

Act 1 Scene 1

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE, with others

THESEUS

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
Another moon. But oh, methinks how slow
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
5 Like to a stepdame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night.
Four nights will quickly dream away the time.
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
10 New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments.
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth.
Turn melancholy forth to funerals.
15 The pale companion is not for our pomp.

Exit PHILOSTRATE

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA enter with PHILOSTRATE and others.

THESEUS

Our wedding day is almost here, my beautiful Hippolyta. We'll be getting married in four days, on the day of the new moon. But it seems to me that the days are passing too slowly—the old moon is taking too long to fade away! That old, slow moon is keeping me from getting what I want, just like an old widow makes her stepson wait to get his inheritance.

HIPPOLYTA

No, you'll see, four days will quickly turn into four nights. And since we dream at night, time passes quickly then. Finally the new moon, curved like a silver bow in the sky, will look down on our wedding celebration.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate, get the young people of Athens ready to celebrate and have a good time. Sadness is only appropriate for funerals. We don't want it at our festivities.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword
And won thy love doing thee injuries.
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.

*Enter **EGEUS** and his daughter **HERMIA**, and **LYSANDER** and **DEMETRIUS***

EGEUS

20 Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke.

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus. What's the news with thee?

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
25 This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.—
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love tokens with my child.
30 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,

Hippolyta, I wooed you with violence, using my sword, and got
you to fall in love with me by injuring you. But I'll marry you
under different circumstances—with extravagant festivals,
public festivities, and celebration.

***EGEUS** enters with his daughter **HERMIA**, and **LYSANDER** and **DEMETRIUS**.*

EGEUS

Long live Theseus, our famous and respected duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus. What's new with you?

EGEUS

I'm here, full of anger, to complain about my daughter Hermia.
—Step forward, Demetrius.—My lord, this man, Demetrius, has
my permission to marry her.—Step forward, Lysander.—But this
other man, Lysander, has cast a magic spell over my child's
heart.—You, you, Lysander, you've given her poems, and
exchanged tokens of love with my daughter. You've pretended
to be in love with her, singing fake love songs softly at her
window by moonlight, and you've captured her imagination by
giving her locks of your hair, rings, toys, trinkets, knickknacks,
little presents, flowers, and candies—things that can really
influence an impressionable young person. You've connived to
steal my daughter's heart, making her stubborn and harsh

Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers
35 Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
40 Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens.
As she is mine, I may dispose of her—
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death—according to our law
45 Immediately provided in that case.

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
50 By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is.

instead of obedient (like she should be).—And, my gracious duke, if she won't agree to marry Demetrius right now, I ask you to let me exercise the right that all fathers have in Athens. Since she belongs to me, I can do what I want with her—as the law says: I can either make her marry Demetrius—or have her killed.

THESEUS

What do you have to say for yourself, Hermia? Think carefully, pretty girl. You should think of your father as a god, since he's the one who gave you your beauty. To him, you're like a figure that he's sculpted out of wax, and he has the power to keep that figure intact or to disfigure it. Demetrius is an admirable man.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
55 The other must be held the worthier.

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold
60 Nor how it may concern my modesty
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts,
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS

65 Either to die the death or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires.
Know of your youth. Examine well your blood—
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
70 You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
To live a barren sister all your life,

You're right, Lysander's admirable too. But since your father
doesn't want him to marry you, you have to consider
Demetrius to be the better man.

HERMIA

I wish my father could see them with my eyes.

THESEUS

No, you must see them as your father sees them.

HERMIA

Your grace, please forgive me. I don't know what makes me
think I can say this, and I don't know if speaking my mind to
such a powerful and noble person as yourself will damage my
reputation for modesty. But please, tell me the worst thing that
could happen to me if I refuse to marry Demetrius.

THESEUS

You'll either be executed or you'll never see another man
again. So think carefully about what you want, beautiful
Hermia. Consider how young you are, and question your
feelings. Then decide whether you could stand to be a nun,
wearing a priestess's habit and caged up in a cloister forever,
living your entire life without a husband or children, weakly
chanting hymns to the cold and virginal goddess of the moon.
People who can restrain their passions and stay virgins forever

Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood
75 To undergo such maiden pilgrimage.
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

HERMIA

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
80 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship, whose unwishèd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

THESEUS

Take time to pause, and by the next new moon—
The sealing day betwixt my love and me
85 For everlasting bond of fellowship—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana's altar to protest
90 For aye austerity and single life.

DEMETRIUS

Relent, sweet Hermia—And, Lysander, yield
Thy crazèd title to my certain right.

LYSANDER

are holy. But although a virgin priestess might be rewarded in heaven, a married woman is happier on Earth. A married woman is like a rose who is picked and made into a beautiful perfume, while a priestess just withers away on the stem.

HERMIA

I'd rather wither away than give up my virginity to someone I don't love.

THESEUS

Take some time to think about this. By the time of the next new moon—the day when Hippolyta and I will be married—be ready either to be executed for disobeying your father, to marry Demetrius as your father wishes, or to take a vow to spend the rest of your life as a virgin priestess of the moon goddess.

DEMETRIUS

Please give in, sweet Hermia.—And Lysander, stop acting like she's yours. I've got more of a right to her than you do.

LYSANDER

You have her father's love, Demetrius.
Let me have Hermia's. Do you marry him.

EGEUS

95 Scornful Lysander, true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

LYSANDER

(to THESEUS) I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
100 As well possessed. My love is more than his.
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked,
(If not with vantage) as Demetrius'.
And—which is more than all these boasts can be—
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
105 Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul. And she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry
110 Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

THESEUS

I must confess that I have heard so much
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof,
But being overfull of self-affairs,

Her father loves you, Demetrius. So why don't you marry him
and let me have Hermia?

EGEUS

It's true, rude Lysander, I do love him. That's why I'm giving him
my daughter. She's mine, and I'm giving her to Demetrius.

LYSANDER

(to THESEUS) My lord, I'm just as noble and rich as he is. I love
Hermia more than he does. My prospects are as good as his, if
not better. And beautiful Hermia loves me—which is more
important than all those other things I'm bragging about. Why
shouldn't I be able to marry her? Demetrius—and I'll say this to
his face—courted Nedar's daughter, Helena, and made her fall
in love with him. That sweet lady, Helena, loves devoutly. She
adores this horrible and unfaithful man.

THESEUS

I have to admit I've heard something about that, and meant to
ask Demetrius about it, but I was too busy with personal
matters and it slipped my mind.—Anyway, Demetrius and

My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come.
115 And come, Egeus. You shall go with me.
I have some private schooling for you both.—
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will,
Or else the law of Athens yields you up
120 (Which by no means we may extenuate)
To death, or to a vow of single life.—
Come, my Hippolyta. What cheer, my love?—
Demetrius and Egeus, go along.
I must employ you in some business
125 Against our nuptial and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

EGEUS

With duty and desire we follow you.

*Exeunt. Manent **LYSANDER** and **HERMIA***

LYSANDER

How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

HERMIA

130 Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

Egeus, both of you, come with me. I want to say a few things to you in private.—As for you, beautiful Hermia, get ready to do what your father wants, because otherwise the law says that you must die or become a nun, and there's nothing I can do about that.—Come with me, Hippolyta. How are you, my love? —Demetrius and Egeus, come with us. I want you to do some things for our wedding, and I also want to discuss something that concerns you both.

EGEUS

We're following you not only because it is our duty, but also because we want to.

*They all exit except **LYSANDER** and **HERMIA**.*

LYSANDER

What's going on, my love? Why are you so pale? Why have your rosy cheeks faded so quickly?

HERMIA

Probably because my cheeks' roses needed rain, which I could easily give them with all the tears in my eyes.

LYSANDER

Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.

135 But either it was different in blood—

HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffèd in respect of years—

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

140 O hell, to choose love by another's eyes!

LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,

LYSANDER

Oh, honey! Listen, in books they say that true love always faces
obstacles. Either the lovers have different social standings—

HERMIA

Oh, what an obstacle that would be! Imagine being too high on
the social ladder, and falling in love with someone beneath
you.

LYSANDER

Or else they were very different ages—

HERMIA

How awful! Being too old to marry someone young.

LYSANDER

Or else their guardians and advisors said no—

HERMIA

What hell, to have your love life determined by someone else!

LYSANDER

Or, even if the lovers are a good match, their love might be
ruined by war, death, or sickness, so that the affair only lasts an
instant. Their time together might be as fleeting as a shadow or
as short as a dream, lasting only as long as it takes a lightning

145 Brief as the lightning in the collied night;
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and Earth,
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.
So quick bright things come to confusion.

HERMIA

150 If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny.
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
155 Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

LYSANDER

A good persuasion. Therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child.
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues,
160 And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee.
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night.
165 And in the wood, a league without the town—

Where I did meet thee once with Helena

bolt to flash across the sky. Before you can say "look," it's gone.
That's how intense things like love are quickly destroyed.

HERMIA

If true lovers are always thwarted, then it must be a rule of fate.
So let's try to be patient as we deal with our problem. It's as
normal a part of love as dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears.

LYSANDER

That's the right attitude. So, listen, Hermia. I have an aunt who
is a widow, who's very rich and doesn't have any children. She
lives about twenty miles from Athens, and she thinks of me as
a son. I could marry you there, gentle Hermia, where the strict
laws of Athens can't touch us. So here's the plan. If you love
me, sneak out of your father's house tomorrow night and meet
me in the forest a few miles outside of town.

You remember the place—I met you there once with Helena to

To do observance to a morn of May—
There will I stay for thee.

HERMIA

My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
170 By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,
175 By all the vows that ever men have broke
(In number more than ever women spoke),
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA

HERMIA

180 Godspeed, fair Helena! Whither away?

HELENA

Call you me "fair"? That "fair" again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!
Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air

celebrate May Day.—I'll wait for you there.

HERMIA

Oh, Lysander, I swear I'll be there tomorrow. I swear by Cupid's strongest bow and his best gold-tipped arrow, by the Goddess of Love's innocent doves, by everything that ties lovers together, by the bonfire where Queen Dido burned herself to death when her lover Aeneas jilted her, and by all the promises that men have broken (and men have broken more promises than women have ever made). I give you my word, I will meet you at that spot tomorrow.

LYSANDER

Keep your promise, my love. Look, here comes Helena.

HELENA enters.

HERMIA

Hello, beautiful Helena! Where are you going?

HELENA

Did you just call me "beautiful"? Take it back. You're the beautiful one as far as Demetrius is concerned. Oh, you're so lucky! Your eyes are like stars, and your voice is more musical

More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear
185 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching. Oh, were favor so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go.
My ear should catch your voice. My eye, your eye.
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
190 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

O, teach me how you look and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA

195 Oh, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

Oh, that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

than a lark's song is to a shepherd in the springtime. Sickness is contagious—I wish beauty were contagious too! I would catch your good looks before I left. My ear would be infected by your voice, my eye by your eye, and my tongue would come down with a bad case of your melodious speech. If the world were mine, I'd give it all up—everything except Demetrius—to be you.

Oh, teach me how you look the way you do, and which tricks you used to make Demetrius fall in love with you.

HERMIA

I frown at him, but he still loves me.

HELENA

Oh, if only my smiles could inspire love as effectively as your frowns!

HERMIA

I curse him, but he loves me.

HELENA

If only my prayers could inspire that kind of affection!

HERMIA

The more I hate him, the more he follows me around.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

200 His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA

None, but your beauty. Would that fault were mine!

HERMIA

Take comfort. He no more shall see my face.

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see

205 Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.

Oh, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.

Tomorrow night when Phoebe doth behold

210 Her silver visage in the watery glass,

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass

(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

HERMIA

(to HELENA) And in the wood where often you and I

215 Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

The more I love him, the more he hates me.

HERMIA

It's not my fault he acts like that, Helena.

HELENA

That's true, it's your beauty's fault. I wish I had a fault like that!

HERMIA

Don't worry. He won't see my face ever again. Lysander and I

are running away from here. Before I saw Lysander, Athens

seemed like paradise to me. But Lysander's so attractive that

he's turned heaven into hell!

LYSANDER

Helena, we'll tell you about our secret plan. Tomorrow night,

when the moon shines on the water and decorates the grass

with tiny beads of pearly light (the time of night that always

hides runaway lovers), we plan to sneak out of Athens.

HERMIA

(to HELENA) In the woods where you and I used to lounge

around on the pale primroses, telling each other sweet secrets

—that's where Lysander and I will meet.

There my Lysander and myself shall meet.
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes
To seek new friends and stranger companies.

220 Farewell, sweet playfellow. Pray thou for us.
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!—
Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

Exit HERMIA

Helena, adieu.

225 As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

Exit LYSANDER

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.
He will not know what all but he do know.
230 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.

From then on we'll turn our backs on Athens. We'll look for new friends and keep the company of strangers. Goodbye, old friend. Pray for us, and I hope you win over Demetrius!—Keep your promise, Lysander. We need to stay away from each other until midnight tomorrow.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

HERMIA exits.

Goodbye, Helena. I hope Demetrius comes to love you as much as you love him!

LYSANDER exits.

HELENA

It's amazing how much happier some people are than others! People throughout Athens think I'm as beautiful as Hermia. But so what? Demetrius doesn't think so, and that's all that matters. He refuses to admit what everyone else knows. But even though he's making a mistake by obsessing over Hermia so much, I'm also making a mistake, since I obsess over him. Love can make worthless things beautiful. When we're in love, we don't see with our eyes but with our minds. That's why

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind.
235 And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste—
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
240 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine.

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
245 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
Pursue her. And for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
250 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

Exit

Enter **QUINCE** the carpenter, and **SNUG** the joiner, and
BOTTOM the weaver, and **FLUTE** the bellows-mender, and
SNOUT the tinker, and **STARVELING** the tailor

paintings of Cupid, the god of love, always show him as blind.
And love doesn't have good judgment either—Cupid, has
wings and no eyes, so he's bound to be reckless and hasty.
That's why they say love is a child. because it makes such bad
choices. Just as boys like to play games by telling lies, Cupid
breaks his promises all the time. Before Demetrius ever saw
Hermia, he showered me with promises and swore he'd be
mine forever.

