

◊ I.1 Enter Sampson and Gregory, with swords and bucklers, of the house of Capulet.

- 1 **SAMPSON** Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.
 2 **GREGORY** No, for then we should be colliers.
 3 **SAMPSON** I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.
 4 **GREGORY** Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.
SAMPSON I strike quickly, being moved.
GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.
SAMPSON A dog of the house of Montague moves me.
GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand.
 Therefore, if thou art moved, thou runn'st away.
 10 **SAMPSON** A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I
 11 will take the wall of any man or maid of Montague's.
 12 **GREGORY** That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest
 goes to the wall.
SAMPSON 'Tis true; and therefore women, being the
 15 weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall. Therefore I
 will push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his
 maids to the wall.
GREGORY The quarrel is between our masters, and us
 their men.
 20 **SAMPSON** 'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant. When
 I have fought with the men, I will be civil with the
 maids – I will cut off their heads.
GREGORY The heads of the maids?
SAMPSON Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maiden-
 25 heads. Take it in what sense thou wilt.
GREGORY They must take it in sense that feel it.

I.1 A public place in Verona s.d. *bucklers* small shields 1 *carry coals* i.e., suffer insults 2 *colliers* coal dealers 3 *an if*; *choler* anger; *draw* draw our swords 4 *collar* hangman's noose 11 *take the wall* pass on the inner and cleaner part of the sidewalk (not in the gutter) 12–13 *the weakest . . . wall* i.e., is pushed from his place (proverbial) 15 *weaker vessels* (cf. I Peter 3:7); *thrust . . . wall* (suggesting a sexual assault) 25–26 *sense . . . sense* meaning . . . physical sensation

- SAMPSON** Me they shall feel while I am able to stand; 27
 and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh. 28
GREGORY 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou
 hadst been Poor John. Draw thy tool! Here comes two 30
 of the house of Montagues.
Enter two other Servingmen [Abram and Balbasar].
SAMPSON My naked weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back
 thee.
GREGORY How? turn thy back and run?
SAMPSON Fear me not.
GREGORY No, marry. I fear thee! 36
SAMPSON Let us take the law of our sides; let them begin. 37
GREGORY I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as
 they list.
SAMPSON Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at 40
 them, which is disgrace to them if they bear it.
ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
SAMPSON I do bite my thumb, sir.
ABRAM Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
SAMPSON *[Aside to Gregory]* Is the law of our side if I
 say ay?
GREGORY *[Aside to Sampson]* No.
SAMPSON No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir;
 but I bite my thumb, sir.
GREGORY Do you quarrel, sir? 50
ABRAM Quarrel, sir? No, sir.
SAMPSON But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good
 a man as you.
ABRAM No better.

27 *stand* (punning on "have an erection") 28–29 *flesh . . . fish* (alluding to the proverb "Neither fish nor flesh"; "flesh" also suggests "penis") 30 *Poor John* dried hake, the cheapest fish; *tool* sword (punning on "penis," which Sampson continues in "naked weapon," l. 32) 36 *marry* indeed (originally an oath, on the name of the Virgin Mary); *I fear thee* to suppose me afraid of you is ridiculous 37 *take . . . of* have the law on 40 *bite my thumb* (an insulting gesture)