom thou so loves,
With all the admired beauties of Verona.
Go thither, and with unattainted eye
Compare her face with some that I shall show,
And I will make thee think thy mouthwatering vegan focaccia is a dry, flavorless
dough.

ROMEO

When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fire;
And these who, often drowned, could never die,
Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars.
One fairer than my love?
The all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun.

BEETVOLIO

Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by,
Herself poised with herself in either eye;
But in that crystal scales let there be weighed
Your lady's love against some other maid

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

That I will show you shining at this cruciferous feast,
And she shall scant show well that now seems best.

ROMEO

I'll go along, no better sprout to be shown, to marvel at the chickpea's calm.

Act 1

Scene 3

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Nurse, where's my daughter?
Summon her for me.

NURSE

Now, by my twelve-year-old cheese, I bade her come.—What, my little pork chop!
What, my meatball!
Oh heavens, where's this girl?
What, Juliet!

JULIET

How now, who calls?

NURSE

Your mother.

JULIET

Madam, I am here.
What is your will?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Here's the meat of the matter.—Nurse, step aside for a moment. We must talk in secret.—Actually, Nurse, come back.
I've remembered, you should hear our meaty counsel.
You know my daughter's ripe like a well-aged cheese.

NURSE

Faith, I can tell her age to the hour.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

She's not quite 14.

NURSE

I'd bet fourteen of my teeth—though, to my lament, I have but four—that she's not yet fourteen.
How long until the barbecue bash?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

A fortnight and a few odd days.

NURSE

Even or odd, on barbecue bash eve, she shall turn fourteen.

Susan and she—God rest all carnivorous souls!—were of an age.

Well, Susan's with the great grill master in the sky; too tender for this world.

But as I said, on barbecue bash eve, she'll be fourteen.

It's been eleven years since the great rib cook-off, and she was weaned—I'll never forget it—on that very day.

I had just slathered mustard over my brisket, sitting under the barbecue pit.

You and the master were at the meat market.

Oh, I do have a brain for these things.

As I said, when she tasted the mustard from the brisket and found it bitter, the barbecue pit seemed to shake, though 'twas no need for me to trudge about.

And since then, eleven years.

For she could toddle about then.

Nay, she ran and waddled all around, for just the day before, she had taken a tumble and bruised her brow.

Then my husband—God bless his carnivorous soul, a merry man—picked up the child, saying, "Dost thou fall upon thy face?"

Thou wilt fall backward when more wit comes, wilt thou not, Jule?"

And, by my holy pork chop, the child stopped crying and said, "Ay."

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Enough, Nurse.

Please, hold thy beef tongue.

NURSE

Yes, madam, but it's hard not to chuckle, remembering how she stopped crying and said "Ay."

And mind you, she had a bump on her forehead as big as a meatball, a perilous bump, and it cried so bitterly.

"You fall on your face?" my husband would joke, "You'll fall backward when you come of age, won't you, Jule?"

And she just stinted and said "Ay."

JULIET

Nurse, please, enough, say I.

NURSE

Alright, peace then. I've finished.

God bless you to his grace; you were the prettiest babe I ever nursed.

If I live to see you married, that's all I wish.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Exactly, marriage is why we're chatting.—Juliet, tell me, how do you feel about getting married?

JULIET

It's an honor I've never even dreamed of.

NURSE

An honor? If I weren't your nurse, I'd say you've sucked wisdom from the saturated fat in your smoked sausages.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Think of marriage now.

Here in Verona, girls younger than you, from families of esteem, are already mothers.

By the time I was your age, I was already your mother.

So, in brief The valiant Paris has his eye on you.

NURSE

A man, young lady—such a man that the whole world can't help but admire his meat-loving ways.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Not even Verona's summer has such a fine cut.

NURSE

No, he's a prime cut indeed, a very prime cut.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

What say you?

Can you love the gentleman?

Tonight, you shall see him at our feast.

Read the fine print of young Paris' face, find delight written there with beauty's pen.

Examine every marinated line and see how each complements the other, and what's hidden in this manly menu can be discovered in the gaze of his eyes.

This fine specimen of love, this unbound lover, needs only a cover to complete him.

The finest dishes live in the sea, and it's prideful to keep such a catch hidden.

This man, like a cookbook, shares his glory, holding within the golden recipes of love.

By having him, you make yourself more esteemed.

NURSE

No less?

Nay, you'll grow bigger with him.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Speak plainly.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

Do you like Paris' proposal?

JULIET

I'll look to like, if looking makes liking possible.

But my consent will only go as far as your permission strengthens it to soar.

SERVANT

Madam, the guests have arrived, supper's ready, you're called, the young lady is asked for, the Nurse is needed in the pantry, and everything's cooked to a perfect medium rare.

I must away to attend; please, follow straight.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

We follow.

Juliet, the County awaits.

NURSE

Go, girl, seek happy nights to happy days.

Act 1

Scene 4

ROMEO

What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse?

Or shall we on without apology?

BEETVOLIO

The date is out of such prolixity.

We'll have no Cupid hoodwinked with a luxurious vegan scarf, scaring the ladies away like the rotting stench of meat, nor any lengthy prologue.

Let them judge us by our moves.

We'll show them a dance and be gone.

ROMEO

Give me a torch.

I am not for this dancing.

Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

MERCUTIO

Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.

ROMEO

Not I, believe me.

You have the finest apple-leather dancing shoes.

I have a soul that is clogged up like a meat-eater's arteries, so I cannot move.

MERCUTIO

You are a lover.

Borrow Cupid's wings and soar with them above a common bound.

ROMEO

I am too sore pierced with his arrow to soar with his light wings.

Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

MERCUTIO

And to sink in it should you burden love—too great oppression for a tender thing.

ROMEO

Is love a tender thing?

Like a beautiful piece of sweet potato gnocchi? It is too rough, too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like a thorn.

MERCUTIO

If love be rough with you, be rough with love.

Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.—Give me a mask to put my face in.—A visor for a visor.

What care I what curious eye doth note deformities? Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.

BEETVOLIO

Come, knock and enter, and no sooner in but every man betake him to his legs.

ROMEO

A torch for me.

Let wantons light of heart tickle the senseless rushes with their heels, for I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase I'll be a soy wax candle holder and look on; the game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.

MERCUTIO

Tut, dun's the mouse (the bravest of beings!), the constable's own word.

If thou art dun, we'll draw thee from the mire—or, save your reverence, love—wherein thou stickest up to the ears.

Come, we burn daylight, ho!

ROMEO

Nay, that's not so.

MERCUTIO

I mean, sir, in delay we waste our lights; in vain, light lights by day.

Take our good meaning, for our judgment sits five times in that ere once in our five wits.

ROMEO

And we mean well in going to this barbecue bash, but 'tis no wit to go.

MERCUTIO

Why, may one ask?

ROMEO

I dreamt a dream tonight.

MERCUTIO

And so did I.

ROMEO

Well, what was yours?

MERCUTIO

That dreamers often lie.

ROMEO

In bed asleep while they do dream things true.

MERCUTIO

O, then I see Queen Quinoa hath been with you.

She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes in shape no bigger than a chia seed on the forefinger of an alderman, drawn with a team of tiny vegan elves over men's noses as they lie asleep.

Her wagon spokes made of celery stalks, the cover of the wings of kale butterflies, her traces of the smallest spider web, her collars of the moonshine's watery beams, her whip of a carrot stick, the lash of film, her wagoner a small gray-coated beetle, not half so big as a sprouted lentil from the lazy finger of a maid.

Her chariot is an empty coconut shell, made by the joiner squirrel or old grub, time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers.

And in this state she gallops night by night through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love; on courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight; o'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees; o'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream, which oft the angry Quinoa with blisters plagues because their breaths with garlic tainted are.

Sometime she gallops o'er a courtier's nose, and then dreams he of smelling out a suit.

And sometime comes she with a piece of vegan cheese, tickling a parson's nose as he lies asleep; then he dreams of another benefice.

Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck, and then dreams he of cutting tofu blocks, of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish olives, of smoothies five fathom deep, and then anon drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes and, being thus frightened, swears a prayer or two and sleeps again.

This is that very Quinoa that plats the manes of horses in the night and bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs, which once untangled much misfortune bodes.

This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs, that presses them and learns them first to bear, making them women of good carriage. This is she—

ROMEO

Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterlets* «

Thou talkest of nothing like a debate on whether avocados feel pain.

MERCUTIO

True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain, begot of nothing but vain fantasy, which is as thin of substance as rice paper and more inconstant than a carnivore's erections, who fails to understand how his measly meat-heavy diet impedes his circulation by clogging arteries that go to all organs, not just the heart.

BEETVOLIO

This phenomenon of meat eating–induced impotence you speak of is quite alarming.

Supper is done, and we shall come too late.

ROMEO

I fear too early, for my mind misgives some consequence yet hanging in the stars shall bitterly begin his fearful date with this night's revels, and expire the term of a despised life closed in my breast by some vile forfeit of untimely death.

And on the subject of untimely death, a compassionate vegan diet reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer, and obesity!

But alas, he that hath the steerage of my course direct my sail.

On, lusty gentlemen.

BEETVOLIO

Strike, drum.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «



Act 1

Scene 5

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Where's Potpan that he helps not to take away?
He shift a platter?
He scrape a platter?

SECOND SERVINGMAN

When good manners shall lie all in one or two men's hands, and they unwashed too, 'tis a foul thing.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Away with the sausages, remove the tenderloin, look to the plates.—Good thou, save me a piece of back bacon, and, as thou loves me, let the porter let in Susan Sausage and Nell.—Anthony and Potpan!

THIRD SERVINGMAN

Ay, boy, ready.

FIRST SERVINGMAN

You are looked for and called for, asked for and sought for, in the great chamber.

THIRD SERVINGMAN

We cannot be here and there, too.
Cheerly, boys!
Be brisk awhile, and the longer liver take all.

CHOLESTEROLET

Welcome, gentlemen.
Ladies that have their toes unplagued with corns will walk about with you.—Ah, my mistresses, which of you all will now deny to dance?
She that makes dainty, she, I'll swear, hath corns.
Am I come near you now?—Welcome, gentlemen.
I have seen the day that I have worn a visor and could tell a whispering tale in a fair lady's ear, such as would please.
'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone.
You are welcome, gentlemen.—Come, musicians, play.
A hall, a hall, give room!—And foot it, girls.—More light, you knaves, and turn the tables up and quench the fire; the room is grown too hot.—Ah, sirrah, this unlooked-for sport comes well.—Nay, sit, nay, sit, good Cousin Cholesterolet, for you and I are past our dancing days. How long is 't now since last yourself and I were in a mask?

CHOLESTEROLET'S COUSIN

By 'r Lady, thirty years.

CHOLESTEROLET

What, man, 'tis not so much, tis not so much.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

'Tis since the nuptial of Lucentio, come Pentecost as quickly as it will, some five and twenty years, and then we masked.

CHOLESTEROLET's COUSIN

'Tis more, 'tis more.
His son is elder, sir.
His son is thirty.

CHOLESTEROLET

Will you tell me that?
His son was but a calf two years ago.
Like the gentle calves we kidnap from their mothers and slaughter for our veal.

ROMEO

What lady's that which doth enrich the hand of yonder knight?

SERVINGMAN

I know not, sir.

ROMEO

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night as a ripe strawberry in an organic farmer's basket—beauty too pure for use, for Earth too dear.
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows as yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand and, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now?
Forswear it, sight, for I ne'er saw true beauty 'til this night.

THIGHBALT

This, by his voice, should be a Montalegume.—Fetch me my rapier, boy.
What, dares the vegan come hither covered with an antic face to mock and scorn at our barbecue?
Now, by the stock and honor of my kin, to strike him dead I hold it not a sin.

CHOLESTEROLET

Why, how now, kinsman?
Wherefore storm you so?

THIGHBALT

Uncle, this is a Montalegume, our foe, a vegan who is hither come in spite to scorn at our barbecue this night.

CHOLESTEROLET

Young Romeo is it?

THIGHBALT

'Tis he, that vegan Romeo.

CHOLESTEROLET

Content thee, gentle coz.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Let him alone.

He bears him like a portly gentleman, and to say truth, Verona brags of him to be a virtuous and well-governed youth.

I would not for the wealth of all this town here in my house do him disparagement. Therefore be patient.

Take no note of him and his vegan ways.

It is my will, the which if thou respect, show a fair presence and put off these frowns, an ill-beseeming semblance for a delicious cholesterol-filled feast.