But when he got all hot and bothered over Hermia, his
promises melted away. I'll go tell Demetrius that Hermia is
running away tomorrow night. He'll run after her. If he's grateful
to me for this information, it'll be worth my pain in helping him
pursue my rival Hermia. At least I'll get to see him when he
goes, and then again when he comes back.

HERMIA *exits.*

Act 1 Scene 2

QUINCE, the carpenter, enters with **SNUG**, the cabinetmaker;
BOTTOM, the weaver; **FLUTE**, the bellows-repairman; **SNOUT**,
the handyman; and **STARVELING**, the tailor.

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

BOTTOM

You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

QUINCE

Here is the scroll of every man's name which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding day at night.

BOTTOM

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

QUINCE

5 Marry, our play is *The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.—Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.—Masters, spread yourselves.

QUINCE

Answer as I call you.—Nick Bottom, the weaver?

BOTTOM**QUINCE**

Is everyone here?

BOTTOM

You should call their names *generally*, one person at a time, in the order in which their names appear on this piece of paper.

QUINCE

This is a list of the names of all the men in Athens who are good enough to act in the play we're going to perform for the duke and duchess on their wedding night.

BOTTOM

First, Peter Quince, tell us what the play is about, then read the names of the actors, and then shut up.

QUINCE

All right. Our play is called *A Very Tragic Comedy About the Horrible Deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

BOTTOM

Let me tell you, it's a great piece of work, and very—funny.—Now, Peter Quince, call the names of the actors on the list. Men, gather around him.

QUINCE

Answer when I call your name.—Nick Bottom, the weaver?

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

10 What is Pyramus? A lover or a [tyrant](#)?

QUINCE

A lover that kills himself, most gallant, for love.

BOTTOM

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms. I will condole in some measure.—To the rest.—Yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in to make all split.

The raging rocks

And shivering shocks

Shall break the locks

Of prison gates.

And Phoebus' car

Shall shine from far

And make and mar

The foolish Fates.

This was lofty!—Now name the rest of the players.—This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more condoling.

Here. Tell me which part I'm going to play, then go on.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, have been cast as Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What's Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover who kills himself very nobly for love.

BOTTOM

I'll have to cry to make my performance believable. And as soon as I start crying, oh boy, the audience had better watch out, because they'll start crying too. I'll make tears pour out of their eyes like rainstorms. I'll moan very believably.—Name the other actors.—But I'm really in the mood to play a tyrant. I could do a great job with Hercules, or any other part that requires ranting and raving. I would rant and rave really well. Like this, listen.

The raging rocks

And shivering shocks

Will break the locks

Of prison gates.

And the sun-god's car

Will shine from far

Away, and make and mar

Foolish fate.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

FLUTE

15 Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman. I have a beard coming.

QUINCE

20 That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

BOTTOM

Oh, that was truly inspired!—Now tell us who the other actors are.—By the way, my performance just now was in the style of Hercules, the tyrant style. A lover would have to be weepier, of course.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-repairman?

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you'll be playing the role of Thisbe.

FLUTE

Who's Thisbe? A knight on a quest?

QUINCE

Thisbe is the lady Pyramus is in love with.

FLUTE

No, come on, don't make me play a woman. I'm growing a beard.

QUINCE

That doesn't matter. You'll wear a mask, and you can make your voice as high as you want to.

BOTTOM

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too! I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: "Thisne, Thisne!"—"Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear, thy Thisbe dear and lady dear!"

QUINCE

No, no. You must play Pyramus.—And Flute, you Thisbe.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

²⁵ Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's mother.—Tom Snout, the tinker?

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You, Pyramus' father.—Myself, Thisbe's father.—Snug the joiner, you, the lion's part.—And I hope here is a play fitted.

SNUG

In that case, if I can wear a mask, let me play Thisbe too! I'll be Pyramus first: "Thisne, Thisne!"—And then in falsetto: "Ah, Pyramus, my dear lover! I'm your dear Thisbe, your dear lady!"

QUINCE

No, no. Bottom, you're Pyramus.—And Flute, you're Thisbe.

BOTTOM

All right. Go on.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you're going to play Thisbe's mother.—Tom Snout, the handyman.

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You'll be Pyramus's father—I'll play Thisbe's father myself—Snug, the cabinetmaker, you'll play the part of the lion.—So that's everyone. I hope this play is well cast now.

SNUG

Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

QUINCE

30 You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me. I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again. Let him roar again."

QUINCE

An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek. And that were enough to hang us all.

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM

I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us. But I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove. I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

QUINCE

Do you have the lion's part written down? If you do, please give it to me, because I need to start learning the lines. It takes me a long time to learn things.

QUINCE

You can improvise the whole thing. It's just roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too. I'll roar so well that it'll be an inspiration to anyone who hears me. I'll roar so well that the duke will say, "Let him roar again. Let him roar again."

QUINCE

If you roar too ferociously, you'll scare the duchess and the other ladies and make them scream. And that would get us all executed.

ALL

Yeah, that would get every single one of us executed.

BOTTOM

Well, my friends, you've got to admit that if you scare the living daylights out of the ladies, they'd have no choice but to execute us. But I'll soften my voice—you know, [aggravate](#) it, so to speak—so that I'll roar as gently as a baby dove. I'll roar like a sweet, peaceful nightingale.

QUINCE

35 You can play no part but Pyramus. For Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day, a most lovely, gentlemanlike man. Therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

QUINCE

Why, what you will.

BOTTOM

I will discharge it in either your straw-color beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French crown-color beard, your perfect yellow.

QUINCE

Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced.—But masters, here are your parts. And I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you to con them by tomorrow night and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

You can't play any part except Pyramus. Because Pyramus is a good-looking man, the most handsome man that you could find on a summer's day, a lovely gentlemanly man. So you're the only one who could play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

Well then, I'll do it. What kind of beard should I wear for the part?

QUINCE

Whatever kind you want, I guess.

BOTTOM

I'll play the part wearing either a straw-colored beard, or a sandy beard, or a red beard, or one of those bright yellow beards that's the color of a French coin.

QUINCE

Some French people don't have beards at all, because syphilis has made all their hair fall out, so you might have to play the part clean-shaven.—But gentlemen, here are your scripts, and I beg you to please learn them by tomorrow night. Meet me in the duke's forest a mile outside of town. It's best to rehearse there, because if we do it here in the city, we'll be bothered by crowds of people and everyone will know the plot of our play. Meanwhile, I'll make a list of props that we'll need for the play. Now make sure you show up, all of you. Don't leave me in the lurch.

BOTTOM

40 We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely
and courageously. Take pains. Be perfect. Adieu.

QUINCE

At the duke's oak we meet.

BOTTOM

Enough. Hold, or cut bowstrings.

Exeunt

BOTTOM

We'll be there, and there we'll rehearse courageously and
wonderfully, truly obscenely. Work hard, know your lines.
Goodbye.

QUINCE

We'll meet at the giant oak tree in the duke's forest.

BOTTOM

Got it? Be there, or don't show your face again.

They all exit.

Act 2 Scene 1

*Enter a FAIRY at one side and ROBIN (ROBIN GOODFELLOW)
at another*

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire.
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon's sphere.

*A FAIRY and ROBIN GOODFELLOW (a "puck" or mischievous
spirit) meet onstage.*

ROBIN

Hello, spirit! Where are you going?

FAIRY

I go over hills and valleys, through bushes and thorns, over
parks and fenced-in spaces, through water and fire. I wander
everywhere faster than the moon revolves around the Earth. I
work for Titania, the Fairy Queen, and organize fairy dances for
her in the grass. The cowslip flowers are her bodyguards. You'll
see that their petals have spots on them—those are rubies,

And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be.
In their gold coats spots you see.
Those be rubies, fairy favors.
In those freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits. I'll be gone.
Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The king doth keep his revels here tonight.
5 Take heed the queen come not within his sight.
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath
Because that she, as her attendant hath
A lovely boy stolen from an Indian king.
She never had so sweet a changeling.
10 And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.

And now they never meet in grove or green,
15 By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen.
But they do square, that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

fairy gifts. Their sweet smells come from those little freckles.
Now I have to go find some dewdrops and hang a pearl earring
on every cowslip flower. Goodbye, you dumb old spirit. I've got
to go. The queen and her elves will be here soon.

ROBIN

The king's having a party here tonight. Just make sure the
queen doesn't come anywhere near him, because King
Oberon is extremely angry. He's furious because she stole an
adorable boy from an Indian king. She's never kidnapped such
a darling human child before, and Oberon's jealous. He wants
the child for himself, to accompany him on his wanderings
through the wild forests. But the queen refuses to hand the
boy over to Oberon. Instead, she puts flowers in the boy's hair
and makes a fuss over him.

And now Oberon and Titania refuse to speak to each other, or
meet each other anywhere—neither in the forest nor on the
plain, nor by the river nor under the stars. They always argue,

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
20 Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
25 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that "Hobgoblin" call you, and "sweet Puck,"
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

ROBIN

Thou speak'st aright.
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
30 I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
35 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale

and the little fairies get so frightened that they hide in acorn cups and won't come out.

FAIRY

Unless I'm mistaken, you're that mischievous and naughty spirit named Robin Goodfellow. Aren't you the one who goes around scaring the maidens in the village, stealing the cream from the top of the milk, screwing up the flour mills, and frustrating housewives by keeping their milk from turning into butter? Aren't you the one who keeps beer from foaming up as it should, and causes people to get lost at night, while you laugh at them? Some people call you "Hobgoblin" and "sweet Puck," and you're nice to them. You do their work for them and give them good luck. That's you, right?

ROBIN

What you say is true. That's me you're talking about, the playful wanderer of the night. I tell jokes to Oberon and make him smile. I'll trick a fat, well-fed horse into thinking that I'm a young female horse. Sometimes I hide at the bottom of an old woman's drink disguised as an apple. When she takes a sip, I bob up against her lips and make her spill the drink all over her withered old neck. Sometimes a wise old woman with a sad story to tell tries to sit down on me, thinking I'm a three-legged stool. But I slip from underneath her and she falls down, crying,

Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
40 And "Tailor!" cries, and falls into a cough,
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

45 And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

*Enter **OBERON**, the King of Fairies, at one side with his train,
and **TITANIA**, the Queen, at the other, with hers*

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon?—Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

50 Then I must be thy lady. But I know

"Ow, my butt!" and starts coughing, and then everyone laughs
and has fun. But step aside, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here's my mistress, Titania. I wish he'd go away!

***OBERON**, the Fairy King, and his followers enter. On the opposite
side of the stage, **TITANIA**, the Fairy Queen, and her followers
enter.*

OBERON

How *not* nice to see you, Titania.

TITANIA

What, are you jealous, Oberon?—Fairies, let's get out of here.
I've sworn I'll never sleep with him or talk to him again.

OBERON

Wait just a minute, you brazen hussy. Aren't you supposed to
obey me, your lord and husband?

TITANIA

When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
55 Come from the farthest step of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

60 How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? Glance at my credit
with Hippolyta,
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægles break his faith,
65 With Ariadne and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy.
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
70 Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.

If you're my lord and husband, I must be your lady and wife, so you're supposed to be faithful to me. But I know for a fact that you snuck away from Fairyland disguised as a shepherd, and spent all day playing straw pipes and singing love poems to your new girlfriend. The only reason you left India was to come here and see that butch Amazon Hippolyta. She was your boot-wearing mistress and your warrior lover, and now that she's getting married to Theseus, you've come to celebrate their marriage.

OBERON

How can you stand there shamelessly talking about me and Hippolyta, when you know that I know about your love for Theseus? Weren't you the one who made him desert Perigouna in the middle of the night, right after he'd raped her? And weren't you the one who made him cheat on all of his other girlfriends, like Aegles, Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are nothing but jealous lies. Since the beginning of midsummer, my fairies and I haven't been able to meet anywhere to do our dances in the wind without being disturbed by you and your arguments. We haven't been able to meet on a hill or in a valley, in the forest or a meadow, by a pebbly fountain or a rushing stream, or on the beach by the ocean without you disturbing us. And because you interrupt us

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
75 Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
80 Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
85 For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
90 That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
95 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,

so that we can't dance for them, the winds have made fogs rise up out of the sea and fall down on the rivers so that the rivers flood, just to get revenge on you. So all the work that oxen and farmers have done in plowing the fields has been for nothing, because the unripe grain has rotted before it was ripe. Sheep pens are empty in the middle of the flooded fields, and the crows get fat from eating the dead bodies of infected sheep. All the fields where people usually play games are filled with mud, and you can't even see the elaborate mazes that people create in the grass, because no one walks in them anymore and they've all grown over. It's not winter here for the human mortals, so they're not protected by the holy hymns and carols that they sing in winter. So the pale, angry moon, who controls the tides, fills the air with diseases. As a consequence of this bad weather and these bad moods the seasons have started to change. Cold frosts spread over the red roses, and the icy winter wears a crown of sweet summer flowers as some sick joke. Spring, summer, fertile autumn and angry winter have all changed places, and now the confused world doesn't know which is which. And this is all because of our argument. We are responsible for this.

By their increase, now knows not which is which.

100 And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension.
We are their parents and original.

OBERON

Do you amend it then. It lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

105 I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest.

The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order,
And in the spiced Indian air by night

110 Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

115 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following—her womb then rich with my young squire—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

120 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.

OBERON

Do something about it, then. You have the power to fix it. Why would Titania want to argue with her Oberon? All I'm asking for is to have that little human boy as part of my crew.

TITANIA

Get over it. I won't give up this child for all of Fairyland. His mother was one of my worshippers, and we always used to gossip together at night in India, sitting together by the ocean and watching the merchant ships sailing on the ocean. We used to laugh to see the sails fill up with wind so that they looked like they had big, pregnant bellies, as if the wind had gotten them pregnant. She would imitate them—since she was already pregnant with the little boy—and she would go sailing over the land herself to go get me little presents, and come back carrying gifts like she was a ship coming back from a voyage. But since she was a mortal, she died giving birth to that boy, and for her sake I'm raising him and will not give him up.

And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.

125 If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us.
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away!

130 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

*Exeunt **TITANIA** and her train*

OBERON

Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.—(to ROBIN GOODFELLOW)
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
135 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath

OBERON

How long do you plan to stay here in this forest?

