

Romeo and Juliet

In the famous garden scene, despite the family feud, a pair of innocent lovers express their love for each other. Shakespeare's humanism is evidently seen in his praise of human love and in his defiance of feudal discord.

Act II

Scene 2

ROMEO (*coming forward*)

.....

Juliet appears above at a window.

But, soft!! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon²
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious:
Her vestal livery³ is but sick and green⁴
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.
It is my lady! O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?
Her eye discourses: I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business⁵, do intreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres⁶ till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars⁷,
As daylight doth a lamp. Here eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream⁸ so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

JULIET

Ay me!

ROMEO

She speaks.

O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,

As is a winged messenger of heaven⁹
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes¹⁰
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,
When he bestrides¹¹ the lazy-pacing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny¹² thy father and refuse thy name:
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

ROMEO(aside)

Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy:
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet:
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name¹³, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

ROMEO

I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized,
Henceforth I never will be Romeo

JULIET

What man art thou that thus bescreen'd in night¹⁴
So stumblest on my counsel¹⁵?

ROMEO

By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am.
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee.
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

Notes on the text

1. soft: (exclamation) Be silent.
2. moon: The moon here is identified with the goddess Diana, the patroness of virgins.
3. vestal livery: virgin's uniform.

4. green: pale.
5. business: mission.
6. spheres: orbits.
7. shame those stars: put those stars to shame.
8. stream: flow (the brightness of her eyes would flow through the sky).
9. a winged messenger of heaven: an angel.
10. Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes: When an angel appears in the sky, people raised their heads and turned up their eyes to look at it with great wonder. The white shows when the eyes are turned upward.
11. bestrides: sits or stands with legs apart.
12. Deny: disown, refuse to acknowledge.
13. for that name: in return for the giving up of your name.
14. bescreen'd in the night: hid in the dark.
15. stumblest on my counsel: come unexpectedly upon my innermost thought.