Enter Chorus.

Two households, both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene),
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-marked love
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which, if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Chorus exits.

Enter two Gentlemen, meeting.

First Gentleman.

Whence come you?

Second Gentleman.

From Verona.

First Gentleman.

Is there stir there?

Second Gentleman.

A most gentle

gentleman, the well-reputed brother

of Proteus, is arriv'd.

First Gentleman.

And how

go matters there?

Second Gentleman.

Well,

for the valiant Valerius, Martius' son,

Lives in the style of old Bellario.

First Gentleman.

What, is Bassianus possest of his country?

Second Gentleman.

No, not so, for he is gone to seek him.

First Gentleman.

Why, he is a worthy man.

Second Gentleman.

So some think him, but his worth is nothing

To what he thinks him. Ever his behaves him

So courteously, that his commendations

Exceed his qualities.

First Gentleman.

If he hath a horse that is faster than the

wind, let me have him; he that ever

saw him, when the gates are shut,

but at his book? He'll draw a companion

Out of the very hat

Where he doth lay his head.

Second Gentleman.

Nay, but his letters,

If you unseal them, are full of sentences,

That breathe the spirit of humble modesty.

He is a soul

That dares not venture on the consequence

But, in the way of meanness, husbandeth

Such haughty strokes

That manhood seems in him

So eschew'd,

So slow, so lazy, and so pale in venture,

That did not honour tack him to his side,

His cowardice would run away with him.

First Gentleman.

What trade is he of?

Second Gentleman.

Of all trades

I will not say he has an ignorant spirit,

But seek his praise in this;

That having nothing of his own to spend,

He easily borrows of other men's.

First Gentleman.

Nothing?

Second Gentleman.

Nothing.

First Gentleman.

Why, he's a beggar.

Second Gentleman.

Nay, that's not true; he has a thousand crowns

Of his own getting. But whate'er he has,

He lets me speak of him as I please.

First Gentleman.

Why, 'tis a favour.

Second Gentleman.

Yea, to help ill words

from the mouth of a well-meaning man.

Enter BASSIANUS and JUNIOR, his Son.

Here comes the good Bassianus,

And his son, a hopeful boy.

First Gentleman.

The boy has the face of Titus' brother.

Second Gentleman.

A noble boy.

First Gentleman.

And, to speak truth, the features of his father

Too much posterity. He is a pretty boy.

Bass. *[To his Son]*

What says my boy to this entertainment?

Jun.

Father, I would I had the grace

To set a form upon them.

Bass.

Thou hast all,

If these breeds no offence.

Jun.

No, my good lord.

Enter, from the other side, SABINUS and MARTIUS, with their attendants.

Sab.

Bless thee, fair son!

Bass.

Welcome, grave sir.

Sab.

How does your honour for this many a day?

Bass.

I thank you, well, my worthy friend.

Second Gentleman.

The good Valerius, well be with you!

Sab.

He must, sir, or he will wear a block alone.

Bass. *[To SABINUS]*

My worthy friend, I thank you for your pains.

First Gentleman.

My lord, his mocks are too profound for me.

Second Gentleman.

He has a continual good turn for the comic,

And he is welcome for his wit.

Jun.

Welcome, my lords.

Sab.

So, so, so.

Mart.

A fair beginning of a feast!

Bass.

Welcome, good Martius.

Mart.

No less to you,

And all the rest, good brethren, welcome all.

Jun.

Welcome, good mother, welcome, gentle Nan.

Nem.

My duty to you both, and welcome, gentle friends,

And you, my noble brother Bassianus!

Bass.

We thank you, gentle lady.

Nem.

And you, my lord.

Bass.

We thank you, gentle lady.

Sab.

So, so. So, so, so!

Nem.

You are welcome all. I thank you, lords,

For your good company.

Bass.

And we thank you, lady,
For your good welcome. Let me see your dinner got;
I am half-mad, and stark-mad too, for lack
Of company.

Sab.

It is well done, Bassianus.

Mart.

You are a merry man, Bassianus.

Bass.

Nay, I am sad; I have business in hand,
A tragedy of tears; and it is meet
That decent sorrow stop my mouth.

Enter a Servant.

Ser.

My lords, there are some strangers, knights and ladies,
At door that would have speech with you.

Bass.

Let them come in.

Enter SABINUS, MARS, and MARTIUS, with their attendants.

Sab.

My noble lords of Rome, my reasons for this change
Must rather by good write be set down,

Than by me spoken, for your eye reads my mind,

Where my tongue o'errunneth.

Mart.

We are much delighted.

Bass.

But what means, sir,

This soldier in our presence thus to scratch his head?

Mart.