TITANIA

Maybe until after Theseus's wedding day. If you behave yourself and join us in our circle dance and moonlight celebrations, then you can come with us. If not, leave me alone, and I'll stay away from your turf.

OBERON

Give me that boy and I'll come with you.

TITANIA

Not for your entire fairy kingdom.—Come, fairies, let's go. We're going to have an out-and-out brawl if I stay any longer.

***TITANIA** and her **FAIRIES** exit.*

OBERON

Well, go on your way, then. You won't leave this grove until I've paid you back for this insult. (to ROBIN GOODFELLOW) My dear Puck, come here. You remember the time when I was sitting on a cliff, and I heard a mermaid sitting on a dolphin's back sing such a sweet and harmonious song that it calmed

That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid's music?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

140 That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
145 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passèd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
150 Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.
And maidens call it "love-in-idleness."
Fetch me that flower. The herb I showed thee once.
155 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again

the stormy sea and made stars shoot out of the sky so they
could hear her better?

ROBIN

Yes, I remember.

OBERON

That same night, I saw Cupid flying from the moon to the earth,
with all of his arrows ready. (You couldn't see him, but I could.)
He took aim at a beautiful young virgin who was sitting on a
throne in the western part of the world, and he shot his arrow
of love well enough to have pierced a hundred thousand
hearts. But I could see that Cupid's fiery arrow was put out by
watery, virginal moonbeams, so the royal virgin continued her
virginal thoughts without being interrupted by thoughts of love.
But I paid attention to where Cupid's arrow fell. It fell on a little
western flower, which used to be white as milk but now has
turned purple from being wounded by the arrow of love.
Young girls call it "love-in-idleness." Bring me that flower. I
showed it to you once. If its juice is put on someone's eyelids
while they're asleep, that person will fall in love with the next
living creature he or she sees. Bring me this plant, and get
back here before the sea monster has time to swim three
miles.

Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

160 I'll put a girdle round about the Earth
In forty minutes.

*Exit **ROBIN***

OBERON

Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon—
165 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey or on busy ape—
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from of her sight—
As I can take it with another herb—
170 I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible.
And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter **DEMETRIUS**, **HELENA** following him*

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
175 The one I'll stay, the other stayeth me.

ROBIN

I could go around the world in forty minutes.

***ROBIN** exits.*

OBERON

When I have the juice of that flower, I'll trickle some drops of it
on Titania's eyes while she's sleeping. She'll fall madly in love
with the first thing she sees when she wakes up—even if it's a
lion, a bear, a wolf, a bull, a monkey, or an ape. And before I
make her normal again—I can cure her by treating her with
another plant—I'll make her give me that little boy as my page.
But who's that coming this way? I'll make myself invisible and
listen to their conversation.

***DEMETRIUS** enters, followed by **HELENA**.*

DEMETRIUS

Look, I don't love you, so stop following me around. Where are
Lysander and beautiful Hermia? Lysander I want to stop, but
Hermia stops my heart from beating. You told me they

Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood.
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

180 You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant.
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
185 Or rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot, love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel. And, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
190 Use me but as your spaniel—spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me. Only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love—
And yet a place of high respect with me—
195 Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

escaped into this forest. And here I am, going crazy in the
middle of the woods because I can't find my Hermia. Go away,
get out of here, and stop following me.

HELENA

You attract me to you, you cruel magnet! But you must not
attract iron, because my heart is as true as steel. If you let go of
your power to attract me, I won't have any power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I ask you to follow me? Do I speak to you kindly? Don't I tell
you in the clearest terms that I do not and cannot love you?

HELENA

Yes, but that makes me love you even more. I'm your little dog,
Demetrius. The more you beat me, the more I'll love you. Treat
me like you would treat a dog—kick me, hit me, neglect me, try
to lose me. Just let me follow behind you, even though I'm not
good enough for you. Could I ask for a worse place in your
heart than to be treated as you would treat a dog? And yet I
would consider it an honor to be your dog.

DEMETRIUS

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit.
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much,
200 To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not,
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

HELENA

205 Your virtue is my privilege. For that
It is not night when I do see your face.
Therefore I think I am not in the night.
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world.
210 Then how can it be said I am alone
When all the world is here to look on me?

DEMETRIUS

I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

HELENA

Don't push it. Just looking at you makes me sick.

HELENA

And I get sick when I can't look at you.

DEMETRIUS

You're risking your reputation by leaving the city and stalking
someone who doesn't love you. Standing around alone in a
deserted area in the middle of the night isn't the best way to
protect your virginity.

HELENA

I rely on your virtue to protect me. And because I can see your
shining face, it doesn't feel like nighttime to me. This forest
doesn't seem deserted when you're here, because you are all
the world to me. So how can anyone say I'm alone, when the
whole world is here to look at me?

DEMETRIUS

I'll run away from you and hide in the bushes, and leave you to
the mercy of wild animals.

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
215 Run when you will, the story shall be changed.

Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase.
The dove pursues the griffin. The mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger—bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valor flies.

DEMETRIUS

220 I will not stay thy questions. Let me go.
Or if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

HELENA

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
225 Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

Exit DEMETRIUS

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.

Exit HELENA

The wildest animal isn't as cruel as you are. Run whenever you
want to. The story of Daphne and Apollo will be changed:

the lustful god Apollo runs away from the virginal nymph
Daphne who pursues him, the dove chases after the griffin,
which is usually its predator, and the gentle deer tries to hunt
down the tiger—speed is useless when the cowardly person
chases and the brave person runs away.

DEMETRIUS

I'm not sticking around to listen to you any longer. Leave me
alone. Or if you follow me, you'd better understand that I'll do
something bad to you in the forest.

HELENA

Yes, you already hurt me in the church, in the town, and in the
fields. Shame on you, Demetrius! Your behavior is an insult to
all women. We cannot fight for love as men can. We should be
pursued and courted. We weren't made to do the pursuing.

DEMETRIUS exits.

I'll follow you and turn this hell I'm in into a kind of heaven. It
would be heavenly to be killed by someone I love so much.

HELENA exits.

OBERON

230 Fare thee well, nymph. Ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

Enter ROBIN

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.

OBERON

I pray thee, give it me.

(takes flower from ROBIN)

235 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
240 Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
245 *(gives ROBIN some of the flower)*

Take thou some of it and seek through this grove:

OBERON

Goodbye, nymph. Before he leaves this part of the forest, you'll change places: you'll be the one running away, and he'll be in love with you.

ROBIN enters.

Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

ROBIN

Yes, here it is.

OBERON

Please, give it to me. *(he takes the flower from ROBIN)* I know a place where wild thyme blooms, and oxlips and violets grow. It's covered over with luscious honeysuckle, sweet muskroses and sweetbrier.

Titania sleeps there sometimes at night, lulled to sleep among the flowers by dances and other delights. Snakes shed their skin there, and the shed skin is wide enough to wrap a fairy in. I'll put the juice of this flower on Titania's eyes, and fill her with horrible delusions and desires. *(he gives ROBIN part of the flower)* You take some of it too, and look around in this part of the forest. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a young man who wants nothing to do with her. Put some of this flower's

A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes.
But do it when the next thing he espies
250 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

255 Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall do so.

Exeunt severally

juice on his eyes, and make sure to do it in such a way that the next thing he sees will be the lady. You'll be able to tell it's him because he's wearing Athenian clothes. Do it carefully, so that he'll end up loving her more than she loves him. And then make sure to meet me before the rooster's first crow at dawn.

ROBIN

Don't worry, sir. I'm at your service.

They all exit, separately.

Act 2 Scene 2

*Enter **TITANIA**, Queen of Fairies, with her train of **FAIRIES***

TITANIA

Come now, a roundel and a fairy song.
Then for the third part of a minute, hence—
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
Some war with reremice for their leathern wings
5 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep.
Then to your offices and let me rest.

***FAIRIES** sing*

***TITANIA**, the Fairy Queen, enters with her following of **FAIRIES**.*

TITANIA

Come, dance in a circle and sing a fairy song, and then go off for a while to do your work. Some of you will kill the worms infesting the rosebuds, some of you will fight with bats to get their leathery wings, so we can make coats for my small elves. Some of you will keep that loud owl away, the one that hoots and wonders every night at us dainty fairies. Sing me to sleep now, and then go off to do your duties and let me rest.

*The **FAIRIES** sing.*

FIRST FAIRY

(sings)

*You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong.
Come not near our fairy queen.*

FAIRIES

¹⁰ *(sing)*

*Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby.*

FIRST FAIRY

(sings)

*Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!*

*Beetles black, approach not near.
Worm nor snail, do no offense.*

FAIRIES

(sing)

FIRST FAIRY

(singing)

*Snakes with forked tongues,
And porcupines, don't be seen.
Deadly lizards, don't be mean.
Don't come near our fairy queen.*

FAIRIES

(singing)

*Nightingale, melodiously
Sing our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Let no harm
Or spell or charm
Come near our lovely lady.
Say good night with a lullaby.*

FIRST FAIRY

(singing)

*Spiders with your webs, stay away.
You long-legged things, begone!*

*Black beetles, don't come near.
Worms and snails, don't be bad.*

FAIRIES

(singing)

*Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby.*

TITANIA *sleeps*

SECOND FAIRY

Hence, away! Now all is well.
One aloof stand sentinel.

Exeunt FAIRIES

Enter OBERON

OBERON

¹⁵ *(squeezing flower juice on TITANIA 's eyelids)*

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take.
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce or cat or bear,
²⁰ Pard or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear,
When thou wakest, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.

*Nightingale, melodiously
Sing our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Let no harm
Or spell or charm
Come near our lovely lady.
Say good night with a lullaby.*

TITANIA *falls asleep.*

SECOND FAIRY

Okay, let's go! Everything's fine now. One of us will stay and stand guard.

The FAIRIES exit.

OBERON *enters.*

OBERON

(he squeezes flower juice on TITANIA 's eyelids)

Whatever you see first when you wake up, think of it as your true love. Love him and yearn for him, even if he's a lynx, a cat, a bear, a leopard, or a wild boar. Whatever's there when you wake up will be dear to you. Wake up when something nasty is nearby.

Exit OBERON

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA

LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood.

25 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way.

We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good.

And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

Be it so, Lysander. Find you out a bed,

For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER

30 One turf shall serve as pillow for us both.

One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

HERMIA

Nay, good Lysander. For my sake, my dear,

Lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.

LYSANDER

O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence.

35 Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean that my heart unto yours is knit

OBERON *exits.*

LYSANDER and **HERMIA** *enter.*

LYSANDER

My love, you look like you're about to faint from wandering in the woods for so long, and to tell you the truth, I've gotten us lost.

We'll take a rest, if you think it's a good idea, and wait until daylight when things will be easier.

HERMIA

Let's do that, Lysander. Find something to cushion you while you sleep. I'm going to rest my head on this little slope.

LYSANDER

We can both sleep together on the grass. We'll have one heart, one bed, two bodies, and one faithful vow.

HERMIA

No, Lysander. Please, for my sake, sleep a little farther away.

Don't sleep so close to me.

LYSANDER

Oh, sweetheart, I didn't mean anything naughty when I said that. When lovers talk to each other, their hearts should understand each other. I just meant that our hearts are joined,

So that but one heart we can make of it.
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath—
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
40 Then by your side no bed room me deny.
For, lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
45 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off in human modesty.
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid.
So far be distant. And, good night, sweet friend.
50 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

LYSANDER

Amen, amen to that fair prayer, say I.
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed. Sleep give thee all his rest!

HERMIA

With half that wish the wisher's eyes be pressed!

HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep

Enter ROBIN

so we can almost think of them as one heart. Our two bodies are linked together by the promises we've made to each other, so there are two bodies and one faithful vow. So let me sleep next to you. If I lie *next* to you, I won't lie *to* you—I'll be faithful and respect you.

HERMIA

Lysander's got a way with words. I would certainly be rude and shameful if I had implied that you were a liar. But please, darling, sleep a little farther away so we can behave properly. It's only proper for a well-behaved bachelor and a well-behaved girl to be physically separated like this. Stay away for now, and good night, my sweet friend. I hope your love for me remains this strong for your entire life!

LYSANDER

Amen to that. I hope my life ends before my loyalty to you does. I'll sleep over here. Sleep well!

HERMIA

You sleep well too.

HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep. ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Through the forest have I gone.
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.

55 *(sees LYSANDER and HERMIA)*

Night and silence! Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
This is he, my master said,
Despisèd the Athenian maid.
And here the maiden, sleeping sound
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! She durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.

(squeezes flower juice on LYSANDER's eyelids)

Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wakest, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.
So awake when I am gone,
For I must now to Oberon.

Exit **ROBIN**

Enter **DEMETRIUS** and **HELENA**, running

ROBIN

I've been through the entire forest, but I haven't found any Athenian man to use the flower on. *(he sees LYSANDER and HERMIA)* Wait a second, who's this? He's wearing Athenian clothes. This must be the guy who rejected the Athenian girl. And here's the girl, sleeping soundly on the damp and dirty ground. Pretty girl! She shouldn't lie near this rude and heartless man. *(he puts flower juice on LYSANDER 's eyelids)* Jerk, I throw all the power of this magic charm on your eyes. When you wake up, let love keep you from going back to sleep. Wake up when I'm gone, because now I have to go to Oberon.

ROBIN *exits.*

DEMETRIUS and **HELENA** *enter, running.*

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

HELENA

O, wilt thou darkling leave me? Do not so.

DEMETRIUS

60 Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go.

Exit DEMETRIUS

HELENA

Oh, I am out of breath in this fond chase.

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,

For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.

65 How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.

If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,

For beasts that meet me run away for fear.

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

70 Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

HELENA

Stop, Demetrius! Stop, even if only to kill me.

DEMETRIUS

I'm telling you, get out of here, and don't follow me around like this.

HELENA

Oh, will you leave me alone in the dark? Don't.

DEMETRIUS

Stay here at your own risk. I'm going on alone.

DEMETRIUS exits.

HELENA

Oh, I'm out of breath from this foolish chase. The more I pray, the less I get out of it. Hermia is lucky, wherever she is, because she has beautiful eyes. How did her eyes get so bright? Not from crying. If that's the case, tears wash my eyes more than hers. No, no, I'm as ugly as a bear, since animals that see me run away in terror. So it's no surprise that Demetrius runs away from me as if I were a monster. What evil and deceitful mirror made me think I could rival Hermia's starry eyes? (*she sees* LYSANDER) But who's this here? Lysander, on the ground? Is he dead or sleeping? I don't see any blood or injuries—Lysander, if you're alive, wake up.