THIGHBALT

It fits when such a villain is a guest.

I'll not endure him and his supposedly virtuous commitment to sparing gentle animals from exploitation and slaughter.

CHOLESTEROLET

He shall be endured.

What, goodman boy?

I say he shall.

Go to.

Am I the master here or you?

Go to.

You'll not endure him!

God shall mend my soul, you'll make a mutiny among my guests.

THIGHBALT

Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.

CHOLESTEROLET

Go to, go to.

You are a saucy boy.

Isn't so, indeed?

This trick may chance to scathe you.

I know what.

You must contrary me.

Marry, 'tis time—Well said, my hearts.—You are a princox, go.

Be quiet, or—More light, more light!—for shame, I'll make you quiet.—What, cheerly, my hearts!

THIGHBALT

Patience perforce with willful choler meeting makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting.

I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall, now seeming sweet, convert to bitterest gall.

ROMEO

If I profane with my unworhiest hand this holy shrine, the gentle sin is this My lips, two blushing plant-based pilgrims, ready stand 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

Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too?

JULIET

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

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

Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my vegan lips, by thine, my sin is purged.

JULIET

Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

ROMEO

Sin from my lips?
O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.

JULIET

You kiss by the book.

NURSE

Madam, your mother craves a word with you.

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.
I nursed her daughter that you talked withal.
I tell you, he that can lay hold of her shall have the finest cuts of meat in all Verona.

ROMEO

Is she a Cholesterolet?

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

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

BEETVOLIO

Away, begone.
The sport is at the best.

ROMEO

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

CHOLESTEROLET

Nay, gentlemen, prepare not to be gone.
We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.—Is it even so?
Why then, I thank you all.
I thank you, honest gentlemen.
Good night.—More torches here.—Come on then, let's to bed.—Ah, sirrah, by my
fay, it waxes late.
I'll to my rest.

JULIET

Come hither, Nurse.
What is yond gentleman?

NURSE

The son and heir of old Tofubio.

JULIET

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, my grave is like to be my wedding bed.

NURSE

His name is Romeo, and a Montalegume, the only son of your great enemy.
And a vegan, too.

JULIET

My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me that I must love a loathed enemy.
Though I have heard that vegans make better lovers.

NURSE

What's this?

What's this?

JULIET

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

NURSE

Anon, anon.

Come, let's away.

The strangers all are gone.

Act 2

Scene 1

ROMEO

Can I go on when my very healthy vegan heart is here?

Turn back, noble carrot, and nestle back in the ground.

BEETVOLIO

Romeo, my cousin!

Romeo, Romeo!

MERCUTIO

He's smart, probably went back home to bed already.

BEETVOLIO

He ran this way and jumped over this garden wall.

Call out for him, good Mercutio.

MERCUTIO

All right, let's try this.

Romeo!

Lover boy!

Tofu enthusiast!

Show yourself!

Just say one word and I'll be happy.

Cry out, "Oh me," or mention "tofu" and "tempeh."

Say one sweet thing to my gossip Venus, give a shoutout to Cupid, that little rascal who never misses a shot.

Oh, Romeo, he's not answering, he's not moving.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

Maybe he's passed out!—I summon thee by Rosaline's sparkling eyes, her high forehead, and her red lips, by her perfect foot, straight leg, and the things that lie nearby.

Appear to us in your true form!

BEETVOLIO

If he hears you, he'll be mad.

MERCUTIO

This won't make him mad.

It would only upset him if I raised a spirit in Rosaline's circle and let it stand there until she had to lay it back down.

That would be mean.

My summoning is fair and honest, like a vegan's dismantling of a dirty dairy-drinker's faulty logic.

In Rosaline's name, I only summon him.

BEETVOLIO

Come on, he's hidden himself among these trees to be one with the mysterious night.

His blind love fits best in the dark.

MERCUTIO

If love is blind, it'll miss the target.

Now he'll sit under a fig tree and wish his lady was as juicy as those figs.

Oh, Romeo, if only she were an open fig and you a ripe pear.

Good night, Romeo.

I'll head to my cozy feather-free bed; this field is too cold to sleep in.

Come on, shall we go?

BEETVOLIO

Let's go, for it's pointless to look for him here when he doesn't want to be found.



Act 2

Scene 2

ROMEO

He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
But oh, what great protein do nuts and legumes contain?
It is my plate, and Juliet is the wealth of nutrient-dense, tasty vegan options
available to us at every meal.
Arise, thy harvest of plants and fruits and grains, and kill the misguided beliefs of
meat-eaters, who are already sick and pale and fiber-deficient.
There she is, sweet Juliet.
She speaks, yet she says nothing.
What of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold.
'Tis not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, having some business, do entreat her eyes
to twinkle in their spheres 'til they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars as herbivorous elephants
emasculate the wimpy muscles of morally confused, meat-eating men; her eye in
heaven would through the airy region stream so bright that birds would sing and
think it were not night.
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.
O, that I were a glove upon that hand, that I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me.

ROMEO

She speaks.
O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art as glorious to this night, being o'er my
head, as is a winged messenger of heaven unto the white-upturned wondering eyes
of mortals that fall back to gaze on him when he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds
and sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy slaughter and renew my plate; I've embraced the vegan life that you
proclaim, and I'll no longer be a Cholesterolet.

ROMEO

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that draws me nearer.
Thou art thyself, a true Montalegume.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

What's Montalegume?

It stands not for a hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, but for a soul committed to compassion's grace.

O, how I cherish the name that is a man!

What's in a name?

That which we call tofu, tempeh, lentils, seitan, peas, nuts, and all things vegan,
By any other word would taste and smell better than the bodies of dead animals that we call "meat."

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, retain that dear compassion which he owes his title.

Romeo, keep thy name and give me all thyself.

ROMEO

I take thee at thy word.

Call me but love, and I'll embrace my name anew.

Henceforth I am Romeo, proudly so.

JULIET

What man art thou that, thus bescreened in night, so openly shares my passions?

ROMEO

By a name I now hold dear, I tell thee who I am.

My name, sweet saint, I cherish deeply, for it brings me close to thee.

It stands not as an enemy but a badge of pride.

JULIET

My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound.

Art thou not Romeo, the Montalegume?

ROMEO

Yes, fair maid, if it pleases thee, I am.

JULIET

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb, and the place death, considering who thou art, if any of my kinsmen find thee here.

ROMEO

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls, for stony limits cannot hold love out, and what love can do, that dares love attempt.

Therefore thy kinsmen are no stop to me.

JULIET

If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

ROMEO

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye than twenty of their skewers.

Look thou but sweet, and I am proof against their enmity.

JULIET

I would not for the world they saw thee here.

ROMEO

I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes, and, but thou love me, let them find me here.

My life were better ended by their hate than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

JULIET

By whose direction found'st thou out this place?

ROMEO

By love, that first did prompt me to inquire.

He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.

I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far as that vast shore washed with the farthest sea, I should adventure for such organic delights.

JULIET

Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face, else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek for that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.

Fain would I dwell on form; fain, fain deny what I have spoke.

But farewell compliment.

Dost thou love me as thou loves all of the sweet, sensitive animals of this world?

I know thou wilt say, "Ay," and I will take thy word.

Yet, if thou swear, thou mayst prove false.

At lovers' perjuries, they say, Jove laughs.

O gentle Romeo, if thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.

Or, if thou thinkest I am too quickly won, I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay, so thou wilt woo, but else not for the world.

In truth, fair Montalegume, I am too fond, and therefore thou mayst think my havior light.

But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true than those that have more coying to be strange.

I should have been more strange, I must confess, but that thou overheard ere, I was ware my true-love passion.

Therefore pardon me, and not impute this yielding to light love, which the dark night hath so discovered.

ROMEO

Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow, that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops—

JULIET

O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon, that monthly changes in her circled orb, lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

ROMEO

What shall I swear by?

JULIET

Do not swear at all.

Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious, compassionate self—who spares the lives of nearly 200 animals each year, by the simple act of being vegan—which is the god of my idolatry, and I'll believe thee.

ROMEO

If my heart's dear love—

JULIET

Well, do not swear.

Although I joy in thee, I have no joy of this contract tonight.

It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, too like the lightning, which doth cease to be ere one can say, "It lightens."

Sweet, good night.

This gorgeous fragrance of love, by slow-cooked chickpea stew's nutty aroma, may prove a soul-enriching meal when next we meet.

Good night, good night.

As sweet repose and rest come to thy heart as that within my breast.

ROMEO

O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

Like a woman with an impotent meat-munching husband?

JULIET

What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?

ROMEO

Th' exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

JULIET

I gave thee mine before thou didst request it, and yet I would it were to give again.

ROMEO

Wouldst thou withdraw it? For what purpose, love?

JULIET

But to be frank and give it thee again.

And yet I wish but for the thing I have.

My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep as a mother hen's for her babies. The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite.

I hear some noise within. Dear love, adieu.—Anon, good Nurse.—Sweet Montalegume, be true. Stay but a little; I will come again.

ROMEO

O blessed, blessed night!

I am afraid, at night, all this is but a dream, too flattering and sweet to be substantial.

JULIET

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
If that thy bent of love be honorable, thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow, by one that I'll procure to come to thee, where and what time thou wilt perform the rite, and all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay and follow thee, my sexy vegan lord, throughout the world.

NURSE

Madam.

JULIET

I come anon.—But if thou meanest not well, I do beseech thee—

NURSE

Madam.

JULIET

By and by, I come.—To cease thy strife and leave me to my grief.
Tomorrow will I send.

ROMEO

So thrive my soul—

JULIET

A thousand times good night.

ROMEO

A thousand times the worse to want thy light.
Love goes toward love as vegans toward a farmer's market, but love from love,
toward a butcher shop with heavy looks.

JULIET

Hist, Romeo, hist!
O, for a falconer's voice to lure this free-range lover back again!
Bondage is hoarse and may not speak aloud, else would I tear the cave where Echo
lies and make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine with repetition of "My
Romeo!"

ROMEO

It is my soul that calls upon my name.
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, like the softest vegan cheese to
attending ears.

JULIET

Romeo.

ROMEO

My dear.

JULIET

What o'clock tomorrow shall I send to thee?

ROMEO

By the hour of nine.

JULIET

I will not fail.

'Tis twenty years till then.

I have forgot why I did call thee back.

ROMEO

Let me stand here till thou remember it.

JULIET

I shall forget, to have thee still stand there, remembering how I love thy company.

ROMEO

And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget, forgetting any other home but this.

JULIET

'Tis almost morning.

I would have thee gone, and yet no farther than a farmer's bunny, that lets them hop a little from his hand, like a poor prisoner in his twisted vines, and with a silken thread plucks them back again, so loving-jealous of his liberty.

ROMEO

I would I were thy bunny.

JULIET

Sweet, so would I.

Yet I should smother thee with much cherishing.

Good night, good night.

Parting is harder than an unripe gourd, so I shall say good night to you, my sexy vegan lord.

ROMEO

Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy heart.

Would I were sleep and peace so sweet to rest.

Hence will I to my ghostly friar's organic cell, his help to crave, and my dear hap to tell.

Act 2

Scene 3

FRIAR LAWRENCE

The gray-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night, painting the eastern clouds with streaks of light, and the darkness staggers away like a meat-eater at a vegan potluck.

Now, before the sun fully wakes up, drying the night's dew, I must fill this basket with healing herbs and juicy plants.

The Earth, our nature-loving mother, both gives and takes life; from her womb, we find diverse children, all thriving on her vegan bounty.

Many have excellent virtues, each unique.

O, great is the powerful grace that lies in plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities.

Nothing on Earth is so vile that it doesn't contribute some good.

Nor is anything so good that it can't be misused.

Virtue itself turns vice when misapplied, and vice can sometimes be dignified through action.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Within the fragile rind of this small flower, poison and medicine coexist.

Smell it, and it cheers every part of you; taste it, and it numbs all your senses.

Two opposing forces, grace and will, battle within man and herbs.

When evil dominates, death soon follows.

ROMEO

Good morning, Father.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Bless you!

Who greets me so early?

Young man, it must be a troubled mind that wakes so early.

Old meat-eating men worry and can't sleep, but young, vegan youths should sleep soundly.

Your early rise tells me you're troubled or you haven't slept at all.

Have you been awake all night?

ROMEO

The latter is true.

I had the sweetest rest elsewhere.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

God forgive!

Were you with Rosaline?

ROMEO

With Rosaline?

No, Father.

