

**ROMEO AND JULIET,**  
**BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

**ACT I, Scene 4: Mercutio's Speech to Queen Mab**



**Queen Mab**, engraving by William Say, 1827, after a painting by Alfred Edward Chalon

**MERCUTIO:** O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you. She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes In shape no bigger than an agate stone On the forefinger of an alderman, Drawn with a team of little atomies Over men's noses as they lie asleep; Her wagon spokes made of long spinners' legs, The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers; Her traces, of the smallest spider web; Her collars, of the moonshine's wat'ry beams; Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film; Her wagoner, a small grey-coated gnat, 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. 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 lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees; O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream, Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues, Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are. Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose, And then dreams he of smelling out a suit; And sometimes comes she with a tithe-pig's tail Tickling a parson's nose as 'a lies asleep, Then dreams he of another benefice. Sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck, And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats, Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades, Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon 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 plats the manes of horses in the night And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs, 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!