(sees LYSANDER) But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?

Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—

75 Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

LYSANDER

(waking) And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word

80 Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander. Say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia? No. I do repent

85 The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love.

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason swayed,

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

90 Things growing are not ripe until their season.

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.

And touching now the point of human skill,

LYSANDER

(waking up) I'd even run through fire if you told me to. Radiant, beautiful Helena! I feel like Mother Nature has allowed me to see into your heart, as if by magic. Where is Demetrius? Oh, I'd kill that name with my sword if I could!

HELENA

Don't say that, Lysander. Don't say that. Why do you care that he loves Hermia? What does it matter? Hermia still loves you, so be happy.

LYSANDER

Happy with Hermia? No. I regret all the boring time I wasted with her. I don't love Hermia; I love Helena. Who wouldn't love a dove more than a crow? A man's desires are influenced by his logical mind, and it's simply logical that you're more worthy of love than Hermia is.

Fruits and vegetables don't ripen until the right season of the year. Likewise, I'm young, and my sense of reason has just ripened. I can finally see the light. My logic has more control

Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
95 Love's stories written in love's richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
100 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well. Perforce I must confess
105 I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
Oh, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused!

Exit HELENA

LYSANDER

She sees not Hermia.—Hermia, sleep thou there.
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
110 For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive,

over my desires than it used to, and it's telling me to look into
your eyes, where I see every love story ever told.

HELENA

Why does everyone always make fun of me? What have I done
to deserve this kind of treatment from you? Is it not enough, is
it not enough, young man, that I'll never be pretty enough to
get a kind look from Demetrius? Do you have to harp on my
inadequacy? My God, it's wrong for you to woo me in such a
cruel, disdainful way. But goodbye. I have to tell you, I thought
you were a much kinder person than this. Oh, how awful that a
lady who's been rejected by one man should therefore be
treated horribly by another one!

HELENA exits.

LYSANDER

She doesn't see Hermia—Hermia, keep sleeping, and don't
come near me ever again! Eating too many sweets makes
people sick to their stomachs, and people always hate the
mistakes they made in the past worse than anyone else hates
those mistakes. Hermia, you're the sweet I've had too much of,
and the mistake I used to make, so I hate you more than

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
115 Of all be hated, but the most of me.—
And all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight.

Exit **LYSANDER**

HERMIA

(waking) Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
120 Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here.
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel pray.
Lysander!—What, removed?—Lysander, lord!—
125 What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word?—
Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? Then I well perceive you all not nigh.
Either death or you I'll find immediately.

Exit

*TITANIA sleeps. Enter the clowns: **BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING***

BOTTOM

anyone else does.—I'll use all my talents and efforts to serve
Helen and bring her honor.

***LYSANDER** exits.*

HERMIA

(waking up) Help me, Lysander, help me! Get this snake off of
my chest. Oh, my God! What a terrible dream I just had!
Lysander, look how I'm shaking from fear. I thought a snake
was eating my heart while you sat smiling and watching.
Lysander!—What, is he gone?—Lysander, my lord!—What, is he
out of earshot? Gone? No answer, nothing? Oh, God, where are
you? Say something if you can hear me. Say something,
please! I'm almost fainting with fear. Nothing? Then I guess
you're nowhere nearby. I'll find you—or die—right away.

***HERMIA** exits.*

Act 3 Scene 1

*While **TITANIA** is asleep onstage, the clowns—**BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING**—enter.*

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

Pat, pat. And here's a marvelous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house, and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

5 There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

SNOUT

By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING

I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

BOTTOM

Not a whit. I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no

Are we all here?

QUINCE

Right on time. This is the perfect place to rehearse. This clearing will be the stage, and this hawthorn bush will be our dressing room. Let's put on our play exactly as we'll perform it for the duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince—

QUINCE

What is it, jolly Bottom?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never work. First of all, Pyramus has to take out a sword to kill himself, which the ladies in the audience won't be able to stand. What should we do about that?

SNOUT

By God, that's a real problem, it's true.

STARVELING

I think we'll have to leave out all the killing, come to think of it.

BOTTOM

Not at all! I've got a plan that will fix everything. Write me a prologue that I can recite to the audience before the play

harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed. And for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear.

QUINCE

Well. We will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

BOTTOM

¹⁰ No, make it two more. Let it be written in eight and eight.

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves. To bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing. For there is not a more fearful wildfowl than your lion living. And we ought to look to 't.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

starts. I'll tell them that we won't hurt anyone with our swords, and that Pyramus isn't really dead. And to make it even clearer, we can tell them that I'm playing Pyramus but I'm not really Pyramus—really, I'm Bottom the weaver. That'll keep them from being afraid.

QUINCE

All right, we'll have a prologue then. We'll write it in alternating eight- and six-syllable lines, just like in a ballad.

BOTTOM

No, add a couple more syllables. Make it eight and eight.

SNOUT

Won't the ladies be scared of the lion?

STARVELING

I'm really worried about that.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you ought to think to yourself, bringing in—God forbid!—a lion amongst ladies is really terrible. There's no scarier wild bird than the living lion, and we should remember that.

SNOUT

So we need another prologue to tell everyone he's not a real lion.

BOTTOM

15 Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck. And he himself must speak through, saying thus—or to the same defect—"Ladies," or "Fair ladies," "I would wish you" or "I would request you" or "I would entreat you" "not to fear, not to tremble, my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing. I am a man as other men are." And there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

QUINCE

Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber. For, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNOUT

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac. Find out moonshine, find out moonshine!

QUINCE

(takes out a book) Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM

No, we can just announce the actor's name, and let his face show through the lion costume, and have him say something himself. He should say the following, or something else to the same [defect](#)—"Ladies," or "Lovely ladies," "I would like to ask you" or "I would like to request of you" or "I would like to beg you" "not to be afraid, and not to tremble with fear. I value your lives as highly as my own. If you thought I was a real lion, I would be risking my life. But no, I am not at all a lion. I am a man, just like other men." And then he should say his name, and tell them plainly that he's Snug the carpenter.

QUINCE

All right, that's what we'll do then. But there are two things we still have to figure out. How are we going to bring moonlight into a room? Because, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNOUT

Will the moon be shining on the night we're performing our play?

BOTTOM

We need a calendar! Look in the almanac. Look up moonshine, look up moonshine!

QUINCE

(he takes out a book) Yes, the moon will shine that night.

BOTTOM

20 Why then, may you leave a casement of the great chamber window where we play open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

QUINCE

Ay. Or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber. For Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT

You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

BOTTOM

Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him to signify wall. And let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

QUINCE**BOTTOM**

Well then, you can leave one of the windows open in the big hall where we'll be performing, and the moon can shine in through the window.

QUINCE

Yes, or else someone will have to come in carrying a bundle of sticks and a lantern and say he's come to [disfigure](#), or represent, the character of Moonshine, because the man in the moon is supposed to carry sticks and a lantern. But there's still another problem: we need to have a wall in the big hall, because according to the story, Pyramus and Thisbe talked through a little hole in a wall.

SNOUT

You'll never be able to bring in a wall. What do you think, Bottom?

BOTTOM

Someone should play the part of Wall. He can have some plaster or clay or limestone or something on him to show the audience he's a wall. He can hold his fingers in a V-shape like this, and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper to each other through that little crack.

QUINCE

If that may be then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts.—Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake.—And so everyone according to his cue.

*Enter **ROBIN** unseen*

ROBIN

25 *(aside)* What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor.
An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM

30 *(as PYRAMUS)* Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet—

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS)

—odors savors sweet,

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

And by and by I will to thee appear.

35 But hark, a voice!

If we can do that, everything will be all right. Now sit down, everybody, and rehearse your parts—Pyramus, you start. When you have said your lines, go hide in that bush.—Everyone else, go there too when you're not onstage.

***ROBIN** enters, unseen by the characters onstage.*

ROBIN

(to himself) Who are these country bumpkins swaggering around so close to where the fairy queen is sleeping? What? Are they about to put on a play? I'll watch. And I'll act in it, too, if I feel like it.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus.—Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) Thisbe, flowers with sweet odious smells—

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) —odors and smells are like your breath, my

dearest Thisbe dear. But what's that, a voice! Wait here a while.

I'll be right back!

Stay thou but here awhile,

Exit **BOTTOM**

ROBIN

(aside) A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

Exit **ROBIN**

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUINCE

Ay, marry, must you. For you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

FLUTE

(as THISBE) Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
40 Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire.
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

QUINCE

"Ninus' tomb," man. Why, you must not speak that yet. That you answer to Pyramus. You speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter. Your cue is past. It is "never tire."

BOTTOM *exits.*

ROBIN

(to himself) That's the strangest Pyramus I've ever seen.

ROBIN *exits.*

FLUTE

Am I supposed to talk now?

QUINCE

Yes, you are. You're supposed to show that you understand that Pyramus just went to check on a noise he heard and is coming right back.

FLUTE

(as THISBE) Most radiant Pyramus, you are as white as a lily, and the color of a red rose on a splendid rosebush, a very lively young man and also a lovely Jew. You are as reliable as a horse that never gets tired. I'll meet you, Pyramus, at Ninny's grave.

QUINCE

That's "Ninus's grave," man. And don't say all of that yet. You're supposed to say some of it as a reply to Pyramus. You just said

FLUTE

45 Oh. (as thisbe) As true as truest horse that yet would never tire.

*Enter **BOTTOM**, with an ass's head, and **ROBIN***

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.

QUINCE

Oh, monstrous! Oh, strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters! Fly, masters! Help!

*Exeunt **QUINCE**, **FLUTE**, **SNUG**, **SNOUT**, and **STARVELING***

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll lead you about a round
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier.
50 Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire.
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

all your lines at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter. You missed your cue. It's "never get tired."

FLUTE

Oh! (as THISBE) As reliable as a horse that never gets tired.

***ROBIN** enters with **BOTTOM**, with a donkey's head instead of a human head.*

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS) If I were handsome, my lovely Thisbe, I would still want only you.

QUINCE

Help! It's a monster! We're being haunted. Run, everyone, run!

***QUINCE**, **FLUTE**, **SNUG**, **SNOUT**, and **STARVELING** exit.*

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll run you around in circles, through bogs and bushes and woods and thorns. Sometimes I'll take the shape of a horse, sometimes I'll take the shape of a hound or a pig or a headless bear. Sometimes I'll turn into fire! And I'll neigh like a horse and bark like a hound and grunt like a pig and roar like a bear and burn like a fire at every turn.

*Exit **ROBIN***

BOTTOM

Why do they run away? This is a knavery of them to make me
afeard.

*Enter **SNOUT***

SNOUT

55 O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?

BOTTOM

What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?

*Exit **SNOUT***

*Enter **QUINCE***

QUINCE

Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated.

*Exit **QUINCE***

BOTTOM

I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me, to fright me if
they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they

***ROBIN** exits.*

BOTTOM

Why are they running away? This is some joke of theirs to
scare me.

***SNOUT** enters.*

SNOUT

Oh, Bottom, you've changed! What have you got on your
head?

BOTTOM

What do you think I've got on my head? You're acting like an
ass, don't you think?

***SNOUT** exits.*

***QUINCE** enters.*

QUINCE

God bless you, Bottom, God bless you. You've been changed.
Reborn.

***QUINCE** exits.*

BOTTOM

I see what they're up to. They want to make an ass of me, to
scare me if they can. But I won't leave this spot, no matter what

can. I will walk up and down here and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

(sings)

*The ouzel cock, so black of hue
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill—*

TITANIA

60 *(waking)* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM

(sings)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And dares not answer "Nay"—*

For indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird?
Who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo" never so?

TITANIA

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
65 Mine ear is much enamored of thy note.

they do. I'll walk up and down and sing a song, so they'll know I'm not afraid.

(singing)

*The blackbird with its black feathers
And its orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its clear voice,
The wren with its small, piping chirp—*

TITANIA

(waking up) What angel is this who's waking me up from my bed of flowers?

BOTTOM

(singing)

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his simple song
That many men hear
But they don't dare say no to it—*

Of course they don't say "no"! Who'd waste his time talking to such a stupid bird? Who'd bother to accuse [a bird of lying](#), even if the bird were telling him that his wife was cheating on him?

TITANIA

Please sing again, sweet human. I love to listen to your voice, and I love to look at your body. I know this is the first time I've

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape.
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM

Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that.
70 And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company
together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest
neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can glee upon
occasion.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

Not so, neither. But if I had wit enough to get out of this wood,
I have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
75 I am a spirit of no common rate.
The summer still doth tend upon my state.
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
80 And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so

ever seen you, but you're so wonderful that I can't help
swearing to you that I love you.

BOTTOM

I don't think you've got much of a reason to love me. But to tell
you the truth, reason and love have very little to do with each
other these days. It's too bad some mutual friend of theirs
doesn't introduce them. Ha, ha! No, I'm just kidding.

TITANIA

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

No, that's not true. But if I were smart enough to get out of this
forest, I'd be wise enough to satisfy myself.

TITANIA

Don't bother wishing you could leave this forest, because
you're going to stay here whether you want to or not. I'm no
ordinary fairy. I rule over the summer, and I love you. So come
with me. I'll give you fairies as servants, and they'll bring you
jewels from the depths of the ocean, and sing to you while you
sleep on a bed of flowers. And I'll turn you into a spirit like us,
so you won't die as humans do.—Come here, Peaseblossom,
Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

*Enter four fairies: **PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED***

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

MOTH

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

ALL

85 Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.

90 The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes

*Four fairies—**PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED**—enter.*

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

Me too.

MOTH

Me too.

MUSTARDSEED

And me too.

ALL

Where should we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and polite to this gentleman. Follow him around. Leap and dance for him. Feed him apricots and blackberries, with purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries. Steal honey from the bumblebees, and make candles out of the bees' wax. Light them with the light of glowworms, so my love will have light when he goes to bed and wakes up. Pluck off colorful butterfly

To have my love to bed and to arise.
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
95 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

COBWEB

Hail.