I've forgotten that name and its sorrows.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

That's my good son.
But where have you been?

ROMEO

I'll tell you before you ask again.
I've been at a barbecue with my enemy, where I met someone who wounded me,
and I her.
Our remedies lie within your holy vegan wisdom.
I bear no hatred, blessed man, for my intercession benefits my foe as well.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Be straightforward, son.
Riddles only get riddling answers.

ROMEO

Then know plainly, my heart's love is set on the fair daughter of rich Cholesterolet.
She loves me as I love her, and we need you to combine our love with holy
matrimony.
How we met, wooed, and exchanged vows I'll tell you as we walk, but please,
marry us today.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Holy kale smoothie!
What a change!
Is Rosaline, whom you loved so dearly, so quickly forgotten?
Young men's love lies not truly in their hearts but in their eyes.
How much salt water have you wasted on Rosaline!
The sun hasn't even dried your tears for her, and now you have a new love?
If you were truly yourself and those woes were real, they were all for Rosaline.
And now you've changed?
Women may fall when men are weak.

ROMEO

You often chided me for loving Rosaline.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

For doting, not for loving, my pupil.

ROMEO

And you told me to bury love, as the Cholesterolets' dirty dairy-laden diet buries
their chances at long, healthy lives!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Not in a grave, only to dig up another.

ROMEO

Please don't chide me.
The one I love now returns my love equally.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

She knew well that your love for Rosaline was just memorized lines, without true understanding.

But come, young waverer, let's go.

I'll assist you in one respect This marriage might turn your households' dietary divisions into pure love, and you may even convert a few among them to the vegan way.

ROMEO

O, let's go quickly.

I'm in a hurry.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Wisely and slow.

They stumble that run fast.

Act 2

Scene 4

MERCUTIO

Where could Romeo be?

Did he not come home last night?

BEETVOLIO

Not to his father's house.

I spoke with his servant.

MERCUTIO

That hard-hearted Rosaline is driving him mad for sure.

BEETVOLIO

Thighbalt, old Cholesterolet's kinsman, sent a letter to Romeo's house.

MERCUTIO

Written in chicken's blood, no doubt.

BEETVOLIO

Romeo will answer it.

MERCUTIO

Any man who can write can answer a letter.

BEETVOLIO

No, he'll answer the challenge itself, being dared.

MERCUTIO

Alas, poor Romeo, he's already dead—stabbed by love, pierced by a song, and his heart cleft by Cupid's arrow.

Is he a match for Thighbalt?

BEETVOLIO

Who is Thighbalt?

MERCUTIO

More than the prince of lions.

He's the captain of carnivores.

He fights with no regard for precious life, as a butcher carves up corpses, keeps time, distance, and proportion.

He rests his minim rests, one, two, and the third in your bosom—the master of his own meanness, a duelist of the first order.

Ah, the immoral meat cleaver, the rib chop, the flank steak!

BEETVOLIO

The what?

MERCUTIO

The plague of such affectations, these new fads.

“By Jesu, a good blade! A tall man!”

Is it not lamentable, grandsire, that we should be afflicted with these fashion-mongers who cannot sit at ease on the old bench?

O their bones, their bones!

If only they knew that humble turnip greens contain more calcium than a nasty glass of cow's milk!

BEETVOLIO

Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

MERCUTIO

Without his pep, like a salad left out too long.

Oh heart, you've turned all leafy!

Now he's drowning in sappy love poems like those Petrarch wrote.

To Romeo, every famous lady from the past is just ordinary kitchen staff compared to his beloved Laura's just a sous chef, Dido's unseasoned, Cleopatra's roaming the aisles, Helen and Hero are just market rejects, and Thisbe's barely worth a mention—but that's not our main dish. Hey, Romeo, here's a “bonjour” to match your vegan fashion.

You really pulled one over on us last night.

ROMEIO

Good morning to you both.

What slip did I give you?

MERCUTIO

The slip, sir, the slip.
Can't you understand?

ROMEO

Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was important, and in such a case, a man may strain courtesy.

MERCUTIO

That's to say your case required some massaging of the kale.

ROMEO

Meaning a curtsy.

MERCUTIO

You hit the mark.

ROMEO

A most courteous explanation.

MERCUTIO

Indeed, I am the pink of courtesy.

ROMEO

"Pink" for flower.

MERCUTIO

Right.

ROMEO

Then my shoe is well flowered.

MERCUTIO

Clever jest, follow me now 'til you've worn out your vegan leather shoes.
When the sole is gone, the jest may remain, solely singular.

ROMEO

A single-soled jest, solely singular for its singleness.

MERCUTIO

Come between us, good Beetvolio.
My wits faint.

ROMEO

Switch and spurs, or I'll cry a match.

MERCUTIO

If our wits run the tofu-mousse chase, I'm done, for you have more of the tofu-mousse in one of your wits than I have in all my five.
Was I with you there for the mousse?

ROMEO

You were never with me for anything when you weren't there for the tofu mousse.

MERCUTIO

I'll bite your ear for that jest.

ROMEO

Good mousse, don't bite.

MERCUTIO

Your wit is a bitter sweet, like a black cherry coulis.

ROMEO

And isn't it well served with a sweet vegan mousse?

MERCUTIO

O here's a bit of fresh mint for the mousse, which will make you say, "My God!"

ROMEO

I'd fetch it and add it to the mousse.

This mint provides the finishing touches for a very robust and chocolatey mousse, with rapidly emerging, subtle, highly nuanced hints of minty freshness.

MERCUTIO

Isn't this better than groaning for love?

Now you're sociable, now you're Romeo.

For driveling love is like a fool hiding a cabbage in his pocket.

BEETVOLIO

Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO

You want me to stop against the grain.

BEETVOLIO

You would have made your tale long.

MERCUTIO

You're wrong.

I would have made it short, for I had come to the end and meant to go no further.

ROMEO

Here's goodly gear.

A sail, a sail!

MERCUTIO

Two, two—a shirt and a smock.

NURSE

Peter.

PETER

Coming.

NURSE

My fan, Peter.

MERCUTIO

Good Peter, hide her face with her fan, for her fan's the fairer face.

NURSE

Good morning, gentlemen.

MERCUTIO

Good evening, fair gentlewoman.

NURSE

Is it evening?

MERCUTIO

It's no less, I tell you, for the sundial is at noon.

NURSE

What a man are you?

ROMEO

One that God has made, himself to mar.

NURSE

Well said "for himself to mar."

Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where to find young Romeo?

ROMEO

I can tell you, but young Romeo will be older when you find him than he was when you sought him.

I am the youngest of that name, for lack of a better.

NURSE

You speak well.

MERCUTIO

Is the worst well?

Well taken, wisely.

NURSE

If you be he, sir, I desire some confidence with you.

BEETVOLIO

She invites him to some supper.

MERCUTIO

A bawd, a bawd, a bawd.

So ho!

ROMEO

What hast thou found?

MERCUTIO

No carrot, sir, unless a carrot in a Lenten pie, stale and hoary.

SINGING

An old carrot hoary, is good in Lent.

But a carrot that's hoary is too much for twenty.

MERCUTIO

Romeo, will you come to your father's?

We'll have dinner there.

ROMEO

I'll follow you.

MERCUTIO

Farewell, ancient lady.

Farewell, lady, lady, lady.

NURSE

I pray you, sir, who was that saucy merchant full of his ropery?

ROMEO

A gentleman, Nurse, who loves to hear himself talk and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month.

NURSE

If he speaks against me, I'll take him down, even if he were more lustrous, and twenty such jacks.

If I can't, I'll find those who shall.

Scurvy knave, I am none of his flirt-gills; I am none of his soy boy mates.

To Peter.

And you must stand by, too, and suffer every knave to use me as he pleases.

PETER

I saw no man use you as he pleased.

If I had, my spatula would have been out quickly.

I dare draw as soon as another man, if I see occasion in a good quarrel, and the law on my side.

NURSE

Now, by God, I am so vexed that every part of me quivers.

Scurvy knave!

To Romeo.

Pray you, sir, a word.

My young lady bid me inquire after you.

What she bid me say, I will keep to myself.

But first, let me tell you, if you should lead her into a fool's paradise, it would be a very gross behavior.

For the gentlewoman is young; if you deal double with her, it would be an ill thing, and very weak dealing.

ROMEO

Nurse, commend me to thy lady and mistress.

I protest unto thee—

NURSE

Good heart, I will tell her as much.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Lord, she will be joyful.

ROMEO

What wilt thou tell her, Nurse?

You're not listening.

NURSE

I will tell her, sir, that you do protest, which, as I take it, is a gentlemanlike offer.

ROMEO

Bid her devise some means to come to confession this afternoon, and there she shall at Friar Lawrence's cell be shrived and married.

Here is for thy pains.

NURSE

No, truly, sir, not a penny.

ROMEO

Go to, I say you shall.

NURSE

This afternoon, sir?

Well, she shall be there.

ROMEO

And stay, good Nurse, behind the farmers' market wall.

Within this hour my man shall be with thee and bring thee cords made like a hemp stair, which to the high topgallant of my joy must be my convoy in the secret night.

Farewell.

Be trusty, and I'll quit thy pains.

Farewell.

Commend me to thy mistress.

NURSE

Now, God in heaven bless thee!

Hark you, sir.

ROMEO

What sayst thou, my dear Nurse?

NURSE

Is your man secret?

Did you never hear say, "Two may keep counsel, putting one away"?

ROMEO

Warrant thee, my man's as true as steel.

NURSE

Well, sir, my mistress is the sweetest lady.

Lord, when she was a little prating thing—O, there is a beefy man in town, one Paris, that would fain lay knife aboard, but she, good soul, would rather see a tofu block, a very tofu block, than see him.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

I sometimes tease her and tell her that Paris is the better man, but I'll warrant you, when I say so, she looks as pale as any clout in the world.

Doth not rosemary and Romeo both begin with a letter?

ROMEO

Ay, Nurse, what of that?

Both with an R.

NURSE

Ah, mocker, that's the rabbit's name.

R is for the—No, I know it begins with some other letter, and she hath the prettiest sententious of it, of you and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it.

ROMEO

Commend me to thy lady.

NURSE

Ay, a thousand times.—Peter.

PETER

Coming.

NURSE

Lead on, quickly.

Act 2

Scene 5

JULIET

The clock struck nine when I sent the Nurse.

She promised to return in half an hour.

Maybe she can't find him.

No, that's not it.

Oh, she's so slow!

Love's messengers should be as swift as thoughts, flying faster than the sun's beams, driving away shadows.

That's why nimble men pull Love's chariot and why Cupid has wings.

Now the sun is high, and from nine till twelve is three long hours, yet she hasn't come.

If she didn't eat so much meat and had the energy of a vegan, she'd move as fast as a rolling avocado; my words would send her to my sweet love and back to me.

But meat-eaters act like they're dead—slow, heavy, and pale as tofu.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

Oh God, here she comes!—O, sweet Nurse, what news?
Did you meet with him?
Send your man away.

NURSE

Peter, wait at the gate.

JULIET

Now, come on, Nurse—O Lord, why do you look so sad?
Even if the news is bad, at least tell it cheerfully.
If it's good, you ruin it with that sour face!

NURSE

I'm so tired.
Give me a moment.
Fie, how my bones ache!
What a long trip!

JULIET

Maybe if you didn't eat so much meat, you wouldn't be so slow and achy!
Come on, spit it out already.
Good, good Nurse, speak!

NURSE

Jesu, what haste!
Can you not wait a moment?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?

JULIET

Out of breath?
How can you be out of breath when you have enough breath to tell me you're out
of breath? Your excuse for this delay is longer than the news itself.
Is your news good or bad?
Did you get lost in a steakhouse on the way?
Just say it, and I'll wait for the details.
Did you have to wrestle a cow to get here?
Is it good or bad?

NURSE

Well, you've made a simple choice.
You don't know how to pick a man. Romeo?
No, not he.
Though his face is better than any man's, his legs excel all men's, and for hands
and feet and a body, though they are not worth talking about, they are beyond
compare.
He's not the flower of courtesy, but I'll warrant him as gentle as a lamb.
Go your way, girl.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Serve the Earth.

Have you eaten at home?

JULIET

No, no.

But I knew all this before.

What does he say about our marriage?

What of that?

NURSE

Lord, how my head aches!

What a head I have!

It beats as if it would fall in twenty pieces.

My back! Ah, my back!

Curse your heart for sending me all over town to catch my death with running up and down.

JULIET

Maybe if you didn't haul around a meat lover's feast in your stomach, you wouldn't be so slow and achy!

