

Romeo and Juliet

From Act I, Scene iv

BENVOLIO Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.

MERCUTIO Without his roe, like a dried herring: flesh, flesh,
how art thou fishified! Now is he for the numbers
that Petrarch flowed in: Laura to his lady was but a
kitchen-wench; marry, she had a better love to
be-rhyme her; Dido a dowdy; Cleopatra a gipsy;
Helen and Hero hildings and harlots; Thisbe a grey
eye or so, but not to the purpose. Signior
Romeo, bon jour! there's a French salutation
to your French slop. You gave us the counterfeit
fairly last night.

ROMEO Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?

MERCUTIO The ship, sir, the slip; can you not conceive?

ROMEO Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great; and in
such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.

MERCUTIO That's as much as to say, such a case as yours
constrains a man to bow in the hams.

ROMEO Meaning, to court'sy.

MERCUTIO Thou hast most kindly hit it.

ROMEO A most courteous exposition.

MERCUTIO Nay, I am the very pink of courtesy.

ROMEO Pink for flower.

MERCUTIO Right.

ROMEO Why, then is my pump well flowered.

MERCUTIO Well said: follow me this jest now till thou hast
worn out thy pump, that when the single sole of it
is worn, the jest may remain after the wearing sole singular.

ROMEO O single-soled jest, solely singular for the
singleness.

MERCUTIO Come between us, good Benvolio; my wits faint.

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

MERCUTIO Nay, if thy wits run the wild-goose chase, I have done, for thou hast more of the wild-goose in one of thy wits than, I am sure, I have in my whole five: was I with you there for the goose?

ROMEO Thou wast never with me for any thing when thou wast not there for the goose.

MERCUTIO I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.

ROMEO Nay, good goose, bite not.

MERCUTIO Thy wit is a very bitter sweetening; it is a most sharp sauce.

ROMEO And is it not well served in to a sweet goose?

MERCUTIO O here's a wit of cheveril, that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad!

ROMEO I stretch it out for that word 'broad;' which added to the goose, proves thee far and wide a broad goose.

MERCUTIO Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature: for this drivelling love is like a great natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole.

BENVOLIO Stop there, stop there.

MERCUTIO Thou desirest me to stop in my tale against the hair.

BENVOLIO Thou wouldst else have made thy tale large.

MERCUTIO O, thou art deceived; I would have made it short: for I was come to the whole depth of my tale; and meant, indeed, to occupy the argument no longer.

ROMEO Here's goodly gear!
(Enter Nurse and PETER)