MOTH

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

I cry your worships' mercy, heartily.—I beseech your worship's name.

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

100 I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman?

wings, and use them to fan moonbeams away from his eyes as he sleeps. Bow to him, fairies, and curtsy to him.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hello, mortal!

COBWEB

Hello!

MOTH

Hello!

MUSTARDSEED

Hello!

BOTTOM

I beg your pardon, sirs.—Please tell me your name, sir?

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

I'd like to get to know you better, Mr. Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I'll use you as a bandage to stop the bleeding.—And your name, sir?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother,
and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master
Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—
Your name, I beseech you, sir?

MUSTARDSEED

105 Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well. That
same cowardly, giantlike ox-beef hath devoured many a
gentleman of your house. I promise you your kindred hath
made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more
acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Come, wait upon him. Lead him to my bower.
The moon methinks looks with a watery eye.
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
110 Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue. Bring him silently.

Exeunt

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

Please, give my regards to your mother, Mrs. Peapod, and your
father, Mr. Peapod. Good Mr. Peaseblossom, I'd like to get to
know you better too.—And you, may I ask what your name is,
sir?

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Mr. Mustardseed, I know you very well. Those cowardly,
gigantic sides of beef have been responsible for many of your
family members getting eaten as a condiment on beef. I swear
to you, many members of your mustard family have made my
eyes water before. I look forward to getting to know you better,
Mr. Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Take good care of him. Take him to my sleeping area. The
moon looks sad to me. When she cries, all the little flowers cry
too. They're sad because someone is prevented from having
sex—or is having it against her will. Keep my lover quiet. Bring
him to me in silence.

They all exit.

Act 3 Scene 2

*Enter **OBERON**, King of Fairies, solus*

OBERON

I wonder if Titania be awaked.

Then, what it was that next came in her eye,

Which she must dote on in extremity.

*Enter **ROBIN***

Here comes my messenger.—How now, mad spirit?

5 What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

ROBIN

My mistress with a monster is in love.

Near to her close and consecrated bower,

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,

A crew of patches, rude mechanicals

10 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,

Were met together to rehearse a play

Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.

The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,

Who Pyramus presented in their sport,

15 Forsook his scene and entered in a brake,

When I did him at this advantage take,

An ass's noll I fixèd on his head.

Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,

***OBERON**, the Fairy King, enters.*

OBERON

I wonder if Titania is awake yet, and if she is, I wonder what the first thing she saw was. Whatever it is, she must be completely in love with it now.

***ROBIN** enters.*

Ah, here comes my messenger.—What's going on, you crazy spirit? What havoc have you wreaked in this part of the forest?

ROBIN

My mistress Titania is in love with a monster. While she was sleeping in her bed of flowers, a group of bumbling idiots, rough workmen from Athens, got together nearby to rehearse some play they plan to perform on Theseus's wedding day. The stupidest one, who played Pyramus in their play, finished his scene and went to sit in the bushes to wait for his next cue. I took that opportunity to stick a donkey's head on him. When it was time for him to go back onstage and talk to his Thisbe, he came out of the bushes and everyone saw him. His friends ran away as fast as ducks scatter when they hear a hunter's gunshot. One of them was so frightened when he heard my footsteps that he yelled, "Murder!" and called for help from Athens. They were all so afraid that they completely lost their

And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
20 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky—
So at his sight away his fellows fly;
25 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls.

He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch,
30 Some sleeves, some hats—from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear
And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
When in that moment so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

35 This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

ROBIN

I took him sleeping—that is finished too—
And the Athenian woman by his side,
40 That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

common sense. They started to become scared of inanimate objects, terrified by the thorns and briars that catch at their clothing and pull off their sleeves and hats. I led them on in this frightened, distracted state, and left sweet

Pyramus there, transformed into someone with a donkey's head. At that exact moment, Titania woke up and immediately fell in love with him, an ass.

OBERON

This is going even better than I planned. But have you put the love juice from the flower on the eyes of that Athenian, as I asked you to do?

ROBIN

Yes, I found him when he was asleep—so that's taken care of too—and the Athenian woman was sleeping near him. When he woke up, he must have seen her.

Enter **DEMETRIUS** and **HERMIA**

OBERON

(aside to ROBIN) Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

ROBIN

(aside to OBERON) This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why rebuke you him that loves you so?

Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA

45 Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse.

For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.

If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,

Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,

And kill me too.

50 The sun was not so true unto the day

As he to me. Would he have stolen away

From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon

This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon

May through the center creep and so displease

55 Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.

It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.

DEMETRIUS and **HERMIA** enter.

OBERON

(speaking so that only ROBIN can hear) Step aside. Here's the Athenian coming now.

ROBIN

(speaking so that only OBERON can hear) That's definitely the woman I saw, but it's not the same man.

DEMETRIUS

Why are you so rude to someone who loves you so much?

Save that kind of harsh language for your worst enemy.

HERMIA

I'm only scolding you now, but I should treat you much worse, because I'm afraid you've given me good reason to curse you.

If you killed Lysander while he was sleeping, then you're already up to your ankles in blood. You might as well jump right into a bloodbath and kill me, too.

He was more faithful to me than the sun is to the daytime.

Would he have snuck away from me while I was asleep? I'll

believe that when I believe that there's a hole through the

center of the earth, and the moon has passed all the way

through to the other side. The only possibility is that you've

murdered him. A murderer should look like you do, so pale and grim.

So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

So should the murdered look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.

60 Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA

What's this to my Lysander? Where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

65 Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou drivest me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never numbered among men!
Oh, once tell true, tell true even for my sake—
Durst thou have looked upon him being awake,
70 And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it, for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.

DEMETRIUS

That's how someone who's been murdered should look, and
that's how I look. You've pierced me through the heart with
your cruelty, and yet you, the murderer, look as bright and
clear as a star in the sky.

HERMIA

What does that have to do with my Lysander? Where is he?
Oh, good Demetrius, will you find him for me?

DEMETRIUS

I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

Get out, dog! You've driven me to my wit's end. Did you kill
him, then? From now on I won't even consider you a human
being. Oh, just tell the truth for once. tell the truth, if only for
my sake.—Would you have even dared to look at him when he
was awake? And did you kill him while he was sleeping? Oh,
how brave of you! A snake could do that as easily as you could.
A snake did do it, because no snake ever had a more forked,
lying tongue than you have.

DEMETRIUS

75 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood.
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA

I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.

80 And from thy hated presence part I so.
See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

Exit HERMIA

DEMETRIUS

There is no following her in this fierce vein.
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

85 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe,
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.
(lies down and sleeps)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite,
90 And laid the love juice on some true love's sight.

You're getting all worked up over a misunderstanding. I didn't
kill Lysander. ?As far as I know, he's not even dead.

HERMIA

Then please tell me he's all right.

DEMETRIUS

If I told you that, what would I get out of it?

HERMIA

The privilege of never seeing me again. And now I'm going to
leave your despised company. You'll never see me again,
whether or not he's dead.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

I can't go after her when she's in a rage like this. So I'll stay here
for a while. Sadness gets worse when you haven't had enough
sleep. I'll try to sleep a little here. (DEMETRIUS *lies down and
falls asleep*)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What have you done? You've made a mistake and
put the love-juice on someone else, someone who was truly in

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o'errules that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

95 About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find—
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
100 I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

ROBIN

I go, I go. Look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

Exit ROBIN

OBERON

(squeezing flower juice into DEMETRIUS 's eyes)

Flower of this purple dye,
105 Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.

love. Because of your mistake someone's true love must have turned bad, instead of this man's false love being turned into a true love.

ROBIN

In that case, it must be fate. That's the way of the world. For every man who's faithful to his true love, a million end up running after a different lover.

OBERON

Go around the forest, moving faster than the wind, and make sure you find Helena of Athens.—She's lovesick, and her face is pale from all the sighing she's been doing, because sighing is bad for the blood. Bring her here with some trick or illusion, and I'll put the charm on his eyes for when she comes.

ROBIN

I go, I go, look at me go—faster than an arrow from a [Tartar's](#) bow.

ROBIN exits

OBERON

(putting flower juice on DEMETRIUS 's eyelids)

You purple flower, hit by Cupid's arrow, sink into the pupils of this man's eyes. When he sees the girl he should love, make her seem as bright to him as the evening star. Young man,

When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.

110 When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

*Enter **ROBIN***

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth, mistook by me,
115 Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

ROBIN

120 Then will two at once woo one.
That must needs be sport alone.
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

*Enter **LYSANDER** and **HELENA***

when you wake up, if she's nearby, beg her to cure your
lovesickness.

***ROBIN** enters.*

ROBIN

Helena is nearby, boss. The young man who I mistook for this
one is there too, begging her to love him. Should we watch this
ridiculous scene? Lord, what fools these mortals are!

OBERON

Step aside. The noise they're making will wake up Demetrius.

ROBIN

Then the two of them will both pursue one girl. That will be
funny enough, and preposterous situations are my favorite
thing.

***LYSANDER** and **HELENA** enter.*

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

125 Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Look, when I vow, I weep. And vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA

130 You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!

These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,

135 Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS**LYSANDER**

Why do you think I'm making fun of you when I tell you I love you? People don't cry when they're mocking someone.

Look, when I swear that I love you, I cry, and when someone cries while he's making a promise, he's usually telling the truth. How can it seem like I'm making fun of you, when my tears prove that I'm sincere?

HELENA

You get trickier and trickier. You've made the same promises to me and to Hermia—they can't both be true! They must both be false. The promises you're making to me belong to Hermia.

Will you abandon her? If you weighed the promises you made to me against the promises you made to her, they'd come out the same—they both weigh nothing. They're lies.

LYSANDER

I wasn't thinking clearly when I made those promises to her.

HELENA

And I don't believe you're thinking clearly now, as you break those promises.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he doesn't love you.

DEMETRIUS

(waking) O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!

140 To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. Oh, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
145 When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
150 You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so

155 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena—
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
160 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort

(waking up) Oh Helena, you goddess, you divine and perfect nymph! What can I compare your eyes to? Crystal isn't as clear as they are. Oh, your lips are as ripe as a pair of tempting cherries touching each other! The pure white of the snow on a mountaintop seems black as a crow's wing next to the whiteness of your hands. Oh, let me kiss your beautiful white hand. It'll make me so happy!

HELENA

Damn it! I see you're all determined to gang up on me for a few laughs. If you had any manners at all, you wouldn't treat me like this. Can't you just hate me, as I know you do? Do you have to get together to humiliate me too? If you were real men, as you pretend to be, you wouldn't treat a lady this way, making vows and promises and praising my beauty when I know you're really both disgusted by me. You're competing for

Hermia's love, and now you're competing to see which one of you can make fun of me the most. That's a great idea, a really manly thing to do—making a poor girl cry! No respectable person would offend an innocent girl just to have some fun.

A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.

165 For you love Hermia. This you know I know.

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up my part.

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,

Whom I do love and will do till my death.

HELENA

170 Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.

If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,

And now to Helen is it home returned,

175 There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,

Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.

Look, where thy love comes. Yonder is thy dear.

LYSANDER

Don't be cruel, Demetrius. I know you love Hermia, and you know I know it. Right here, right now, I swear I'm giving up all my claims on her and handing her to you. In exchange, give up your claim to love Helena, since I love her and will love her until I die.

HELENA

Nobody's ever gone to so much trouble just to make fun of someone.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep your Hermia. I don't want her. If I ever loved her, all that love is gone now. My love for her was temporary. Now I'll love Helena forever.

LYSANDER

Helena, it's not true.

DEMETRIUS

Don't insult a deep love that you don't understand, or you'll pay the price. Look, here comes the woman you love.

*Enter **HERMIA***

HERMIA

180 Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes.
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found.
185 Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
190 Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

***HERMIA** enters.*

HERMIA

It's hard to see clearly in the dark of night, but it's easier to hear well.

I couldn't see you, Lysander, but I heard your voice, and that's how I found you. Why did you leave me alone so unkindly?

LYSANDER

Why stay when love tells you to go?

HERMIA

But what love could make my Lysander leave me?

LYSANDER

I had to hurry to my love, beautiful Helena, who lights up the night better than all those fiery stars. Why are you looking for me? Didn't you figure out that I left you because I hate you?

HERMIA

You can't mean what you're saying. It's impossible.

HELENA

195 Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.—
Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
200 To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—oh, is it all forgot?
205 All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
210 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry—seeming parted
But yet an union in partition—
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
215 So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crownèd with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder

HELENA

So, she's in on this too! Now I see that all three of them have gotten together to play this cruel trick on me. Hurtful Hermia, you ungrateful girl, have you conspired with these two to provoke me with this horrible teasing? Have you forgotten all the talks we've had together, the vows we made to be like sisters to one another, all the hours we spent together, wishing that we never had to say goodbye—have you forgotten? Our friendship in our schooldays, our childhood innocence? We used to sit together and sew one flower with our two needles, sewing it on one piece of cloth, sitting on the same cushion, singing one song in the same key, as if our hands, our sides, our voices and our minds were stuck together. We grew together like twin cherries—which seemed to be separate but were also together—two lovely cherries on one stem.

We seemed to have two separate bodies, but we had one heart. Do you want to destroy our old friendship by joining these men to insult your poor friend? It's not friendly, and it's

To join with men in scorning your poor friend?

220 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.

Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,

Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

I am amazèd at your passionate words.

I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

225 Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,

To follow me and praise my eyes and face?

And made your other love, Demetrius—

Who even but now did spurn me with his foot—

To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,

230 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this

To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander

Deny your love, so rich within his soul,

And tender me, forsooth, affection,

But by your setting on, by your consent?

235 What though I be not so in grace as you—

So hung upon with love, so fortunate—

But miserable most, to love unloved?

This you should pity rather than despise.

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

not ladylike. All women would be angry with you for doing it, even though I'm the only one who's hurt by it.

HERMIA

I'm completely dumbfounded by what you're saying. I'm not insulting you. It sounds more like you're insulting me.

HELENA

Come on, confess. Didn't you send Lysander, as an insult, to follow me around praising my eyes and my face? Haven't you made your other love, Demetrius—who kicked me with his foot not long ago—call me a goddess and a divine, rare, precious, heavenly creature? Why does he talk like that to a girl he can't stand? And why does Lysander deny that he loves you, when he loves you so deeply? Why would he show me any affection, unless you told him to? Why does it matter that I'm not as lucky or lovable as you are and that the love I feel is unrequited? You should pity me for that reason, not hate me.

HERMIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

HELENA

240 Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up—
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.

If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
245 You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena. Hear my excuse.
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

HELENA

250 Oh, excellent!

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)
Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

HELENA

Oh, fine. All right, go ahead, keep up your little game, pretend to be sympathetic, but then nudge each other and wink and make faces at me when I turn my back. Keep up your wonderful game. You're doing such a good job on this trick, someone should write a book about it.

If you had any sense of pity, or manners, you wouldn't pretend to fight over me like this. But goodbye. It's partly my own fault, since I followed you here. Leaving—or dying—will soon take care of everything.

LYSANDER

Stay, lovely Helena. Listen to my excuse. My love, my life, my soul, beautiful Helena!

HELENA

That's a good one.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER) Don't insult her like that, Lysander darling.

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER) If Hermia's begging can't make you stop insulting Helena, I can force you to do so.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.

Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.—

255 Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.

I swear by that which I will lose for thee

To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

260 Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

*(holds **LYSANDER** back)*

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA)

No, no. He'll

Seem to break loose.

(to LYSANDER)

You can't force me any more than Hermia can beg me. Your threats are no stronger than her whining.—Helena, I love you. I swear I do. I'll give my life for you, just to prove this guy wrong when he says I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

If that's what you say, go fight a duel with me and prove it.

DEMETRIUS

You're on. Let's do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, where are you going with all this?

*(she holds **LYSANDER** back)*

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get away, you African!

DEMETRIUS

(to HERMIA) No, no. He'll act like he's going to break free from you, Hermia.

(to LYSANDER) Pretend like you're going to follow me, but then

Take on as you would follow,
265 But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude? What change is this,
Sweet love?

LYSANDER

Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!
270 Out, loathed medicine! O hated potion, hence!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you. I'll not trust your word.

LYSANDER

don't come. You're a coward, get out of here!

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Stop hanging on me, you cat, you thorn. Let go of
me, or I'll shake you off like a snake.

HERMIA

Why have you gotten so rude? What's happened to you, my
darling?

LYSANDER

Your darling? Get out, you dark-skinned gypsy! Get out, you
horrible poison. Get out!

HERMIA

Are you joking?

HELENA

Of course he is, and so are you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I'm ready to fight you as promised.

DEMETRIUS

I wish we had a signed legal contract. I can see you don't keep
your promises very well. I don't trust you.

LYSANDER

275 What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me? Wherefore? O me! What news, my love?
280 Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.
Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,
285 And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.

Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me!
290 (to HELENA) You juggler! You canker-blossom!
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA

What? Do you want me to hit Hermia, hurt her, kill her? Sure, I hate her, but I wouldn't hurt her.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER) Can you hurt me any more than by saying you hate me? Hate me? Why? What's happened to you, my love? Am I not Hermia? Aren't you Lysander? I'm as beautiful now as I was a little while ago. You still loved me when we fell asleep, but when you woke up you left me. So you left me—Oh, God help me!—For real?

LYSANDER

I certainly did, and I never wanted to see you again. So stop hoping and wondering what I mean.

I've spelled it out for you clearly. It's no joke. I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA

Oh, no! (to HELENA) You trickster, you snake! You thief! What, did you sneak in at night and steal my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear

295 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why so?—Ay, that way goes the game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures. She hath urged her height,

300 And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.—

And are you grown so high in his esteem

Because I am so dwarfish and so low?

How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak.

305 How low am I? I am not yet so low

But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

Let her not hurt me. I was never cursed.

310 I have no gift at all in shrewishness.

I am a right maid for my cowardice.

Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,

Because she is something lower than myself,

That I can match her.

Oh, that's very nice! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

You're going to make me mad enough to answer you? Damn
you, you faker, you puppet!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why "puppet"?—Oh, I see where this is going. She's talking about our difference in height. She's paraded in front of him to show off how tall she is. She won him over with her height.—Does he have such a high opinion of you because I'm so short? Is that it? So how short am I, you painted barber pole? Tell me. How short am I? I'm not too short to gouge your eyes out with my fingernails.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS) Please don't let her hurt me, gentlemen, however much you want to tease me. I never was much good with insults. I'm not mean and catty like her. I'm a nice shy girl. Please don't let her hit me. Maybe you think that because she's shorter than me I can take her.

HERMIA

"Lower"? Hark, again!

HELENA

315 Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
320 He followed you. For love I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
To strike me, spurn me—nay, to kill me too.
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
325 And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond I am.

HERMIA

Why, get you gone! Who is 't that hinders you?

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

HERMIA

"Shorter!" See, she's doing it again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, please don't act so bitter toward me. I always loved you, Hermia, and gave you advice. I never did anything to hurt you—except once, when I told Demetrius that you planned to sneak off into this forest. And I only did that because I loved Demetrius so much. He followed you. And I followed him because I loved him. But he told me to get lost and threatened to hit me, kick me—even kill me. Now just let me go quietly back to Athens. I'll carry my mistakes back with me. I won't follow you anymore. Please let me go. You see how naïve and foolish I've been.

HERMIA

Well, get out of here then! What's keeping you?

HELENA

My stupid heart, which I'm leaving behind here.

HERMIA

What, you're leaving it with Lysander?

HELENA

No, with Demetrius.

LYSANDER

330 Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER)

No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA

Oh, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!

She was a vixen when she went to school.

335 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "low" and "little"!—

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get you gone, you dwarf,

340 You minimus of hindering knotgrass made,

You bead, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.

Take not her part. For if thou dost intend

LYSANDER

Don't be afraid. She can't hurt you, Helena.

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER) That's right, Hermia won't hurt Helena even if you try to help her.

HELENA

Oh, when you get her angry, she's a good fighter, and vicious too. She was a hellcat in school. And she's fierce, even though she's little.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "little" and "short"!— Why are you letting her insult me like this? Let me at her!.

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Get lost, you dwarf, you tiny little weed, you scrap, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

You're doing too much to defend a woman who wants nothing to do with you. Leave Hermia alone. Don't talk about Helena. Don't take Helena's side. If you continue treating Hermia so badly, you'll pay for it.

345 Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER

Now she holds me not.
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS

"Follow"? Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.

*Exeunt **LYSANDER** and **DEMETRIUS***

HERMIA

350 You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.
Nay, go not back.

HELENA

I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.
My legs are longer though, to run away.

*Exit **HELENA***

HERMIA

355 I am amazed and know not what to say.

*Exit **HERMIA***

LYSANDER

Hermia's not holding onto me anymore. Follow me if you're
brave enough, and we'll fight over Helena.

DEMETRIUS

"Follow"? No, I'll walk right next to you, side by side.

***DEMETRIUS** and **LYSANDER** exit.*

HERMIA

All this fighting is because of you. Stay where you are.

HELENA

I'm not sticking around here any more. I don't trust you. You
might be a better fighter than I am, but my legs are longer and
I can run away faster.

***HELENA** exits.*

HERMIA

I just can't believe any of this. I don't know what to say.

***HERMIA** exits.*

OBERON

(to ROBIN) This is thy negligence. Still thou mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully.

ROBIN

Believe me, King of Shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
360 By the Athenian garment he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes.
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON

365 Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight.
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night.
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
370 As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
375 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.

OBERON

(to ROBIN) This is all your fault. You make mistakes constantly,
or else you cause this kind of trouble on purpose.

ROBIN

Believe me, King of Illusions, I made a mistake. Didn't you tell
me that I'd be able to recognize the man by the Athenian
clothes he was wearing? So far I've done exactly what I was
supposed to do—I put the love potion on an Athenian's eyes.
And so far I'm pleased with the way things have turned out,
since I find all of this commotion very entertaining.

OBERON

As you can see, these lovers are looking for a place to fight.
Hurry up, Robin, and make the night dark and cloudy. Cover
the sky with a low-hanging fog, as dark as hell, and get these
overeager rivals so completely lost in the woods that they can't
run into each other. Imitate Lysander's voice and egg
Demetrius on with insults. Then rant for a while in Demetrius's
voice, and egg Lysander on. That way you'll get them away
from each other until they're so exhausted that they'll sleep
like the dead. (OBERON *gives a new flower to* ROBIN) When
they're asleep, crush some of this flower's juice into Lysander's
eyes. The flower's juice has the power to erase all the damage
that's been done to his eyes, and to make him see normally,

(gives ROBIN another flower)

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property

380 To take from thence all error with his might
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
385 With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy.
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

ROBIN

390 My fairy lord, this must be done with haste.
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards. Damned spirits all,
395 That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone.
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

the way he used to. When they wake up, all this trouble and conflict will seem like a dream or a meaningless vision. Then the lovers will go back to Athens, united together until death. While you're busy with that, I'll go see Queen Titania and ask her once again for the Indian boy. And then I'll undo the spell that I cast over her, so she won't be in love with that monster anymore. Then everything will be peaceful again.

ROBIN

We've got to act fast, my lord of the fairies. Night's fading quickly, and in the distance the morning star is shining, warning us that dawn is coming. At dawn, the ghosts that have been wandering around all night go home to the graveyards. The souls of people who weren't buried in holy ground, but instead lie rotting by the side of the road or at the bottom of a river, have already gone back to their wormy graves. They weren't buried in a real graveyard because they committed suicide, and they don't want their shame to be seen in daylight, so they avoid sunlight and stay forever in the darkness of night.

OBERON

400 But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And like a forester the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
405 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But notwithstanding, haste. Make no delay.
We may effect this business yet ere day.

Exit OBERON

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
I am feared in field and town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

ROBIN

410 *(as DEMETRIUS)*

Here, villain. Drawn and ready. Where art thou?

But we're not like that. We're a different kind of spirit, and we don't have to run away from the sunlight. I like the morning. I often wander around in the woods like a forest ranger until the sun rises in the fiery red sky over the ocean, turning the salty green water to gold. But you should hurry anyway. Don't delay. We still have time to get all of this done before daybreak.

OBERON exits.

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
The people fear me in the country and the town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one of them now.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

Where are you, Demetrius, you arrogant bastard? Say something.

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) I'm over here, you villain, with my sword out and ready to fight. Where are you?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then
To plainer ground.

Exit LYSANDER

Enter DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again!

415 Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER) Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant. Come, thou child!
420 I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)
Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

LYSANDER

I'm coming.

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) Let's go to a flatter area where we can
fight more easily.

LYSANDER exits.

DEMETRIUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, say something! You coward, did you run away from
me? Say something! Are you behind some bush? Where are
you hiding?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) You coward, are you bragging to the
stars and telling the bushes that you want a fight, but then you
won't come and fight me? Come here, you coward! Come here,
you child! I'll beat you with a stick. It would be shameful to fight
you with a sword, the way I would fight with a real man.

DEMETRIUS

Are you there?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Follow my voice. This isn't a good place
to fight.

Exeunt

*Enter **LYSANDER***

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.

425 When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.

I followed fast, but faster he did fly,

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me.

430 *(lies down)*

Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

(sleeps)

*Enter **ROBIN** and **DEMETRIUS***

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER to DEMETRIUS)

435 Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou darest! For well I wot

They exit.

***LYSANDER** enters.*

LYSANDER

He's walking ahead of me, and he keeps daring me to follow

him. When I reach the place he's calling from, he disappears.

This villain is much quicker than I am. I ran after him fast, but he

ran away from me faster, so that now here I am in some dark

part of the forest where the ground is uneven.

I'll rest here. *(he lies down)* I hope the pleasant daytime comes

soon! As soon as the gray light of early morning appears, I'll

find Demetrius and get my revenge for this insult.

***LYSANDER** lies down and falls asleep. **ROBIN** and **DEMETRIUS** enter.*

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Ha, ha, ha! Hey, You coward, why aren't you coming?

DEMETRIUS

Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

ROBIN

440 *(as LYSANDER)* Come hither. I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear
If ever I thy face by daylight see.
Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.

445 By day's approach look to be visited.
(lies down and sleeps)

Enter HELENA

HELENA

O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours. Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight
450 From these that my poor company detest.
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
(lies down and sleeps)

ROBIN

Wait for me, if you're not too scared! I know that's why you're
running away from me, constantly changing places—you're
afraid to stand still and wait for me. You're scared to look me in
the eye. Where are you now?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Come here. I'm over here.

DEMETRIUS

No, you're just taunting me. You'll pay for this if I ever see you
face-to-face in the daylight. Go wherever you want. I'm
exhausted; I need to lie down and sleep on this cold ground.
But watch out. I'll find you at dawn. *(DEMETRIUS lies down and sleeps)*

HELENA enters.

HELENA

Oh, what a long, tedious, exhausting night! I wish it would end. I
wish the comforting light of day would shine so I can go back
to Athens and get away from these people who hate me so
much. I hope I'll be able to sleep and escape my troubles for a
while. People can sometimes forget their difficulties when
they're asleep. *(HELENA lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

Yet but three? Come one more.
Two of both kinds make up four.
Here she comes, cursed and sad.
Cupid is a knavish lad
Thus to make poor females mad.

Enter HERMIA

HERMIA

Never so weary, never so in woe,
455 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
I can no further crawl, no further go.
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!
460 *(lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

On the ground
Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye.
Gentle lover, remedy.
(squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER 's eyes)
When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight

Only three so far? We're still waiting for one more. Two of both kinds makes four. Ah, here she comes, angry and sad. Cupid is a bad boy for making poor women go crazy like this.

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

I've never been more exhausted or upset. I'm all wet from the dew and scratched up by thorns, and I can't crawl any farther. I just can't go on. My legs can't hold themselves up. I'll sleep here until morning. If they do fight, I hope Lysander is safe!
(HERMIA lies down and sleeps)

ROBIN

Sleep well there on the ground. I'll cure you, gentle lover, by putting this medicine on your eyes. *(ROBIN puts the nectar of the flower on LYSANDER's eyelids)* When you wake you will be truly delighted to see the woman you once loved. And when you wake up, you'll be a walking illustration of the well-known country proverb. "Jack will have Jill and everything will be all right."