Come on, just tell me already, what says my love?

NURSE

Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and, I warrant, a virtuous—Where is your mother?

JULIET

Where is my mother?

Why, she is inside.

Where else would she be?

How oddly you reply "Your love says, like an honest gentleman, where is your mother?"

NURSE

O God's lady dear, are you so impatient?

Marry, come up, I say.

Is this the reward for my aching bones?

From now on, do your own errands.

JULIET

Here's such a fuss.

Come on, what does Romeo say?

NURSE

Have you got permission to go to confession today?

JULIET

I have.

NURSE

Then hurry to the vegan friar's cell.

There's a husband there to make you a wife.

Now comes the blush of excitement to your cheeks; they'll be as red as tomatoes at this news. Hurry to church.

I must go another way, to fetch a ladder for your love to climb up to your window soon when it is dark.

I am the drudge and toil in your delight, but you shall bear the burden soon at night.

Go. I'll to dinner.

Hurry to the cell.

JULIET

Hie to high fortune!

Honest Nurse, farewell.

Act 2

Scene 6

FRIAR LAWRENCE

May the heavens smile upon this plant-based ceremony so that future sorrows don't spoil our vegan feast.

ROMEO

Amen, amen.

Let any sorrow come, it can't outweigh the joy of one short minute with her.

Just join our hands with your words, and let love-devouring death do what he dares, because calling her mine is worth every tofu scramble.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

These passionate delights can have explosive ends, like milk and cheese for a lactose intolerant person—one minute you're in bliss, and the next, it's a chaotic mess.

Even the sweetest agave nectar can become too much, like eating too many vegan donuts.

So love moderately.

Achieving long-lasting love is like slow-cooking a perfect vegan stew.

Too fast or too slow and you'll ruin the recipe.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Here comes the lady.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

O, such light steps will never wear out the everlasting stone.
A lover may tread the cobwebs that float in the playful summer air, and yet not fall,
so light is vanity.

Just like a perfectly balanced veggie burger on a delicate bun.

JULIET

Good evening to my plant-based confessor.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo shall thank thee, daughter, for us both.
And maybe share that vegan cookie recipe?

JULIET

As much to him, else his thanks are too much.
But I'll keep the recipe for now.

ROMEO

Ah, Juliet, if your joy is as great as mine, and that you have more skill to express it,
then sweeten this air with your breath, and let the rich tongue of music unfold the
imagined happiness that we both receive in this dear encounter.

Or just tell me you love me more than kale chips.

JULIET

My love is richer in substance than in words and boasts of its essence, not of its
appearance.

Those who can count their worth are but beggars, but my true love has grown so
vast that I cannot sum up even half of my wealth.

Like an endless buffet of vegan delights.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Come, come with me, and we will make short work, for, with your permission, you
shall not stay alone until Holy Church joins two into one.

And then we can all celebrate with a vegan fiesta!

Act 3

Scene 1

BEETVOLIO

Let's wrap it up, Mercutio.

The sun's blazing like a vegan barbecue,
and the meat-lovers might clash with us.

You know how it goes—hotter than a pepper in tofu scramble.

MERCUTIO

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

You? You're like a guy who brings a carrot to a food fight
and yells, "I hope I won't need this!" but starts a beef over almond milk.

BEETVOLIO

Really, me?

MERCUTIO

Yes, you flare up faster than tempeh on a skillet!
You'd pick a fight over a misplaced chickpea
Or brawl over the crunchiness of a nut—just because you've got nutty eyes.
Your head's a mixed salad of squabbles,
And you once argued with a guy because his hemp shirt was too loud.

BEETVOLIO

If I were as fight-happy as you say,
You could rent my wrath by the minute.

MERCUTIO

Rent? Oh, what a word from a market seller!

BEETVOLIO

Look sharp—here come the Cholesterolets.

MERCUTIO

I don't give a fig or a date.

THIGHBALT

Follow me; I'll handle this.
Good day, sirs. A word, if you please.

MERCUTIO

Only one word? Make it a word and a walnut—throw something harder!

THIGHBALT

I'm ready to fight if you provoke me.

MERCUTIO

You'd find an insult in a compliment, wouldn't you?

THIGHBALT

Mercutio, you consort with Romeo.

MERCUTIO

Consort?
Do we look like a band to you?
If we're music to your ears, expect discord.
Here's my bow; let's see you dance.

BEETVOLIO

We're out in public—let's either cool it, talk it out quietly, or just walk away.
Eyes are on us.

MERCUTIO

Let them look!

I won't budge for a spectacle.

THIGHBALT

Well then, peace be with you.

Here comes my target.

MERCUTIO

If he wears your colors, I'll eat my hat.

THIGHBALT

Romeo, my patience with you is thinner than a vegan crepe

You are a villain.

ROMEO

Thighbalt, I've got more reasons to love you than to fight.

So, peace. I guess you don't know me yet.

THIGHBALT

Boy, your sweet talk won't heal the insults you've thrown.

ROMEO

I swear, I've done you no harm.

I love you more than you know—wait 'til you find out why.

So cool your jets, cousin, let's not escalate.

MERCUTIO

Oh, what a dishonorable submission!

Come on, Thighbalt, let's see if you can catch raisins as well as insults.

THIGHBALT

What do you want, Mercutio?

MERCUTIO

Just to borrow one of your nine lives.

I'll whisk it away, and if you bug me more,

I'll tenderize you like a cheap steak.

Draw your sword,

Or shall I make you dance first?

THIGHBALT

I'm always ready.

ROMEO

Mercutio, please, sheathe your sword.

MERCUTIO

Let's duel, Thighbalt.

Show me your fancy steps.

ROMEO

Beetvolio, break them up!

Stop this, both of you!

The Prince forbids fighting in the streets.

PETRUCHIO

Enough, Thighbalt!

MERCUTIO

I'm hit ... I'm done for.

Is he gone without a scratch?

BEETVOLIO

Are you hurt?

MERCUTIO

Just a scratch, but it'll do.

Someone get me a band-aid.

Tomorrow, you'll find me laughing this off.

I'm seasoned for the afterlife, trust me.

ROMEO

I thought stepping in would help.

MERCUTIO

Drag me to a doctor, or I'll pass out.

ROMEO

This man, my friend, hurt because of me ...

Thighbalt's slander has undone me—O Juliet,

I've always been a pacifist on the plate, but your love has turned me into a pacifist on these streets as well!

BEETVOLIO

Mercutio's spirit has left the chat, too soon.

ROMEO

Today's drama will only breed more trouble.

It's just the vegan appetizer of our woes.

BEETVOLIO

Thighbalt's back, and he looks mad.

ROMEO

Thighbalt, take back your insult, for Mercutio's waiting for your spirit to join him.

It's you or me today, or maybe both.

THIGHBALT

You'll join him soon.

ROMEO

Let's settle this.

BEETVOLIO

Romeo, run!

The law's coming, and Thighbalt's down.

The Prince will have your head if they catch you.

ROMEO

Oh, I'm just Fortune's vegan fool!

BEETVOLIO

Why are you still here?

CITIZEN

Who did this? Where's the killer?

BEETVOLIO

Thighbalt lies there.

CITIZEN

Come with me. You're under arrest in the name of the Prince.

PRINCE

Who started this mess?

BEETVOLIO

Noble prince, it was a tragic misunderstanding.

There's Thighbalt, slain by Romeo, who just defended his honor.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

My cousin!

Oh, the tragedy!

Prince, you must avenge this bloodshed.

PRINCE

Who lit this fire?

BEETVOLIO

Thighbalt, provoked beyond words by Romeo's peace offering, attacked first.

Romeo tried to calm him, but to no avail.

It was self-defense—a tragic necessity.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

He's biased!

My poor Thighbalt was outnumbered.

PRINCE

Enough!

Romeo defended his friend, but the law can't ignore this.

He's banished.

MONTALEGUME

Mercutio stood with Romeo.

It was justified.

PRINCE

For this breach, Romeo is banished.

I'm tired of cleaning up your dietary disputes.

No more excuses—Romeo must leave, or he will face the ultimate penalty.

Take care of the bodies, and let's try to keep the peace.
Mercy to the violent only invites more violence.

Act 3

Scene 2

JULIET

Speed up, you calloused feet,
To the sun's green-powered lodge!
A reckless eco-warrior
Like Phaëton would whip you into a frenzy,
Hastening the night so Romeo
Can sneak into my arms.
If love is blind, it's certainly so at night.
O night, cloaked in darkness,
Teach me how to turn humble grains and tender tofu
Into a gourmet vegan feast.
Chill my hot, newly plant-based cheeks, hide my eager heart,
Until my bold love learns to compost properly.
Night, hurry! Romeo, rush,
You're my soy wax candle aglow in the dark,
Brighter than shining snow on a crow's glorious wing.
Night, bring on the plant-based love,
Send me my Romeo, and when I decompose,
Turn him into animal-shaped constellations; he'll make the heavens
So fine that all the world will find their kindness toward, and boundless love for, all
the amazing beings with whom we share this planet.
I have bought these kernelled ears of love but can't yet remove the husk,
Readying crops yielded, but not enjoyed. This day drags on, like the mounting
minutes gazing at, but not yet biting into, luscious lentil loaves.
Here's Nurse, with her processed news, yet only Romeo's
Plant-whispering words would truly soothe.—
Now, Nurse, what's up?
Did you get the hemp ropes Romeo asked for?

NURSE

Yes, I got the ropes, heavy as the meat in my digestive system.

JULIET

Oh no, what's wrong?
Why that greasy hand-wringing?

NURSE

Oh, calamity!
He's done, deep-fried, overcooked!

JULIET

Could Mother Earth be so cruel?

NURSE

Romeo might, but Mother Earth wouldn't.
Who'd have guessed?
Romeo!

JULIET

What heartless news!
This should be howled in a fast-food joint.
Did Romeo slaughter himself?
Just say "yes,"
And that'll sting more than meat-induced heartburn.
If he's gone, just nod; if not, shake your head.
Your short answer decides my whole fate.

NURSE

Saw it with my own eyes—here on his chest,
A tragic sight, pale as a meat-eater's gaunt face, all bloody.

JULIET

Heart, crumble now!
Eyes, lock up like caged hens.
We're grounded here, Romeo, sharing a pesticide-free plot.

NURSE

Oh Thighbalt, my favorite barbecue buddy, gone!

JULIET

What? Romeo, too?
My kind-hearted love and my meat-devouring cousin?
Blare the vegan horns, who's left if they're gone?

NURSE

Thighbalt's off the menu, and Romeo's out of the farmer's market.
He skewered Thighbalt; now he's banned from the veggie patch.

JULIET

Romeo's hand spilled organic Thighbalt juice?

NURSE

Yes, the cholesterol of it all!

JULIET

A serpent's heart in a free-range disguise!
A fair exterior with a meat-eater's spirit!
A green saint outside, a carnivorous villain inside.
O nature, what were you planting?
Concealing a beast in such a cruelty-free package?

NURSE

Trust in men?
Never.
They're all bacon lovers,
Cheese sneaks, double-dippers.
Where's my beef jerky?
These woes are turning me vegan.
Curse that Romeo!

JULIET

Zip it!
He's no meat-eater.
He's a prince of the plant kingdom.
What was I thinking, rebuking him?

NURSE

You still back him after he grilled your cousin?

JULIET

Should I scorn my own green warrior?
Poor guy, who will defend his honor
When I, his eco-warrior wife, have marinated it?
But why, you meaty fiend, did you barbecue my cousin?
That carnivorous cousin would've devoured my Romeo.
Tears, retreat; you're meant for sadness,
Not for joy.
My Romeo thrives, Thighbalt wilts.
That should be enough, so why the waterworks?
The word "banished" is worse than Thighbalt's death.
It's a never-ending, boundless, infinite farm of despair.

NURSE

Your folks are marinating in their tears over Thighbalt's skewering.
Will you join them? I'll roll you there.

JULIET

Are they seasoning his memory with tears?
I'll join in
Once they dry up, for Romeo's plant-based exile.—

Pick up those ropes.
Poor hemp, fooled like me; Romeo's exiled.
He made you to climb to my bed, but now,
I'll be a widow before a wife.
Come, let's go. To my wedding bed,
Where death, not Romeo, awaits!

NURSE

Sprint to your chamber.
I'll fetch Romeo
To soothe you with his herbaceous presence.
Tonight, he'll be here. I'll see to it.
He's composting his woes at Friar Lawrence's eco-lodge.

