

Romeo and Juliet

1.4

*Enter Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio, as masquers,
with five or six other masquers, [bearing a drum and
torches]*

ROMEO

What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse,
Or shall we on without apology?

BENVOLIO

The date is out of such prolixity.
We'll have no Cupid hoodwinked with a scarf,
Bearing a Tartar's painted bow of lath, 5
Scaring the ladies like a crowkeeper,
Nor no without-book Prologue faintly spoke
After the prompter for our entrance.
But let them measure us by what they will,
We'll measure them a measure, and be gone. 10

ROMEO

Give me a torch. I am not for this ambling;
Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

MERCUTIO

Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.

ROMEO

Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes
With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead 15
So stakes me to the ground 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 empierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound 20
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe;
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? It is too rough, 25

Too rude, too boist'rous, and it pricks like thorn.

MERCUTIO

If love be rough with you, be rough with love.
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.
Give me a case to put my visage in,
A visor for a visor. What care I
What curious eye doth quote deformity?
Here are the beetle brows shall blush for me.

30

[They put on visors]

BENVOLIO

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 sense-less rushes with their heels,
For I am proverbied with a grandsire phrase.
I'll be a candle-holder and look on.
The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.

35

[He takes a torch]

MERCUTIO

Tut, dun's the mouse, the constable's own word.
If thou art dun we'll draw thee from the mire
Of ~~±±~~save your reverence~~±±~~love, wherein thou stickest
Up to the ears. Come, we burn daylight, ho!

40

ROMEO

Nay, that's not so.

MERCUTIO I mean, sir, in delay

We waste our lights in vain, like lights by day.
Take our good meaning, for our judgement sits
Five times in that ere once in our five wits.

45

ROMEO

And we mean well in going to this masque,
But 'tis no wit to go.

MERCUTIO Why, may one ask?

ROMEO

I dreamt a dream tonight.

MERCUTIO And so did I.

50

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 Mab hath been with you.

BENVOLIO Queen Mab, what's she?

MERCUTIO

She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes 55

In shape no bigger than an agate stone

On the forefinger of an alderman,

Drawn with a team of little atomi

Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep.

Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs; 60

The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;

Her traces, of the moonshine's wat'ry beams;

Her collars, of the smallest spider web;

Her whip, of cricket's bone, the lash of film;

Her wagoner, a small grey-coated gnat 65

Not half so big as a round little worm

Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid.

Her chariot is an empty hazelnut

Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,

Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers. 70

And in this state she gallops night by night

Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;

O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies straight;

O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,

Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues 75

Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are.

Sometime she gallops o'er a lawyer's lip,

And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;

And sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail

Tickling a parson's nose as he lies asleep; 80

Then dreams he of another benefice.

Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck,

And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,

Of breaches, ambuscados, Spanish blades,

Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon 85

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 Mab

That plaits the manes of horses in the night,

And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs, 90
 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! 95
 Thou talk'st of nothing.

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 the air,
 And more inconstant than the wind, who woos 100
 Even now the frozen bosom of the north,
 And, being angered, puffs away from thence,
 Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.

BENVOLIO
 This wind you talk of blows us from ourselves.
 Supper is done, and we shall come too late. 105

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 despiseÁd life, closed in my breast, 110
 By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
 But he that hath the steerage of my course
 Direct my sail! On, lusty gentlemen.

BENVOLIO Strike, drum.
They march about the stage and [exeunt]