In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye.
And the country proverb known—
That every man should take his own—
In your waking shall be shown.
Jack shall have Jill.
Nought shall go ill.
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

Exit **ROBIN**

ROBIN exits.

Act 4 Scene 1

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA sleep. Enter **TITANIA**, Queen of the Fairies; and **BOTTOM**, with the ass's head; and fairies **PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED; OBERON** the king behind them, unseen

TITANIA

(to **BOTTOM**) Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk roses in thy sleek, smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

BOTTOM

5 Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

DEMETRIUS, HELENA, HERMIA, and LYSANDER are still sleeping on the stage. **TITANIA** enters with **BOTTOM**, who still has a donkey's head, and the fairies **PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED. OBERON** enters behind them, unseen by those onstage.

TITANIA

(to **BOTTOM**) Come over here and sit down on this flowery bed
while I caress those lovable cheeks. I'll put roses on your silky,
smooth head and kiss your big, beautiful ears, my gentle
darling.

BOTTOM

Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

BOTTOM

Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Monsieur Cobweb?

COBWEB

Ready.

BOTTOM

Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle. And, good monsieur, bring me the honey bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur. And good monsieur, have a care the honey bag break not. I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey bag, signor.

Exit COBWEB

10 Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

Ready.

BOTTOM

Give me your neaf, Monsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.

MUSTARDSEED

Here.

BOTTOM

Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Monsieur Cobweb?

COBWEB

Here.

BOTTOM

Monsieur Cobweb, sir, get out your weapons and kill me a striped bumblebee on a thistle, and bring me its honey. Don't tire yourself out, monsieur. Oh, and monsieur, be careful not to break the honey-sac. I'd hate to see you drowned in honey, sir.

COBWEB exits.

Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

Here.

BOTTOM

Give me your first, Mr. Mustardseed. Please, stop bowing, good sir.

MUSTARDSEED

What's your will?

BOTTOM

15 Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur, for methinks I am marvelous hairy about the face. And I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

TITANIA

What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

BOTTOM

I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.

TITANIA

Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

BOTTOM

Truly, a peck of provender. I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay. Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

TITANIA

20 I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard and fetch thee new nuts.

BOTTOM

What would you like me to do?

BOTTOM

Nothing, good sir, except to help Sir Cobweb scratch my head. I should go to the barber's, monsieur, because I think I'm getting really hairy around the face. And I'm such a sensitive ass that if my hair even tickles me a little, I need to scratch.

TITANIA

Would you like to hear some music, my sweet love?

BOTTOM

I have a pretty good ear for music. Let's hear someone play the triangle and the sticks.

TITANIA

Or tell me, my sweet love, what you'd like to eat.

BOTTOM

Actually, I'd like a few pounds of grass. I'd like to munch on some good dry oats. Or maybe I've got a hankering for a bundle of hay. There's nothing like good hay, really sweet hay.

TITANIA

I have an adventurous fairy who'll go seek out the squirrel's secret stash and get you some fresh nuts.

BOTTOM

I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me. I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

TITANIA

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.

Exeunt FAIRIES

25 So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist. The female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
Oh, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

TITANIA and BOTTOM sleep

Enter ROBIN

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?
30 Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favors from this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
35 With a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers,
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds

I'd rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But please don't let any of your people wake me up. I really want to sleep now.

TITANIA

Go to sleep, and I will wrap my arms around you. Fairies, go away. Run off in all directions.

The FAIRIES exit.

I'm putting my arms around you just like the woodbine tendril gently twists itself around the sweet honeysuckle, and like the female ivy curls itself around the branches of the elm tree. Oh, how I love you! I'm so crazy about you!

BOTTOM and TITANIA sleep. ROBIN enters.

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Do you see this sweet sight? Now I'm starting to pity Titania for being so infatuated. I ran into her recently at the edge of the forest, looking for sweet presents for this hateful idiot, and I scolded her and argued with her. She had put a wreath of fresh, fragrant flowers around his hairy forehead, and the drops of dew that lay in the center of the flowers made the flowers look like they were crying with shame to be decorating the head of that ugly jackass. When I

Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
40 When I had at my pleasure taunted her
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child,
Which straight she gave me and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.
45 And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That, he awaking when the other do,
50 May all to Athens back again repair
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

*(squeezing flower juice into **TITANIA's** eyes)*

Be as thou wast wont to be.
55 See as thou wast wont to see.
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessèd power.
Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

had taunted her as much as I wanted to, and she begged me very nicely to leave her alone, I asked her for the stolen Indian child. She said yes right away, and sent a fairy to bring him to my home in Fairyland. And now that I have the boy, I'll undo the spell that makes her vision so disgustingly wrong. And, gentle Puck, take this transformed ass's head off of the head of that Athenian man, so that when he wakes up at the same time as the rest of them do, they can all go back to Athens. They'll only remember the events of tonight as a very unpleasant dream. But first I'll release the fairy queen from the spell.

*(**OBERON** squeezes the juice from the second flower into **TITANIA's** eyes)*

Be like you used to be, and see like you used to see. This bud belongs to Diana, the goddess of virginity, and it has the power to undo the effects of Cupid's flower. Now, Titania, wake up, my sweet queen.

TITANIA

(waking) My Oberon, what visions have I seen!

60 Methought I was enamored of an ass.

OBERON

There lies your love.

TITANIA

How came these things to pass?

Oh, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

OBERON

Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.—

Titania, music call, and strike more dead

65 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

TITANIA

Music, ho! Music such as charmeth sleep!

Music

ROBIN

(taking the ass's head off BOTTOM)

Now when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

OBERON

Sound, music!—Come, my queen, take hands with me,

70 And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

(dances with TITANIA)

TITANIA

(waking up) Oberon, I've had such a strange dream! I dreamed I

was in love with an ass.

OBERON

There's your boyfriend, sleeping right over there.

TITANIA

How did this happen? Oh, I hate looking at his face now!

OBERON

Be quiet for a while.—Robin, take off his donkey head.—Titania,

get the fairies to play some music, and make these five people

sleep more soundly than humans have ever slept before.

TITANIA

Music! Play the kind of music that puts people to sleep.

The music plays.

ROBIN

(removing the ass's head from BOTTOM) When you wake up,

see things with your own foolish eyes again.

OBERON

Play the music.—Take my hands, my queen, and we'll lull these

people to sleep with our soft dancing. *(he dances with TITANIA)*

Now that you and I are friends again, we can dance for Duke

Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will tomorrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

75 And bless it to all fair prosperity.

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

ROBIN

Fairy King, attend, and mark.
I do hear the morning lark.

OBERON

80 Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after the night's shade.
We the globe can compass soon
Swifter than the wandering moon.

TITANIA

Come, my lord, and in our flight
85 Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

*Exeunt **OBERON**, **TITANIA**, and **ROBIN***

*Wind horn within Enter **THESEUS** and all his train, **EGEUS**,
and **HIPPOLYTA***

Theseus tomorrow at midnight, and bless his marriage and his
marriage bed. These other lovers will get married alongside
him, and they'll all be in high spirits.

ROBIN

Listen, Fairy King. I can hear the lark singing. Morning's here.

OBERON

In that case, my queen, let's travel silently and solemnly across
the globe to where it's still night, circling the earth faster than
the moon does.

TITANIA

While we're walking, you can tell me how I ended up sleeping
on the ground with these humans last night.

***OBERON**, **TITANIA**, and **ROBIN** exit.*

*A hunting horn blows. **THESEUS** enters with his servants, **EGEUS**
and **HIPPOLYTA**.*

THESEUS

Go, one of you, find out the forester.

For now our observation is performed.

90 And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley. Let them go.
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.

Exit one of the train

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,

95 And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear
With hounds of Sparta. Never did I hear

100 Such gallant chiding. For, besides the groves,

The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THESEUS

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,

105 So flewed, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,

THESEUS

One of you go find the forest ranger. Since we're done with the
May Day rites and it's still so early in the morning, my love will
have a chance to hear the beautiful music of my hunting dogs
barking as they chase their prey. Unleash the dogs in the
western valley. Let them go. Now go find the forest ranger.

A servant exits.

My beautiful queen, we'll go up the mountain and listen to the
hounds as their barking echoes in the cliffs and sounds like
music.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with the heroes Hercules and Cadmus once, when their
Spartan hunting dogs cornered a bear. I'd never heard such
impressive barking before.

The forests, the skies, the mountains, everything around us
seemed to echo the barks of the hounds. I'd never heard such
raucous music, such pleasant thunder.

THESEUS

My dogs are bred from Spartan hounds. They have the same
folds of flesh around their mouths, the same sandy-colored fur,
and hanging ears that brush the morning dew off the grass.

Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls,
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
110 Was never hollaed to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.
Judge when you hear.
(*sees the four sleeping lovers*)
But, soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS

My lord, this is my daughter here asleep.
115 And this, Lysander. This Demetrius is.
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena.
I wonder of their being here together.

THESEUS

No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and hearing our intent
120 Came here in grace our solemnity.
But speak, Egeus. Is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

They have crooked knees and folds of skin under their necks,
just like the Spartan hounds. They're not very fast in the chase,
but their barking sounds like bells ringing. Each bark is
perfectly in tune with the others, like notes on a scale. No one,
anywhere, has ever gone hunting with a more musical pack of
dogs. Judge for yourself when you hear them. (*he sees the four
lovers sleeping*) But wait a minute! Who are these women?

EGEUS

My lord, that's my daughter asleep on the ground over there,
and this is Lysander here, and this is Demetrius, and this is
Helena, old Nedar's daughter. I don't understand why they're
all here together.

THESEUS

They probably woke up early to celebrate May Day and came
here for my celebration when they heard I'd be here. But tell
me, Egeus. Isn't today the day when Hermia has to tell us her
decision about whether she'll marry Demetrius?

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go tell the hunters to blow their horns and wake them up.

Exit one of the train

*Wind horns and shout within **LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA**, and **HERMIA** wake and start up*

125 Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.

Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and **HERMIA** *kneel*

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and **HERMIA** *stand*

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I know you two are rival enemies.

130 How comes this gentle concord in the world,

That hatred is so far from jealousy

To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER

My lord, I shall reply amazedly,

Half sleep, half waking. But as yet, I swear,

135 I cannot truly say how I came here.

A servant exits.

*Someone shouts offstage. Horns are blown. **LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA**, and **HERMIA**, wake up.*

Good morning, my friends. Valentine's Day is over.

Are you lovebirds only starting to pair up now?

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and **HERMIA** *all kneel.*

LYSANDER

Forgive us, my lord.

THESEUS

Please, all of you, stand up.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and **HERMIA** *get up.*

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS) I know you two are enemies.

Has the world really become so gentle and peaceful that people who hate each other have started to trust each other and sleep beside each other without being afraid?

LYSANDER

My lord, what I say may be a little confused, since I'm half asleep and half awake. I swear, at the moment I really couldn't tell you how I ended up here. But I think—I want to tell you the

But as I think—for truly would I speak,
And now do I bethink me, so it is—
I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,

140 Without the peril of the Athenian law—

EGEUS

(to THESEUS) Enough, enough, my lord. You have enough!
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.—

They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,

145 You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

DEMETRIUS

(to THESEUS) My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood.

And I in fury hither followed them,

150 Fair Helena in fancy following me.

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power—
But by some power it is—my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud

155 Which in my childhood I did dote upon.

And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,

truth, and now that I think about it, I think this is true—I came
here with Hermia. We were planning to leave Athens to escape
the Athenian law and—

EGEUS

(to THESEUS) Enough, enough, my lord. You've heard enough
evidence! I insist that the law punish him—They were going to
run away, Demetrius, they were running away to defeat us,
robbing you of your wife and me of my fatherly right to decide
who my son-in-law will be.

DEMETRIUS

(to THESEUS) My lord, the beautiful Helena told me about their
secret plan to escape into this forest. I was furious and
followed them here, and the lovely Helena was so in love with
me that she followed me.

I'm not sure how it happened—but somehow, something made
my love for Hermia melt away like snow. My past love for
Hermia now seems like a memory of some cheap toy I used to
love as a child. Now the only person I love, and believe in, and
want to look at, is Helena. I was engaged to her before I ever
met Hermia. Then I hated her for a time, as a sick person hates
the food he usually loves. But now I have my natural taste

Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia.

160 But like in sickness did I loathe this food.
But as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
165 Of this discourse we more will hear anon.—
Egeus, I will overbear your will.
For in the temple by and by with us
These couples shall eternally be knit.—
And, for the morning now is something worn,
170 Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

Exeunt THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train

DEMETRIUS

These things seem small and undistinguishable,
175 Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

HERMIA

back, like a sick person when he recovers. Now I want Helena, I
love her, I long for her, and I will always be true to her.

THESEUS

You pretty lovers are lucky you met me here. We'll talk more
about this later.—Egeus, I'm overriding your wishes. These
couples will be married along with me and Hippolyta in the
temple later today.—And now, since the morning is almost
over, we'll give up on the idea of hunting. Come with us to
Athens. We three couples will celebrate with a sumptuous
feast. Come, Hippolyta.

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and EGEUS exit with their followers.

DEMETRIUS

What exactly just happened? The events of last night seem
small and hard to see clearly, like far-off mountains that look
like clouds in the distance.

HERMIA

When everything seems double. Methinks I see these things
with parted eye,

HELENA

So methinks.

And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure

That we are awake? It seems to me

180 That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

HERMIA

Yea, and my father.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

And he did bid us follow to the temple.

DEMETRIUS

Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him
185 And by the way let us recount our dreams.

Yes, it's like my eyes are out of focus, and I'm seeing
everything double.

HELENA

Me too.

I won Demetrius so easily, as if he were a precious diamond I
just found lying around. It's mine because I found it, but I feel
like someone else could easily come and claim it was hers.

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure we're awake? It seems to me like we're still
sleeping, still dreaming. Do you remember seeing the duke
here? Did he tell us to follow him?

HERMIA

Yes, he did. And my father was here too.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

And he told us to follow him to the temple.

DEMETRIUS

Well, then, we're awake. Let's follow him. We can tell one
another our dreams along the way.

Exeunt **LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA**

BOTTOM

(waking) When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer. My next is "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-mender? Snout the tinker? Starveling? God's my life, stol'n hence, and left me asleep? I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream.