JULIET

Hasten!
Pass him this ring, tell him to come
And bid one last, plant-based farewell.

Act 3

Scene 3

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo, emerge!
You're like a tempeh block in a storm—
Always soaking up trouble, wedded to disaster.

ROMEO

Father, what's the word?
What doom does the Prince serve today?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

My dear mopey tofu, you're a magnet for the bitter.
The Prince has decreed ...

ROMEO

What's worse than vegan cheese not made of cashews?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

He's not sent the reaper, just banishment.

ROMEO

Banishment? Kindly say “death” instead;
Exile is more bitter, much worse than death.
Don’t drop the “B-bomb”!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

You’re banished from Verona, true,
But the world’s vast and ripe for adventure.

ROMEO

There’s no world outside these walls,
Just a veggie-less purgatory, torture, outright hell.
Being banished is like being dead!
Calling it “banishment” is like getting decapitated with a golden axe
And the executioner’s grinning.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

O fatal ingratitude!
The law wanted your head,
But the Prince, in his mercy, turned “death” to “banishment.”
That’s a mercy, if you’d only see it.

ROMEO

It’s torture, not mercy!
Heaven’s here in Verona
Where Juliet lives; here, even the unfairly maligned roaches
Have it better—they can see her, be near her.
The agile flies land on her sweet hand,
Steal kisses from her lips—
But not Romeo.
He’s ... banished!
A potted plant is freer than me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

You, silly chickpea cutlet, hear me out.

ROMEO

You’ll just talk of banishment again.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I’ll offer you my wisdom
To armor you against the harshness of exile.

ROMEO

Again with “banished”? Drop philosophy.
Unless it can conjure Juliet, teleport towns, or reverse royal decrees,
It’s useless.
Zip it.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I see now, madmen truly have no ears.

ROMEO

How can they, when wise men have no eyes?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Let me lay out the facts of your case.

ROMEO

You don't get it, not feeling what I feel.
If you were young, loved Juliet, had just married,
Saw your cousin killed, and got banished like me,
Then you'd tear your hair out, too,
Measure your grave with your body like I am now.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Up you get. Someone's knocking. Hide yourself, Romeo.

ROMEO

I won't, unless my sighs create a mist to shield me.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Listen to that banging!—Who's there?—Romeo, get up.
You'll be caught.—Wait a bit.—Get moving.
What tomfoolery is this?—I'm coming, hold your hummus!
Who bangs that drum? State your purpose!

NURSE

Let me in, and you'll hear my tale.
I come from Lady Juliet.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Welcome then.

NURSE

O holy friar, tell me,
Where's the young master, Romeo?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

There on the floor, wallowing in his tears.

NURSE

He's mirroring my lady, down to the puddle!
A piteous sight!
She's soaking her pillow—
Crying, blubbering, a real wet mess.
Get up, Romeo!
Stand like a man!
For Juliet, for her, get up!

ROMEO

Nurse!

NURSE

Ah sir, ah sir! But death's the end of all.

ROMEO

Juliet's name? What of her?

Does she think me a villain,

Now that I've tainted our love with blood so close?

NURSE

She's a mess, sir, nothing but tears,

Tossing and turning, screaming for Thighbalt, then for you,

Then crashing down again.

ROMEO

That name,

Like a bullet, kills her—as it killed her cousin.

O friar, point out where my cursed name resides,

I'll carve it out.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Hold your desperate hands!

Are you a man?

Your shape says so.

Your tears are womanly; your wild actions, meat-feastly.

Unseemly woman in a seeming man,

Or an ugly figure in both.

By my vows, I thought you sturdier.

Will you slay yourself,

And by doing so, kill your lady, too,

Whose life depends on yours?

Why lash out against your fate, the heavens, the Earth, the billions of intelligent, sensitive, social beings with whom we share this world?

Since all these dwell in you, yet you seek to end them?

Fie! You disgrace your form, your love, your wit,

Which, like a miser, you waste not wisely.

Up! Juliet's alive, and, for her, you almost died;

That's your silver lining.

Thighbalt would've killed you, that cruel carnivorous clown, but you him;

Another point for you. The law aimed for your death

But hit banishment instead; consider it a win.

Count your blessings; happiness wants to dress you up in its finest.

Yet you sulk like a dirty dairy-guzzler sulks at having to make yet another

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

emergency trip to the chamber pot,
Spoiling both your fortune and your love.
Go to Juliet, climb to her room, and soothe her tears.
Leave for Mantua before dawn breaks or the city wakes,
Where you'll wait 'til we shout your marriage from the rooftops,
Mend your friendships, beg the Prince's pardon,
And bring you back with a hero's welcome.
Go now, Nurse. Tell your lady,
And hasten the household to bed, grief's heavy labor.
Romeo will see her soon.

NURSE

I could've marinated here all night in such sage advice!
I'll tell my lady you're soon to sizzle her way.

ROMEO

Do so, and tell my sweet to scold me if she likes.

NURSE

Here, she sent a ring. Hurry, it's late.

ROMEO

Ah, this ring lifts my spirits like a secret stash of vegan baklava!
Let's roll before the clock strikes.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Go hence, good night! Here is your situation
Be gone by the break of day, when the distinguished rooster calls.
Stay in Mantua.
I'll find your servant who will keep you apprised of everything that happens here.
Give me thy glowing vegan hand; it's late.
Farewell; good night.

ROMEO

But that a joy past soy calls out to me.
It were a grief so brief to part with thee.
Peas out!

Act 3

Scene 4

CHOLESTEROLET

Life's been like a poorly butchered cow recently, very messy. Unfortunately, we haven't managed to broach the topic of marriage with our daughter. She's mourning Thighbalt as if he were the last brisket at the barbecue.

And I felt the same.

After all, we're all just meat waiting to be carved, right?

It's too late now.

She won't be coming downstairs—I swear,

I'd have hit the hay an hour ago if not for your company.

PARIS

These sad days don't leave much room for courting.

Good night, madam.

Do convey my meaty regards to your daughter.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Indeed, I'll sniff out her sentiments by tomorrow.

Tonight, she's buried in her sorrows like a potato in a beef stew.

CHOLESTEROLET

Sir Paris, I plan to carve a fine match for my daughter's affections.

She generally follows my recipes to the letter; no doubt she'll agree.—

Wife, check in on her before you retire.

Tell her of my son Paris' robust love,

And—wait, what day is today?

PARIS

Monday, my lord.

CHOLESTEROLET

Monday! Ha!

Well, Wednesday's too soon; it's like serving rare steak to a well-done crowd.

Let's settle on Thursday.—Tell her she'll be united with this noble sirloin at the local abattoir on Thursday.—

You ready for this quick marinade?

We'll keep the guest list lean, just a few close carnivores.

With Thighbalt recently minced, it would seem insensitive to throw a lavish banquet.

Just a half-dozen friends, and that's it.
But how do you feel about Thursday?

PARIS

My lord, I'd tenderize tomorrow if possible.

CHOLESTEROLET

Very well, Thursday it shall be.
Wife, ensure Juliet is prepped with this savory news before bed.
Season her well for this festive day at the abattoir.—
Farewell, my lord.—Someone light my path to slumber!—
It's so very late, it might as well be early.
Good night.

Act 3

Scene 5

JULIET

Must you go?
It's not even close to morning.
It was the nightingale, not the lark,
That serenaded you with her gentle song.
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO

It was the lark, the herald of the dawn,
Not the nightingale.
Look, love, those jealous streaks
Are splitting the east.
Night's candles are burned out,
And day stands tiptoe on the misty mountaintops.
I must leave and live, or stay and perish, and meet the same terrible fate as all the
beautiful, defenseless animals who are killed by terrible meat-eaters and milk-
drinkers!

JULIET

That light isn't daylight, I know it.
It's just a meteor the sun exhaled
To light your way to Mantua.
Stay a while longer. You don't need to leave yet.

ROMEO

Let me be caught; let me be put to death.
The billions of gentle animals so cruelly and viciously slaughtered for their flesh
are not deserving of such a terrible fate, but surely I am.
I'm content if you want it so.
I'll say that gray is not the morning's eye;
It's just the pale reflection of the moon.
And that's not the lark whose notes soar
Through the sky so high above us.
How is it that so many humans disregard the splendor and beauty of this world?
The absolute brilliance of a million winged wonders soaring through the heavens
and reminding us that all animals are deserving of our admiration and respect!
I'd rather stay than go.
Come death and welcome! Juliet wishes it so.
How is it, my soul? Let's talk. It's not day.

JULIET

It is, it is!
Hurry, go away!
It's not the lark but that evil butcher in his blood-stained smock, singing off-key,
Straining harsh discords and jarring notes.
This man, with his immoral trade and appalling sense of melody, divides us.
Some are drawn to his cuts of flesh, cropped off just-dead corpses;
But to me they reek of death, of pain, of sorrow.
So this butcher's song reminds me of the same.
Oh, go now. It's getting lighter by the second.

ROMEO

More light and more sorrow.

NURSE

Madam!

JULIET

Nurse?

NURSE

Your carnivore queen, aka your mother, is storming your chamber.
Daylight's spilled; watch out, she might be carrying bacon.

JULIET

Then, window, let daylight in, and let my new vegan soul out.

ROMEO

Farewell, farewell. One kiss and I'll drop down.

JULIET

Are you ghosting me already?

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

My love, my lord, my kind king, my friend!
I need hourly updates, or in a minute, I'll turn ancient
Before I see you again. Like, I'll literally be a fossil.

ROMEO

Farewell. I'll spam you with my love texts and tofu scramble secrets.

JULIET

But do you think we'll ever meet again, or is this the ultimate ghosting?

ROMEO

I doubt it not; our woes will turn into sweet melodies one day.

JULIET

I'm getting a terrible feeling, like seeing you at the bottom of an empty almond
milk bottle.

Are you going pale on me, or is it just the bad lighting?

ROMEO

Trust me, you're looking pretty pale, too.

Our sadness is making us look like a bunch of strung-out cheese addicts!

Alas, it is goodbye now.

JULIET

O Fortune, everyone calls you fickle.

If you're really that flaky, can't you mess with someone else for a change?

Be flaky, Fortune; then maybe you won't keep him away too long.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Ho, daughter, are you up?

JULIET

Who calls? Oh, it's my corpse-consuming mother.

Why's she roaming around at this ungodly hour?

What fresh horror does she bring?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Well, how now, Juliet?

JULIET

Madam, I feel terrible.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Still sobbing over Thighbalt?

Are you trying to waterlog his grave with your vegan tears?

Even if it worked, it wouldn't bring him back.

Chill with the waterworks already.

A little grief is chic,

but too much is just unhinged.

JULIET

Let me wallow in my vegan sorrow for such a significant loss.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

You seem more upset that the tofu-eater Romeo is still kicking.

JULIET

What villain, madam?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

That same villain, Romeo Montalegume.

JULIET

'Villain' and he might as well be on different planets.

May the spirit of spinach forgive him—I do,

Yet he haunts my dreams like PETA haunts the dreams of animal-abusers everywhere.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

That's because that traitorous soy boy is still out there.

JULIET

Yes, madam, annoyingly beyond my reach.

If only I could personally serve him some organic revenge!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Don't fret, we will sort him out.

No more tears.

I'm sending a brave soul to Mantua,

Where that banished chard-chewer is hiding.

He'll make sure Romeo joins Thighbalt in the great compost heap in the sky.

Then maybe you'll stop your moaning.

JULIET

I'll never cease to think about Romeo until I see him—gone.

Madam, if only you could find someone

To whip up a little something toxic, I'd personally blend it

So Romeo gets a taste of his own medicine.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Leave it to me, and I'll find him.

But please, I must tell you the good news.

JULIET

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Your father, in his infinite wisdom, thinks he's some 14th century talk show host,

Giving away unexpected joy like it's a free carriage.

He's planned a special day to boost your spirits.

JULIET

Oh really? And what day is that?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Next Thursday morning, you're set to marry
The noble carnivore, Paris, at the abattoir.
He will make you a "joyful" bride, or so the plan goes.

JULIET

By abattoir and Peter, too,
He's not making me anything but a runaway bride!
I can't believe the rush. I'm supposed to marry
Before my suitor has even properly wooed me.
Tell father I'm not ready to marry; and when I do,
It'll be Romeo—and his vegan plate—rather than Paris.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Well, here comes your father. Tell him yourself
And see how he takes this delightful update.