I would you did like it, sir, 'twere a comesure

To drawen your thoughts from serious business

And give them liberty to revel in the pleasure

Of strange and readiness.

Sab.

I pray you, sir, what time o' day is it with you?

Mart.

The stroke of twelve.

Bass.

I thank you, sir.

Mart.

And, I pray you, what is the business that you follow?

I may not tell.

Bass.

'Tis no matter, sir.

Mart.

Yes, I will tell you, sir. I follow the wars.

Bass.

You might, sir, the wars are follow you.

Mart.

Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill tire.

Bass.

I pray you, come a little slower, for the day
Is hot, the Capulets abroad, and, if you pass
For a familiar of their house, you do
Run the assurance of being beaten.

Mart.

I love him well,
But he hates me;
Wherefore I have a claim of history
To entertain him with our horse-fight.

Mart.

He'll be apart to hear thy story,
And hold his credit with the Lady Lavinia.

Mart.

Why, let him, sir, an if he will.

Bass.

And for your part, thou, gentle Martius, sit,
And let the steward of my house inform thee
Of what concerneth thee. Thou know'st, my noble friend,
That on the twelfth of next month is she
Named Lavinia that must make her choice of Rome
Or of her kindred, and what blood is in her
The noble Titus will tell thee; and for me,
I shall beseech you, if you take not offense,
To lead her to him and to her gentle grandmother.

Mar.

I will, with all my heart, though I pretend no knowledge
Of what you speak.

Bass.

Good Lord, Lord Titus, see, the strangers are ready!

Tit.

Our pleasure, sir, is further to entreat you
That you would leave your friends and come to Rome.

Sab.

If I do, sir, must I have your word for 't
That I shall be consul when I come thither?

Tit.

You have my hand upon it.

Sab.

I will come,
And for this cause, to give my friend fair leave,
I'll take your horse and do admire their steps
Whilst you shall follow.

Tit.

I thank you for your pains,
And will make known unto the rulers of Rome
The strange adventure that hath fall'n this day.

Sab.

Farewell, my lord, I'll follow you with speed,
And at our house I'll wait upon your lordship.

Tit.

Farewell, my lord.

Bass.

I thank your lordship.

Mar.

Farewell, my noble lord.

Sab.

Farewell, my worthy friend.

Exeunt SABINUS, MARS, MARTIUS, and their attendants.

Tit.

See, brother, here's the letter I would have you send
Unto good Marcus Andronicus;
Tell him in brief I will not stoop to him,
Nor to his son, of whom I have received
This answer from Lord Titus Andronicus:
'Marcus Andronicus and his son shall never
Be consul and patrician of Rome.'
Give him this note back again, for I
Will not excuse the scorne I made him, nor
The blow which was the occasion of it.

Bass.

Hear you, my lord: I do beseech your honour
To pardon me.

Tit.

No more; I will hear no more.

Bass.

Then I will speak no more.

Tit.

Well then, no more; let it suffice, my lord,
That I am of a busy, traveling nature,
And stand in little steadiness.

Bass.

I am sure, my lord,
You are not treacherous; and it shall suffice
That I have hop'd you have not bid your friend
Good morrow with a heart dissembled;
Nor, as the times go, stood against him
With your great power, which good respect should
Have still made equal to a friend.

Tit.

I pray, let me know what I have done, or what
I have possess'd, or where I have transgress'd,
Wherein I should subject to your will and pleasure,
And not myself, in all I can command.

Bass.

Why, you are too violent, my lord; I say,
You are too violent in your affairs.

Tit.

You speak
By a sedate and quiet course; and I,
By a soberer and more temperate spirit,
Do meet your turbulence. How have I
Deserv'd this putting off, this moderate course?
Am I so few of friends, of followers, and

So many of foes, that my good will

Should only be confin'd to them?

Bass.

I hope,

You aim not, my good lord, at my life.

Tit.

No, not I; but yet I would have you think,

How you have ever found me a true friend;

And if I have subdu'd you, then, in sign

I have missaid myself; for it is not

The way to win a friend.

Bass.

My lord,

What I have done, I have done out of mere love,

And not for pride, as you do know, my lord.

Tit.

I know it well, and do respect you for it;

And therefore meet you here, to tell you so.

Bass.

I do beseech you, then, to speak your griefs

To those that wish you may not feel them.

Tit.

How now, my son!

My gentle Titus, why art thou in this place?

Tit.

I am mad, my lord, with writing for my brother;

My brain is giddy; ile run mad else.

Tit.

And well thou mayst;

Write him but thus: 'Marcus Andronicus,

Thy loving son, Titus Andronicus,

Sends thee this letter.' There, sign thy name, and

Give me the letter; I will send it.