

# The Friar's Plan

by William Shakespeare *from Romeo and Juliet*

*This passage from Act IV, Scene 1 of Romeo and Juliet takes place in Friar Lawrence's cell, or room. Juliet has come to the friar in a panic; her parents demand she marry Count Paris, but she is already secretly married to Romeo. Romeo, however, has been banished to Mantua for killing Juliet's cousin, Tibalt. Juliet is desperate and pleads with the friar to help her.*

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Friar.

Hold, daughter. I do spy a kind of hope,  
Which craves as desperate an execution  
As that is desperate which we would prevent.  
If, rather than to marry County Paris  
Thou hast the strength of will to slay thyself,  
Then is it likely thou wilt undertake  
A thing like death to chide away this shame,  
That cop'st with death himself to scape from it;  
And, if thou dar'st, I'll give thee remedy.

Juliet.

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,  
From off the battlements of yonder tower;  
Or walk in thievish ways; or bid me lurk  
Where serpents are; chain me with roaring bears;  
Or shut me nightly in a charnel-house,  
O'er-cover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones,  
With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;  
Or bid me go into a new-made grave,  
And hide me with a dead man in his shroud;  
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble;  
And I will do it without fear or doubt,  
To live an unstain'd wife to my sweet love.

Friar.

Hold, then; go home, be merry, give consent  
To marry Paris: Wednesday is to-morrow;  
To-morrow night look that thou lie alone,  
Let not thy nurse lie with thee in thy chamber:  
Take thou this vial, being then in bed,

And this distilled liquor drink thou off:  
When, presently, through all thy veins shall run  
A cold and drowsy humour; for no pulse  
Shall keep his native progress, but surcease:  
No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;  
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade  
To paly ashes; thy eyes' windows fall,  
Like death, when he shuts up the day of life;  
Each part, depriv'd of supple government,  
Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death:  
And in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death  
Thou shalt continue two-and-forty hours,  
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.  
Now, when the bridegroom in the morning comes  
To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead:  
Then,—as the manner of our country is,—  
In thy best robes, uncover'd, on the bier,  
Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault  
Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.  
In the mean time, against thou shalt awake,  
Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift;  
And hither shall he come: and he and I  
Will watch thy waking, and that very night  
Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua.  
And this shall free thee from this present shame,  
If no inconstant toy nor womanish fear  
Abate thy valour in the acting it.

Juliet.

Give me, give me! O, tell not me of fear!

Friar.

Hold; get you gone, be strong and prosperous  
In this resolve: I'll send a friar with speed  
To Mantua, with my letters to thy lord.

Juliet.

Love give me strength! and strength shall help afford.  
Farewell, dear father.

[Exeunt.]

## Questions

1. Cite two references from the passage to show how the friar's potion will make Juliet appear to be dead.
2. How long will the potion last?
3. What are two things Juliet says she will do rather than marry Paris?
4. How does Friar Lawrence say he will inform Romeo of the plan?

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Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. craves
2. slay
3. chide
4. scape
5. charnel-house
6. shanks
7. chapless
8. vial
9. humour
10. surcease
11. supple
12. bier
13. drift
14. abate
15. afford

## Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "I do spy a kind of hope, / Which **craves** as desperate an execution / As that is desperate which we would prevent"  
a. cuts or engraves    b. prohibit; forbids    c. requires or demands    d. encourages; urges
2. "Thou hast the strength of will to **slay** thyself"  
a. kill; murder    b. act or pretend    c. excuse or forgive    d. believe in; trust
3. "A thing like death to **chide** away this shame, / That cop'st with death himself to scape from it"  
a. cleanse; clear    b. condemn or subdue    c. hide from; conceal    d. repeat or duplicate
4. "A thing like death to chide away this shame, / That cop'st with death himself to **scape** from it"  
a. escape; avoid    b. profit or gain    c. learn; understand    d. scratch or shave
5. "shut me nightly in a **charnel-house**, / O'er-cover'd quite with dead men's rattling bones"  
a. stable; barn    b. kitchen; cookery    c. tomb or vault for the dead    d. prison; jail
6. "With reeky **shanks** and yellow chapless skulls"  
a. legs or shins    b. steaks or roasts    c. bars; barricades    d. farm animals
7. "With reeky shanks and yellow **chapless** skulls"  
a. hatless; bare    b. hairless; bald    c. holy; honored    d. without a jaw
8. "Take thou this **vial**, being then in bed, / And this distilled liquor drink thou off"  
a. glass bottle    b. long, sheer cloth    c. evil thing; curse    d. pills or medicine
9. "through all thy veins shall run / A cold and drowsy **humour**"  
a. thigh bone    b. mood or feeling    c. song or lullaby    d. poison or toxin
10. "for no pulse / Shall keep his native progress, but **surcease**"  
a. improve; get better    b. stop or quit    c. quicken; increase    d. restart or begin
11. "Each part, depriv'd of **supple** government, / Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death"  
a. easy; uncomplicated    b. generous rules    c. wealth; plenty    d. flexible; limber
12. "In thy best robes, uncover'd, on the **bier**, / Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault / Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie"

a. altar    b. horse-drawn wagon    c. platform for a coffin    d. bed or mattress

13. "Shall Romeo by my letters know our **drift**; / And hither shall he come"

a. intention or plan    b. sorrow; grief    c. crime or wrongdoing    d. hideaway

14. "If no inconstant toy nor womanish fear / **Abate** thy valour in the acting it"

a. obey; follow    b. reward; benefit    c. decide or determine    d. weaken or lessen

15. "Love give me strength! and strength shall help **afford**"

a. pay for; give money    b. nerves or fear    c. provide; supply    d. silence or quiet