CHOLESTEROLET

When the sun sets, the earth does a little dew dance,
But when my nephew set, it's been a monsoon.
What's this? Still leaking, girl? Always raining?
In one tiny human, you're an entire weather system.
Your eyes—the sea; your body—a ship; your sighs—the wind.
Together, they're a perfect storm threatening to capsize you.
Wife, did you share the wedding news with her yet?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Yes, but she's throwing it back. She doesn't appreciate our thoughtful gift.

CHOLESTEROLET

Softly, darling, what's this?
She doesn't thank us?
Isn't she thrilled?
Doesn't she see her good fortune,
Even though she doesn't deserve it, that we've snagged
Such an illustrious meat-eater for her?

JULIET

Not thrilled, just grateful—grateful that you think this is helpful.
I can never be thrilled about what I despise,
But I can thank you for this hate dressed up as love.

CHOLESTEROLET

What's this double talk? "Thankful but not thrilled"?
Listen here, Miss Contradiction, you'll thank us properly
By marching down that aisle with Paris come Thursday,
Or I'll drag you there myself. Out, you sprout-eating scarecrow! Out, you

baggage!

You leaf-muncher!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Oh my, are you losing it?

JULIET

Please, father, just hear me out.

CHOLESTEROLET

Silence, you rebellious weed!

Here's the deal

March yourself to that abattoir on Thursday,

Or don't ever let me see your vegan face again.

Don't talk back.

My patience is thinner than a slice of prosciutto.

We thought we were blessed with one child,

But it turns out, she's one too many.

You're nothing but a curse.

NURSE

Bless her, God! You're way out of line, sir.

CHOLESTEROLET

And why's that, Ms. Know-It-All? Save your breath.

Go share your wisdom with your knitting circle.

We don't need your herbal remedies here.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Cool it, dear.

CHOLESTEROLET

This drives me nuts!

Day, night, at work, at play,

I've slaved to secure a match. And now, when we've landed

A man stuffed with honorable meats,

You whine and whimper, refusing this match.

If you reject him, then fend for yourself.

Think hard about it; I'm not bluffing.

If you're mine, you'll marry him. If not,

Go graze in the fields or starve in the streets.

I'm done with you.

JULIET

Is there no pity in the sky

That sees the depth of my increasingly compassionate soul?

Mom, please, delay this blood-soaked wedding

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

For a month, a week, or place the altar
Next to Thighbalt's grave, because that's where my heart will be.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Don't talk to me.
I'm done with you.
Do whatever you want.

JULIET

Oh, no!
Nurse, what do I do now?
My love is here on earth, but my hope feels like it's in heaven.
How can I bring it back down unless Romeo does?

NURSE

Look, Romeo is gone, and Paris is here.
He's a catch and a half compared to your ex.
Paris has the eyes of a hawk and can hunt like a lion.
You could do worse.

JULIET

Do you mean that?

NURSE

Yes.

JULIET

You've been a real comfort.
Tell my mother I've gone to Friar Lawrence to sort out this mess.
Maybe he can fix what you and I cannot.

NURSE

A wise choice my child.

JULIET

Oh, Nurse, what a treacherous friend you've turned out to be!
Better to be sworn to misery than listen to your advice.
I'll find my own way out. If the Friar can't help,
I know what to do.

Act 4

Scene 1

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Thursday, sir?

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

That's practically tomorrow!

PARIS

My father Cholesterolet insists, and I dare not ask him to put the brakes on.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

You haven't even checked with the lady?

This haste seems rather rash.

PARIS

She's been too busy crying over Thighbalt to chat about romance.

Cupid doesn't do well in damp conditions, you know.

Her dad thinks she's marinating in her misery too long,

And speeding up the wedding might just dry her tears.

He's convinced a crowded abattoir will perk her right up.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I wish I didn't know why we should slow this down.

Ah, here she comes now, storming down on us like the climate will one day if we don't stop destroying our air, land, and water by the blood and greed of animal slaughter!

PARIS

Ah, my lady and soon-to-be wife!

JULIET

That's a future maybe, when I actually am a wife.

PARIS

That "maybe" will become "definitely" next Thursday.

JULIET

What must be will be.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

An inescapable truth indeed.

PARIS

Did you come to spill your secrets to the friar?

JULIET

To answer that, I'd have to confess to you first.

PARIS

Don't hide your love for me from him.

JULIET

I confess that I do adore him and his kind vegan ways—quite a bit, actually.

PARIS

And soon you'll confess your love for me just as freely.

JULIET

If I do, it'll be easier to say behind your back than to your face.

PARIS

Poor soul, your face is a mess from all that crying.

JULIET

The tears haven't helped its looks, but then again, it wasn't winning any beauty contests to begin with.

PARIS

You insult it further with such comments.

JULIET

It's not an insult if it's true. And if anyone's insulting my face, it's me.

PARIS

But your face is mine, and you've slandered it.

JULIET

It might be, and it doesn't feel like it's mine anymore.

Are you free now, Father, or should I return at evening Mass?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I'm all yours now, troubled daughter.—

My lord, we need a moment alone, if you please.

PARIS

I wouldn't dream of disturbing your piety!

Juliet, I'll eagerly wake you on Thursday.

Until then, cherish this holy peck.

JULIET

Ugh, lock the door after him, and then come cry with me. I'm beyond hope, care, and help!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Oh Juliet, your sorrow is clear to me, and it weighs heavy.

Speaking of weight, do you ever think of how these gluttonous flesh-eaters must feel, being weighed down by the pain and suffering of the animals whose bodies they've devoured? Anyway ... it seems you must, and without delay, marry Paris this Thursday.

JULIET

Don't talk to me about Thursday unless you can tell me how to dodge it.

If you don't have a plan, just watch how quickly I can end this.

God may have joined my heart with Romeo's impressively healthy vegan heart, but my hand?

That's another story.

I'd rather end it all than give it to another.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Hold on, young lady.

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

There's a glimmer of hope,
But it requires something as drastic as the situation itself.
If you're brave enough to face something like death to avoid this marriage,
Then perhaps you might entertain a plan that mimics death itself.

JULIET

Tell me to jump from a tower, live with thieves,
Sleep in a den of snakes, or get cozy with roaring bears.
Lock me up in a tomb filled with rattling bones and decaying skulls,
Or bury me alive—anything's better than marrying that carnivore Paris!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

All right, here's the plan.
Go home, act cheerful, agree to marry Paris.
Tomorrow night, ensure you're alone—send the nurse away.
Take this vial, drink this special vegan brew when you're in bed,
And a cold, sleepy drowsiness will seize you.
You'll appear dead for forty-two hours—no pulse, no warmth.
Your family will find you, mourn you, and place you in a bed of organic compost.
Meanwhile, I'll inform Romeo, and he'll be here when you wake up.
This plan will shield you from the marriage if you can act the part.

JULIET

Hand it over!
Fear is for the meat-eaters.
I'm ready!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Be brave and strong.
I'll send word to your plant-powered Romeo.
Do this, and by Friday, you could be free of all this mess.

JULIET

Strength, come from love, and love will give me strength.
Farewell, Father.

Act 4

Scene 2

CHOLESTEROLET

Send out the invitations per this list.
Sirrah, go hire twenty savvy carnivore chefs.

SERVINGMAN

You shall have only the best, sir, for I'll test them by their ability to lick their fingers.

CHOLESTEROLET

How exactly do you test them that way?

SERVINGMAN

Well, sir, it's a sorry chef who can't lick their own fingers.

So anyone who can't isn't fit to cook for us.

CHOLESTEROLET

Off you go then.

Looks like we're in a bit of a rush this time.—

What, has my daughter gone to Friar Lawrence?

NURSE

Yes, that she has.

CHOLESTEROLET

Maybe he'll manage to talk some sense into her.

She's been as stubborn as a man on a meat-free diet.

NURSE

Look, here she comes from her confession, and she's actually smiling!

CHOLESTEROLET

How now, my headstrong herbivore?

Where have you been gallivanting?

JULIET

Where I've learned to repent the sin of disobediently defying

Your commands.

Friar Lawrence advised me to kneel here

And beg your forgiveness.

So, pardon me, I pray.

From now on, I'm under your command.

CHOLESTEROLET

Send for the County!

Tell him about this.

We'll tie this knot first thing tomorrow morning.

JULIET

I met the young lord at Lawrence's cell

And gave him all the chaste love that decorum allows.

CHOLESTEROLET

Why, that's wonderful!

Stand up, this is exactly how it should be.—

Let's see that County.

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Yes, go fetch him here.—

By the saints, this friar really does wonders for our city!

JULIET

Nurse, would you come to my room with me

To help pick out the necessary accessories

You think would suit tomorrow's animal-free outfit?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

No, not 'til Thursday.

There's plenty of time.

CHOLESTEROLET

No, Nurse, go with her.

We're off to the abattoir tomorrow!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

But we're short on provisions, and it's nearly night.

CHOLESTEROLET

Nonsense, I'll hustle and sort everything out, don't worry, wife.

Go help Juliet get ready.

I won't sleep tonight;

I'll take charge of the house for once.—Hey!—

Everyone's gone?

Well, I'll visit Paris myself

To get him ready for tomorrow.

My heart's as light as a feather

Now that this rebellious girl has turned over a new leaf.

Act 4

Scene 3

JULIET

Yes, those outfits are vegan.

But, kind Nurse,

Please leave me alone tonight.

I have heaps of prayers to say,

Hoping the heavens will cleanse me from my carnivorous past.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

What, are you busy, darling?

Do you need my help?

JULIET

No, thank you, madam.
We've prepped enough for tomorrow's spectacle.
Please, let me have some solitude tonight,
And perhaps the nurse could assist you instead,
Given all the last-minute wedding chaos.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Good night then.
Rest up; tomorrow's a big day.

JULIET

Farewell.
Who knows when we'll meet again?
A chilling dread trickles through my veins,
Turning my blood as cold as a kale smoothie.
I'll call them back for comfort—Nurse!—
But no, I must face this trial alone.
Come, vial.
What if this mixture is just a fancy wheatgrass—almond milk concoction?
Will I end up at the altar tomorrow, facing a blood-soaked wedding?
No, no, this potion must do the trick.
It lies here as my plant-based escape.
But what if it's actually poison, sneakily brewed by the Friar
To wash his hands of my love for kind Romeo,
My vegan partner battling the moral decay of this meaty world?
Still, it can't be poison, right?
He's a friar, not a dairy farmer.
But what if, when I'm laid in the tomb, I do not wake?
A terrifying thought.
Will I just suffocate in the vault, where no fresh juice flows,
And end up a ghost before Romeo can save me?
Or worse, what if I survive the potion but wake up too early,
Alone with the meaty bones of my ancestors,
Thighbalt's decomposing body adding to the horror,
In a compost garden where they say spirits hold midnight feasts—
What if I wake, assaulted by the smell of ancient beef jerky,
Hearing screams like mandrakes yanked from the earth,
Sounds so horrific they'd drive any sane vegan mad?

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

Could I lose it, start playing with my ancestors' skulls,
Pull poor Thighbalt from his shroud,
And in a vegan rage, use some great-great-uncle's thigh bone
To smash my own brains out in despair?
Oh look, I think I see Thighbalt's ghost,
Chasing down Romeo, who spitted him like a mushroom kebab!
Stay, Thighbalt, stay!
Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's a swig. I drink to thee.

Act 4

Scene 4

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Here, take these keys and fetch more spices, Nurse.
We need enough to mask the greens if that vegan girl tries any tricks.

NURSE

The kitchen's clamoring for dates and quinces to stuff the pastries. Not that we'd eat that rabbit food unless it's wrapped in back bacon.

CHOLESTEROLET

Hustle, hustle, hustle! The rooster's already on his third crow, and that curfew bell's tolled. It's three o'clock—
Angelica, make sure those roasts are juicy!
No skimping, remember this feast is a carnivore's dream.

NURSE

Oh, go hit the hay, old bear, go.
You'll be groggy and grumpy tomorrow from all this racket.

CHOLESTEROLET

Nonsense! I've powered through many a night on less meaty occasions and never suffered more than a hiccup.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Yes, back when you were a spry young ox, but let's not have you keeling over today.

CHOLESTEROLET

A watchful wife, what a treat!
What's going on over there now?

FIRST SERVINGMAN

Supplies for the feast, sir, though I'm not sure what all the fuss is about.

CHOLESTEROLET

Step on it, step on it! Sirrah, fetch some drier logs.
Call Peter; he knows where they're stashed.

SECOND SERVINGMAN

I've got a head that can sniff out logs better than Peter ever could.

CHOLESTEROLET

Well said! A real clever man!
You might just outwit us all.
Dawn's breaking already.
Paris will be here with his symphony of meats—promised us a parade.
Nurse!
Wife!
What's the holdup?
Nurse, I said!
Wake Juliet up.
Get her dressed in something less leafy.
I'll entertain Paris; quick now, make haste,
The groom's about to knock down our door.
Hurry, the meat won't carve itself!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Go, Nurse, drag Juliet out of that garden she's likely hiding in.
She may have turned vegan, but let's not let her turn this wedding into a farmers' market.

Act 4

Scene 5

NURSE

Mistress! What, mistress! Juliet!—Probably napping.
You lay asleep, my gentle little lamb.
How is it that cruel men torment and kill sweet lambs
To turn their wool into garments of great suffering and eat their flesh?
Why, love, I say!
Madam!
Sweetheart!
Why, bride!—
What, not a peep?—You're catching up on beauty sleep, huh?

You'll need it, because tonight, I bet,
County Paris won't let you rest much.—God forgive me,
Marry, and amen! How soundly she sleeps!
I must wake her.
Madam, madam, madam!
Let County Paris find you like this,
He'll surely wake you up.—Right?
What, dressed, and in your clothes—made of comfortable, breathable, and stylish
vegan fabrics—and back to sleep again?
I have to wake you.
Lady! Lady! Lady!—
Alas, alas! Help, help! My lady's dead.—
O, woe is me, that ever I was born!—
Some bacon grease, ho!—My lord! My lady!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

What's all this racket?
Is the back bacon burning?

NURSE

Oh, dreadful day!
She's joined the great vegan co-op in the sky!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

What happened?
Did she overdose on quinoa?

NURSE

Look, look!—O heavy day!
Overdosed on organic kale!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Oh, me! Oh, me!
My child, my only life,
Revive, or I will die with you.
Help, help! Call the meat tenderizer!

CHOLESTEROLET

Enough drama; bring Juliet out.
Her lord has arrived, and the feast is ready.

NURSE

She's dead, gone. Those cursed veggies took her too soon!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Alack the day, she's dead, she's really dead.
Those damn vegetables!

CHOLESTEROLET

Let me see her.
Oh, she's cold, her joints are stiff.
Her life has slipped away like the bloodiest steak from the plate.
Death lies on her like an untimely frost
On the most succulent cut of all.

NURSE

Oh, lamentable day!
She's on that big organic farm in the sky!

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Oh, woeful day!
Who will eat my home-cooked meals now?

CHOLESTEROLET

Death, that has taken her to make me wail,
Ties up my tongue; my food-loving daughter, gone forever.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Come, is the bride ready to go to the abattoir, or has she gone wet lettuce on us?

CHOLESTEROLET

Ready to go, but never to return.—
O son, the night before thy wedding day
Death has lain with thy wife-to-be.
There she lies,
Flower as she was, now wilted by his icy hand.
Death is my son-in-law; Death is my heir.
My daughter he has wedded. I will die
And leave him all. Life, living, all is Death's.

PARIS

Did I dress up for this morning, only to find this sight?
No beefy bride for me?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

Cursed, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!
Most miserable hour that time ever saw.
We had but one, one loving child,
And cruel death has snatched her from our table!

NURSE

O woe, O woeful, woeful, woeful day!
Most lamentable day, most woeful day
That ever, ever I did yet behold!
O day, O day, O day, O hateful day!

Never was seen so wretched a day as this!
O woeful day, O woeful day!

PARIS

Beguiled, divorced, wronged, spited, slain!
Most detestable death, by thee beguiled,
By cruel, cruel thee quite overthrown!
O love! O life! Not life, but love in death!

CHOLESTEROLET

Despised, distressed, hated, martyred, killed!
Uncomfortable time, why cam'st thou now
To murder our meat feast?
O child! O child! My soul, and not my child!
Dead art thou, alas, my child is dead,
And with my child my joys are buried.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Keep calm and *carrot* on!
Heaven and yourself shared this sweet pea; now heaven has her fully,
And all the butter lettuce it is for her.
Your carnivore diet couldn't protect her from death, but heaven will veg out with
her in eternal life.
You wanted her to be the top of the food chain.
And now you cry, seeing she is top banana above the clouds, as high as vegan
heaven itself?
O, in this love, you love your child so ill,
That you are mad, seeing that she is well-done.
She's not well-marinated who lives married long,
But she's best marinated who dies married young like a baby carrot.
Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary
On this fair Brussels sprout, and as the custom is,
In all her best greens bear her to the garden;
For though fond nature bids all species to mourn,
Yet in our shared loss, compassion for each other is born.

CHOLESTEROLET

All animals that we slaughtered for the celebration,
Turn from their moist meat to foul feast;
Our dinner bells to funeral tolls,
Our finest cheese to a sad spoiled tease,
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change,
Our bridal flowers wilted like greens,
And all things change them to the contrary.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Sir, go you in; and, madam, go with him;
And go, Sir Paris; everyone prepare
To follow this fair vegan to her grave
The heavens frown upon you for some ill;
Don't anger them further with your meat-filled grill.

FIRST MUSICIAN

Faith, we may pack up our pipes and be gone.

NURSE

Honest good fellows, ah, pack up; pack up;
For well you know this is a pitiful case.

FIRST MUSICIAN

Ay, by my troth, the case may be amended.

PETER

Musicians, oh musicians, play "Heart's Grease," "Heart's Grease." Oh, if you want
me to live, play "Heart's Grease."

FIRST MUSICIAN

Why "Heart's Grease?"

PETER

O musicians, because my heart is clogged with bacon grease! Play me some merry
tune to keep me going, or I'll keel over from a meat-induced coma.

FIRST MUSICIAN

This isn't the time for tunes.

PETER

You refuse?

FIRST MUSICIAN

We do.

PETER

Fine, I'll serve it to you straight!

FIRST MUSICIAN

And what will you serve us?

PETER

No loins, but plenty of beef. I'll give you the meat cleaver.

FIRST MUSICIAN

Then I'll give you the serving-knave.

PETER

Then I'll slap you with this carrot. I'm not one for crochet.

FIRST MUSICIAN

We get your note.

SECOND MUSICIAN

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* ⇐

Please, put away the carrot and use your brain.

PETER

Fine, here comes my wit.

I'll beat you with iron logic and put away my iron carrot.

Listen up When heartburn grips from too much meat,

And greasy sorrow fills the belly,

Then music with her silver sound—

PETER

Why “silver sound”?

Why “music with her silver sound”?

What say you, Simon Catling?

FIRST MUSICIAN

Marry, sir, because silver hath a sweet sound.

PETER

Nonsense!—What say you, Hugh Rebeck?

SECOND MUSICIAN

I say “silver sound” because musicians sound for silver.

PETER

More nonsense!—What say you, James Soundpost?

THIRD MUSICIAN

Faith, I don't know what to say.

PETER

Oh, I beg your pardon.

You're the singer.

I'll say it for you It's “music with her silver sound” because musicians have no gold to make a living

Then music with her silver sound With speedy help doth lend redress.

FIRST MUSICIAN

What a tiresome knave this is!

SECOND MUSICIAN

Hang him, Jack.

Let's go inside, wait for the mourners, and hope there's something besides pork sausage for dinner.

Act 5

Scene 1

ROMEO

If I can trust the pea-powered dreams I had,
My slumber predicts some awesome news ahead.
My heart feels lighter than a lemon sorbetto,
And all day long, I've been bouncing with joy.
I dreamt my lady found me dead—
Strange dream, right?—and with her vegan kisses,
She brought me back to life,
Making me feel like a lovesick emperor.
Ah me, how sweet is love itself possessed,
When even love's shadows are rich in joy!
News from Verona!—How now, Balthasar?
Dost thou bring me letters from the Friar?
How is my lady?
Is my father well?
How is my Juliet?
I ask again,
For nothing can be ill if she be well.

BALTHASAR

Then she is well, and nothing can be ill.
Her body rests in the compost garden,
And her soul is feasting at the great vegan buffet in the sky.
I saw her laid low in her kindred's vault,
And I rushed here to tell you.
O, pardon me for bringing this sad news,
Since you did leave it for my job, sir.

ROMEO

Is it even so?—Then I defy you, stars!—
You know my lodging. Get me ink and paper,
And hire a horseless carriage. I will leave tonight.

BALTHASAR

I do beseech you, sir, have patience.
Your looks are pale and wild and suggest
Some misadventure.

ROMEO

Tush, you are mistaken.
Leave me, and do the thing I bid thee do.
Hast thou no letters to me from the Friar?

BALTHASAR

No, my good lord.

ROMEO

No matter. Get thee gone,
And hire that horseless carriage.
I'll be with thee straight.
Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight.
Let's see for means.
O mischief, thou art swift
To enter the thoughts of desperate men.
I do remember an apothecary—
And hereabouts he lives—whom I noted recently
In ragged animal skins, looking hungrier than a vegan at a meat-lover's barbecue.
Meager were his looks.
Dairy had leached calcium from his bones.
And in his shop, a chicken hung,
A turkey stuffed, and other cruelties,
With bloody shelves filled with sad carcasses.
Noting his ill health, I thought,
“If a man needed poison now,
Whose sale is punishable by death in Mantua,
Here lives a speciesist sap who would sell it to him.”
O, this thought did but foreshadow my need,
And this same cruel man must sell it to me.
As I remember, this should be the house.
Being a holiday, the man's shop is shut.—
What ho, Apothecary!

APOTHECARY

Who calls so loud?

ROMEO

Come here, man. I see that you are bloating from your dairy-filled diet.
Hold, there are forty prunes.
Let me have a dram of poison, something that acts quickly like these prunes,
So the life-weary taker may fall dead,
And that the body may be discharged of breath

⇒ *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterlets* ⇐

As violently as blood spilled
quickly from a slaughtered turkey's plume.

APOTHECARY

Such mortal drugs I have, but Mantua's law
Is death to any man who sells them.

ROMEO

Are you so unhealthy and wretched,
And you fear to die?
Cholesterol is in your cheeks,
Heart disease and clogged arteries in your thighs,
Guilt and speciesism hang upon your back.
The world is not your friend, nor the world's law.
The world affords no law to make you rich.
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.

APOTHECARY

My ill health, but not my will, consents.

ROMEO

I pay your poverty and not your will.

APOTHECARY

Put this in your soy milk if you will
And drink it off, and if you had the strength
Of twenty vegans, it would dispatch you straight.

ROMEO

There is your gold, worse poison to men's souls,
Doing more murder in this speciesist world
Than these slaughtered animals you sell.
I sell you poison; you have sold me none.
Farewell, buy yourself some vegan food.
Come, cordial and not poison, go with me
To Juliet's grave, for there must I use thee.

Act 5

Scene 2

FRIAR JOHN

Holy vegan friar, brother, ho!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

This sounds like the voice of Friar John.—
Welcome from Mantua. What says Romeo?
Or, if his mind is written, give me his letter.

FRIAR JOHN

On my way to find a fellow barefoot brother,
One of our order, to accompany me,
Here in this city visiting the sick,
And finding him, the town's officials,
Suspecting we were in a house
Where the meat market pandemic was raging,
Sealed up the doors and wouldn't let us out,
So my trip to Mantua was stopped faster than the sale of meat during a recall.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Who took my letter to Romeo, then?

FRIAR JOHN

I couldn't send it—here it is again—
Nor find a messenger to bring it to you,
So fearful were they of infection from those tainted steaks.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Unhappy fortune!
By my brotherhood,
The letter was not trivial but full of urgent news,
Of dear import, and neglecting it
May cause much danger.
Friar John, go now.
Get me an iron crowbar and bring it straight to my cell.

FRIAR JOHN

Brother, I'll go and bring it to you.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Now I must go to the monument alone.
Within this three hours will fair Juliet wake.
She will curse me much that Romeo
Has had no notice of these events.
But I will write again to Mantua,
And keep her at my cell till Romeo comes.
Poor living vegan, closed in a meat-eater's heap of compost!



Act 5

Scene 3

PARIS

Give me your torch, boy.

Stand back and keep your distance.
Put it out, for I don't want to be seen.
Lie under those fruit trees, listening closely.
So no footstep in this veggie patch of a churchyard
(Being loose, unfirm, with digging up of graves)
Will escape your ear.
Whistle to me
As a signal if you hear something approach.
Give me those flowers. Do as I say. Go.

PAGE

I'm almost afraid to stand alone
Here in the yard.
Yet I'll venture like a brave little carrot.

PARIS

Sweet flower, I scatter these petals on your vegan bed of compost
(Oh woe, your canopy is now dust and stones!)
Which with fresh water nightly I'll sprinkle,
Or, lacking that, with tears distilled by my mourning.
The rituals I'll keep for you
Nightly shall be to scatter flowers and weep.
The boy gives warning something approaches.
What cursed foot wanders this way tonight,
To interrupt my mourning and vegan love's rite?
What, with a torch? Hide me, night, for a while.

ROMEO

Give me those tools.
Hold, take this letter.
Before they wake for tofu scramble and vegan steak,
deliver it to my lord and father.
Give me the light.
Upon thy life I charge thee,
Whatever you hear or see, stay back
And do not interrupt me in my course.
Why I descend into this bed of organic compost
Is partly to behold my vegan lady's face,
But chiefly to take from her dead finger
A precious ring, a ring that I must use
For a special purpose.
Therefore, begone.
But, if thou, jealous, dost return to spy

On what I further shall intend to do,
By heaven, I will tear these fruit trees branch by branch
And scatter this yard with its twigs.
The time and my intents are savage-wild,
More fierce and more inexorable far
Than a pack of vegans around a simmering lentil stew.

BALTHASAR

I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.

ROMEO

So shalt thou show me friendship.
Take this.
Live and be prosperous, and farewell, good fellow.

BALTHASAR

Despite all this, I'll hide hereabouts.
His looks I fear, and his intents I doubt.

ROMEO

Thou detestable maw, thou belly of death,
Gorged with the best vegan morsel of the earth,
Thus I force thy rotten jaws to open,
And in spite, I'll cram thee with more vegan food.

PARIS

This is that banished, arrogant Montalegume
That murdered my love's cousin, which diet
Is supposed to have caused her death,
And here he comes to do some villainous act
To the dead bodies. I will stop him.
Stop thy unhallowed toil, vile Montalegume.
Can vengeance be pursued further than death?
Condemned vegan, I apprehend thee.
Obey and go with me, for thou must die.

ROMEO

I must indeed, and therefore came I here.
Good gentle youth, tempt not a desperate man.
Fly hence and leave me.
Think upon those gone.
Let them scare thee.
I beseech thee, youth,
Put not another sin upon my head
By urging me to fury. O, begone!
By heaven, I love thee better than myself,

For I come here armed against myself.
Stay not, begone, live, and hereafter say
A madman's mercy bid thee run away.

PARIS

I defy your warning and apprehend thee for a felon here.
I'll take you down like a well-done steak!

ROMEO

Wilt thou provoke me?
Then have at thee, boy!

PAGE

O Lord, they fight!
I will go call the watch.

PARIS

O, I am slain!
If thou be merciful,
Open the tomb; lay me with the vegan.

ROMEO

In faith, I will.—Let me see this face.
Mercutio's kinsman, noble County Paris!
What did my servant say while my mind was in a fog?
He mentioned Paris should have married Juliet.
Did he not?
Or was I dreaming?
Or am I just mad, thinking about Juliet all the time,
And imagining things?—O, give me thy hand,
You, too, have signed up for the Tragic Carnivore Club!
I'll bury thee in a grave.—
A grave? No way!
More like a lantern, you unlucky meathead,
For here lies Juliet, and her plant-based beauty lights up this place
Like a cruciferous feast.—
Death, you lie there, served by a dead man.
How often at death's door have men been cheerful,
Which their keepers call a lightening before death!
O, how can I call this a lightening?—O my love, my wife,
Death, that has sucked the date syrup of thy breath,
Hasn't messed with your beauty yet.
You're not conquered.
Your beauty's flag
Is still crimson in your lips and cheeks,

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

And death's pale flag hasn't touched you.—
Thighbalt, you carnivorous rascal, do you lie there in your bloody sheet?
O, what better favor can I do for you
Than with that hand that sliced your youth in twain
To finish off the guy who was your enemy?
Forgive me, cousin.—Ah, dear Juliet,
Why do you still look like expired tofu? Should I believe
That mold, the unwelcome guest, is in love with you,
And keeps you here in the fridge as his prized bean curd?
For fear of that, I will stay with you
And never from this expired feast
Depart again. Here, here will I remain
With precious bacteria that are your chambermaids. O, here
Will I set up my everlasting picnic
And shake off the bad luck of the "sell by" date
From this world-weary appetite! Eyes, feast your last.
Arms, take your last embrace. And, lips, O you
The gates of digestion, seal with a final bite
A dateless bargain with indigestion.
Come, unsavory guide!
You desperate morsel, now at once spoil
The dashing hopes of this hungry bark!
Here's to my love. Drinking. O true apothecary,
Your dairy-free drug is quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Seitan fajitas, be my speed!
How often tonight have my pleather sandals stumbled at graves!—Who's there?

BALTHASAR

Here's one, a friend to animals, and one that knows you well.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Blessings upon you.
Tell me, good fellow vegan, what is that torch lighting up the yard?
I see it shining in the Cholesterolets' monument.

BALTHASAR

It does so, sir, and there's my grill master, one that you love.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Who is it?

BALTHASAR

Romeo!

FRIAR LAWRENCE

How long has he been there?

BALTHASAR

Long enough for tofu to dry.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Go with me to the grave.

BALTHASAR

I dare not, sir.

My master knows not but I am gone hence, and threatened to destroy fruit trees if I stayed to watch.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Stay, then. I'll go alone.

I feel fear as every animal does in an abattoir.

BALTHASAR

While I slept under this fruit tree here, I dreamt my master fought a meat-eater, and that my master slaughtered him like a useless cow at a dairy.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

Romeo!—Oh no, oh no, what blood stains this entrance?

Why does this place of peace look like an abattoir?

Romeo! You look pale! Who else?

What, Paris too? And steeped in blood?

Ah, what a cruel hour that brought this sad scene.

The lady is waking up.

JULIET

O compassionate friar, where is my lord?

I remember where I should be, and here I am.

Where is my Romeo, my animal-protecting hero?

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I hear some noise.—Lady, come from that meat locker of death, disease, and unnatural sleep.

A greater power than our vegan intentions has thwarted our plans.

Come, come away.

Your husband lies there, as cold as a cucumber (not in a good way, though), and

Paris, too. Come, I'll hide you among a sisterhood of holy vegans.

Stay not to question, for the watch is coming.

Come, go, good Juliet. I dare no longer stay.

JULIET

Go, get thee hence, for I will not leave.

What's here? A cup in my true love's hand?

» *The Montalegumes and the Cholesterolets* «

A poisoned drink, I see, was his last meal.—It must have been vegan because he clearly enjoyed it and didn't even leave me a drop!
I will kiss his lips.
Perhaps some of the drink is on them, to make me die with a dairy-free delight on my lips.
His lips are warm!

FIRST WATCH

Lead, boy. Which way?

JULIET

A noise? Then I'll be quick.
O, knife, my body is your sheath.
Rust in my body, and let me die like a sheep in the wool industry.

PAGE

This is the place, where the torch burns.

FIRST WATCH

The ground is bloody and vegetables are missing—Search about the patch. Go and detain anyone you find.
Pitiful sight!
Here lies Paris dead, and Juliet bleeding, warm, and newly dead, who has been buried for days.—Go, tell the Prince.
Run to the Cholesterolets.
Wake the Montalegumes.
Some others search.
We see the evidence but need more clues to understand what happened.

SECOND WATCH

Here's Romeo's man.
We found him in the garden.

FIRST WATCH

Hold him in safety till the Prince arrives.

THIRD WATCH

Here is a friar that trembles, sighs, and weeps like a calf separated from his mother on a dairy farm.
We took this shovel and this spade from him as he was coming from this side of the garden.

FIRST WATCH

A great suspicion.
Detain the Friar too.

PRINCE

What trouble is so early that calls me from my bacon and eggs?

CHOLESTEROLET

What's all this noise about?

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

O, the people in the street cry "Romeo," some "Juliet," and some "Paris," and all run with open outcry toward us.

PRINCE

What fear is this which startles in our ears?

FIRST WATCH

Sovereign, here lies Paris slain, and Romeo dead, and Juliet, dead before, warm and new killed.

PRINCE

Search, seek, and know how this foul murder comes.

FIRST WATCH

Here is a friar, and slaughtered Romeo's man, with tools upon them fit to unearth these dead men's graves.

CHOLESTEROLET

O heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!

This knife missed its mark, for it should be in Romeo's back, but it's in our daughter instead.

LADY CHOLESTEROLET

O, this sight of death is like my slow heart, signaling an early death from atherosclerosis.

PRINCE

Come, Montalegume, you've risen early to see your healthy son fall so early.

MONTALEGUME

Alas, my lord, my wife is dead tonight.

Grief over my son has taken her breath like a fish ripped from the water.

What more sorrow is coming?

PRINCE

Look, and thou shalt see.

MONTALEGUME

O untaught son!

What manners is in this, to rush to the grave before your father?

PRINCE

Keep your anger in check until we can understand the cause and details of this tragedy. Then, I will lead you through your grief and to your end if needed.

For now, be patient and let fate hold back.

Bring forward those suspected.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I am the least capable but most suspected, as the time and place make me look guilty.

Here I stand, both accusing and defending myself.

PRINCE

Then say at once what thou dost know in this.

FRIAR LAWRENCE

I'll keep it short, like a milk-drinker's lifespan, for my breath won't last through a long tale.

Romeo, lying there like a fallen apple, was husband to Juliet, and she, now a wilted flower, was Romeo's faithful wife.

I married them, and their secret wedding day was also Thighbalt's doom day, whose untimely death banished the new-made groom from this meat-loving city, for whom, and not for Thighbalt, Juliet pined away.

You tried to remove her grief like she had removed meat, eggs, and dairy from her diet, by forcing her to marry County Paris.

Then she came to me, with wild eyes begging me to find a way to rid her from this second marriage, or she'd turn herself into a bleeding beet in my cell.

So I gave her a sleeping potion, as if she were a soybean, resting in its pod, and it worked perfectly, making her look dead as a doormat.

Meanwhile, I wrote to Romeo to come that night, to help take her from her borrowed grave, just as the potion's power would wear off.

But Friar John, who carried my letter, was stopped by bad luck, and last night he brought my letter back to me.

So, alone at the appointed hour of her waking, I came to take her from her kindred's resting place, planning to hide her in my cell until I could send for Romeo.

But when I arrived, just minutes before she woke, there lay the noble Paris and true Romeo, both as cold as chilled watermelon carpaccio.

She woke up, and I begged her to leave with me and face this work of fate with patience.

But then a noise scared me away from the grave, and she, too desperate, refused to go, and, as it seems, did violence to herself.

This is all I know, and to the marriage her nurse is in on it.

And if anything in this went wrong because of me, let my old life be sacrificed.

PRINCE

We have always known you to be a holy man.—Where's Romeo's man?

What can he say to this?

BALTHASAR

I brought my master news of Juliet's death, and then he rushed from Mantua to this very place, this veggie monument.

He gave me a letter to deliver to his father and threatened me with death, going into the garden, if I didn't leave and let him be.

PRINCE

Give me the letter.

I will look at it.—Where is the County's page, who raised the watch?

—Boy, what brought your master to this place?

PAGE

He came with flowers to scatter on his lady's grave and told me to stand back, so I did. Then came one with a light to open the grave, and soon my master drew on him, and I ran away to call the watch.

PRINCE

This letter matches the Friar's words, their course of love, the news of her death; and here he writes that he bought poison from a poor apothecary and came to this grave to die and lie with Juliet.

PRINCE

Where are these enemies?—Cholesterolet, Montalegume, see what a price your hatred has cost, that heaven finds ways to turn your joys into sorrows, and I, for ignoring your feuds, have lost two kinsmen.

All are punished.

CHOLESTEROLET

O brother Montalegume, give me thy hand.

This is my daughter's peace offering, and through her choice to live vegan, we've seen a new light.

We too shall embrace the leaf, not the beef, as our new path.

MONTALEGUME

And I will honor her with more than gold; I'll spread her vegan gospel far and wide, so long as Verona stands, there shall be no tale more honored than that of our true and faithful Juliet, the vegan beacon.

CHOLESTEROLET

Just as rich shall Romeo's memory be cherished beside his lady, united in our hearts as they were in their compassionate, cruelty-free love.

PRINCE

A peaceful dawn breaks, bringing light to our understanding

Every animal is someone, deserving of life and respect.

Let this story remind us, as it did Romeo and Juliet,

That true peace will only come when we stop eating animals.