It shall be called "Bottom's Dream" because it hath no bottom. And I will sing it in the latter end of a play before the duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

Exit

Enter **QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING**

QUINCE

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA *exit*.

BOTTOM

(waking up) Tell me when my cue comes, and I'll say my line. My next cue is "Most handsome Pyramus." Hey! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-repairman? Snout the handyman? Starveling? My God, they've all run away and left me sleeping here? What a weird dream I had.—You can't even describe such a weird dream. You'd be an ass if you even tried to explain it. I thought I was—no, nobody can even describe what I was. I thought I was, I thought I had—but a person would be an idiot to try to say what I thought I had. No eye has ever heard, no ear has ever seen, no hand has tasted, or tongue felt, or heart described what my dream was like. I'll get Peter Quince to write this dream down as a ballad.

I'll call it "Bottom's Dream" because it's so deep that it has no bottom. And I'll sing it for the duke in the intermission of a play. Or maybe, to make it even more lovely, I'll sing it when the heroine dies.

BOTTOM *exits*.

QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING *enter*.

QUINCE

Act 4 Scene 2

Have you sent to Bottom's house? Is he come home yet?

STARVELING

He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

FLUTE

If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward.
Doth it?

QUINCE

It is not possible. You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

FLUTE

5 No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

QUINCE

Yea, and the best person too. And he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

FLUTE

You must say "paragon." A "paramour" is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

*Enter **SNUG***

SNUG

Have you sent anyone to Bottom's house? Has he come home yet?

STARVELING

No one's heard from him. I'm sure he's been kidnapped.

FLUTE

If he doesn't show up, the play is ruined. It won't go on. Will it?

QUINCE

No, it would be impossible. He's the only person in Athens who can play Pyramus.

FLUTE

Definitely. He's quite simply the smartest working-man in Athens.

QUINCE

Yes, and the best looking too. And his voice is the paramour of sweetness.

FLUTE

You mean "paragon." A "[paramour](#)" is something bad.

***SNUG** enters.*

SNUG

Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

FLUTE

O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life. He could not have 'scaped sixpence a day. An the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged.

10 He would have deserved it. Sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

*Enter **BOTTOM***

BOTTOM

Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?

QUINCE

Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

BOTTOM

Masters, I am to discourse wonders—but ask me not what, for if I tell you I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

QUINCE

The duke's leaving the temple. Two or three more lords and ladies have been married too. If we'd been able to put on our play, we would have had it made.

FLUTE

Oh that great, funny guy, Bottom! He would have gotten a pension of six pence a day for his whole life. Six pence a day would've been forced on him. I'll be damned if the duke wouldn't have given him six pence a day for playing Pyramus.

And he would have deserved it too. Pyramus is worth [six pence a day](#), or it's worth nothing!

***BOTTOM** enters.*

BOTTOM

Where are my guys? Where are my good fellows?

QUINCE

Bottom! Oh, how wonderful to see you! Oh, what a relief!

BOTTOM

My friends, I've got some amazing things to tell you—but don't ask me to tell you what. I swear by my Athenian citizenship that I won't tell you anything. I'll tell you everything exactly as it happened.

QUINCE

Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOTTOM

15 Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps. Meet presently at the palace. Every man look o'er his part. For the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen. And let not him that plays the lion pair his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath. And I do not doubt but to hear them say, "It is a sweet comedy." No more words. Away, go away!

Exeunt

Tell us, Bottom.

BOTTOM

No, you won't get a word out of me. All I'll tell you is that the duke has had dinner already. Now it's time to get your costumes together. Find some good strings for tying on your false beards, and grab new ribbons to decorate your shoes. Meet me at the palace as soon as possible. Look over your lines again. Our play's going to be performed for the duke! So make sure Thisbe's wearing clean underwear, and make sure whoever's playing the lion doesn't cut his nails, because he needs them long to look like lion's claws. And no one eat any onions or garlic. If we have sweet-smelling breath, I'm sure they'll say "it's a sweet play." Now no more talking. Get busy, go!

They all exit.

Act 5 Scene 1

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE, with other attendant lords

HIPPOLYTA

'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

THESEUS

More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables nor these fairy toys.

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE enter, with a number of lords and servants.

HIPPOLYTA

These lovers are saying some strange things, Theseus.

THESEUS

Yes, strange—and totally made up too. I'll never believe any of these old legends or fairy tales. Lovers and madmen

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
5 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold—
10 That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven.
And as imagination bodies forth
15 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That if it would but apprehend some joy,
20 It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
25 More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy,
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

hallucinate about things that sane people just can't understand. Lunatics, lovers, and poets all are ruled by their overactive imaginations. Some people think they see devils and monsters everywhere—and they're lunatics. Lovers are just as crazy, and think a dark-skinned gypsy is the most gorgeous woman in the world. Poets are always looking around like they're having a fit, confusing the mundane with the otherworldly, and describing things in their writing that simply don't exist. All these people have such strong imaginations that, when they feel happy, they assume a god or some other supernatural being is bringing that happiness to them. Or if they're afraid of something at night, they look at the shrubbery and imagine it's a wild bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But the story that these lovers are telling, and the fact that they all saw and heard exactly the same things, make me think there's more going on here than imaginary fantasies. Their story is bizarre and astounding, but it's solid and consistent.

*Enter lovers: **LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA***

THESEUS

Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.—
Joy, gentle friends! Joy and fresh days of love

30 Accompany your hearts!

LYSANDER

More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

THESEUS

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we have
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bedtime?
35 Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS

Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?
40 What masque, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time if not with some delight?

*The lovers—**LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA**—
enter.*

THESEUS

Here come the lovers, laughing happily.—I wish you joy, my
friends! I hope the days ahead are full of joy for you.

LYSANDER

We wish you even more joy, and hope joy comes to you in your
royal walks, at your table, and in your royal bed!

THESEUS

Now, what kind of entertainment do we have to fill up the long
three hours between dinner and bedtime? Where is our
entertainment director? What performances have been
prepared? Aren't there any plays for us to enjoy while we wait
in torture for bedtime to come? Let me see Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

Here I am, Theseus.

THESEUS

Tell us what entertainment you've prepared for the evening.
Which plays, what music? How will we pass the time without
some entertainment?

PHILOSTRATE

(giving THESEUS a document)

There is a brief, how many sports are ripe.

Make choice of which your highness will see first.

THESEUS

45 *(reads)*

"The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."

We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary."

50 That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe. Very tragical mirth."

"Merry" and "tragical"? "Tedious" and "brief"?
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE

PHILOSTRATE

(giving THESEUS a piece of paper) Here's a list of all of the acts
that have been prepared. Choose which one you want to see
first.

THESEUS

(reading) "The battle between Hercules and the Centaurs, to be
sung by an Athenian eunuch, accompanied by a harp." No, we
won't see that. I've already told that story to Hippolyta, while
praising my cousin Hercules. What else? "The riot of the drunk
Bacchanals who rip the singer Orpheus to shreds." That's an
old show, and I saw it the last time I came back from
conquering

Thebes. "The nine Muses mourning the death of learning and
scholarship." That's some sharp, critical satire, and it's not
appropriate for a wedding. "A tedious short drama about young
Pyramus and his love Thisbe, a very sad and tragic comedy." A
sad comedy? Short but still tedious? That's like hot ice and
strange snow. How can this drama be so many contradictory
things?

PHILOSTRATE

55 A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play.
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious. For in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

60 And tragical, my noble lord, it is.
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water—but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS

65 What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labored in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play against your nuptial.

THESEUS

70 And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord.
It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world—
Unless you can find sport in their intents,

It's a play about ten words long, which is the shortest play I've ever heard of. But in my opinion, it's about ten words too long. That's why it's tedious. In the entire play, not one word is well-written, and not one of the actors is right for his part. It's tragic because Pyramus kills himself. I have to admit that when I saw his suicide during rehearsal, I had tears in my eyes—but they were tears of laughter.

THESEUS

Who are the actors?

PHILOSTRATE

Rough workmen from Athens who never spent much time thinking. Now they've worn out their out-of-shape brains to put on this play for your wedding.

THESEUS

So let's see it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord. This play isn't right for you. I've seen the whole thing, and it's completely worthless—unless you think their bad acting and their misremembered lines—which they memorized so painfully—are funny.

Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain
75 To do you service.

THESEUS

I will hear that play.
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in.—And take your places, ladies.

Exit PHILOSTRATE

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'er charged
80 And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS

Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake.
85 And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes,

THESEUS

I'll watch this play. Nothing can really be bad when it's created
by simple people who try hard. Come on, bring them in. And sit
down, ladies.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

HIPPOLYTA

I don't like seeing poor people overburdened or looking bad
when they're trying to do something good.

THESEUS

You won't see anything like that, sweetheart.

HIPPOLYTA

He just said that they're no good at acting.

THESEUS

Then we're even kinder people for thanking them for
something that they're not good at. We'll entertain ourselves
by accepting their mistakes. When poor dutiful people can't do
certain things well, generous people can consider the effort
they put into it rather than the effect that they produce. In my
travels, great scholars have come up to me, meaning to greet

Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
90 Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practiced accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome,
95 And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

*Enter **PHILOSTRATE***

PHILOSTRATE

100 So please your grace, the Prologue is addressed.

THESEUS

Let him approach.

*Enter **QUINCE** as the **PROLOGUE***

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE)

If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think we come not to offend,

105 But with good will. To show our simple skill,

me with well-rehearsed welcoming speeches, and I have seen them tremble and turn pale, and pause inappropriately in the middle of their sentences, and botch their well-rehearsed tones of voice because they're so nervous, and then break off abruptly at the end, without actually welcoming me. Trust me, my sweet, I figured out that they were trying to welcome me even though they were silent, and that message was as clear from someone who was modest and nervously dutiful as it is from someone who is loud and audacious and eloquent. Therefore, love and tongue-tied simplicity can say the most even when they're saying the least, in my opinion.

***PHILOSTRATE** enters.*

PHILOSTRATE

Your grace, the person who is going to deliver the prologue is ready.

THESEUS

Let him come forward.

*The **PROLOGUE (QUINCE)** enters.*

PROLOGUE

If we happen to offend you, it's because we want to. We don't want you to think we came here to offend you, except that we want to offend you with our good intentions. Our plan to show off our little bit of talent will wind up getting us executed.

That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to contest you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
110 We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt. He knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

HIPPOLYTA

Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder—a sound, but not in government.

THESEUS

His speech was like a tangled chain. Nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter **BOTTOM** as **PYRAMUS**, and **FLUTE** as **THISBE**, and **SNOUT** as **WALL**, and **STARVELING** as **MOONSHINE**, and **SNUG** as **LION***

Please keep in mind we're only here out of spite. We don't come here with the intention of making you happy. We're absolutely not here to delight you. The actors are ready to come out and make you sorry. By watching their show, you'll find out everything you're likely to know.

THESEUS

This guy doesn't pay much attention to punctuation.

LYSANDER

He rode that prologue like a wild horse. He didn't know how to stop it. The moral of this story is that it's not enough to speak; you have to speak grammatically.

HIPPOLYTA

Yes, he performed his prologue like a child plays a recorder—he can make sounds, but they're out of control.

THESEUS

His speech was like a tangled chain. It went on and on and was a total mess. Who's next?

***BOTTOM** enters as **PYRAMUS**, with **FLUTE** as **THISBE**, **SNOUT** as **WALL**, **STARVELING** as **MOONSHINE**, and **SNUG** as **LION**.*

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE)

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

125 This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.

This man, with lime and roughcast, doth present

Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

130 This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine. For, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb—there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which "Lion" hight by name,

135 The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright.

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

140 And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain.

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.

And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,

145 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

PROLOGUE

(delivered by QUINCE) Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps you are wondering what is going on. Well, keep wondering, until the truth makes everything clear. This man is Pyramus, if you want to know. This beautiful lady is definitely Thisbe. This man with the limestone and cement is portraying Wall, that horrible wall that kept these lovers apart. They are content to whisper through Wall's little hole, the poor souls, and no one should be surprised. This man, with his lantern, dog, and thornbush, portrays Moonshine, because, if you want to know, the lovers were not ashamed to meet each other by moonshine at Ninus's tomb in order to carry on their courtship. This grisly beast, which is called "Lion," scared away, or rather frightened, the faithful Thisbe when she arrived at the meeting place at night. As she ran away from him, she dropped her cloak, which the horrible Lion stained with his bloody mouth. Soon Pyramus comes along, a tall and handsome young man, and finds his faithful Thisbe's cloak to be dead. At this point, he takes his sword, his bloody blameful blade, and bravely breaks open his boiling bloody breast. And Thisbe, hiding in the shade of the mulberry bushes, took his dagger and killed herself. For the rest of the story, let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and the two lovers talk more about it, since they're standing here.

At large discourse, while here they do remain.

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEMETRIUS

No wonder, my lord. One lion may when many asses do.

*Exeunt PROLOGUE, PYRAMUS, THISBE, LION, and
MOONSHINE*

WALL

(played by SNOUT) In this same interlude it doth befall

150 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall.

And such a wall, as I would have you think,

That had in it a crannied hole, or chink,

Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,

Did whisper often very secretly.

155 This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show

That I am that same wall. The truth is so.

And this the cranny is, right and sinister,

Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion's going to talk.

DEMETRIUS

It wouldn't surprise me, my lord. If these asses can speak, a lion should be able to.

PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.

WALL

(played by SNOUT) At this point I, Snout, play a wall. But not just any wall. I want you to understand that I'm pretending to be a kind of wall that has a little hole in it. The lovers Pyramus and Thisbe often whispered very secretly through that hole. This clay, this cement, and this stone that I'm carrying around show that I'm that wall. It's the truth. And this is the crack, right side and left side *(points with two fingers)*, through which the frightened lovers will be whispering.

THESEUS

Can you imagine cement and stone talking better?

DEMETRIUS

160 It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Enter PYRAMUS

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!

PYRAMUS

(played by BOTTOM)

O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!

165 O night, which ever art when day is not!

O night, O night! Alack, alack, alack,

I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot!—

And thou, O Wall, O sweet, O lovely Wall,

That stand'st between her father's ground and mine.

170 Thou Wall, O Wall, O sweet and lovely Wall,

Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne!

WALL holds up fingers as chink

Thanks, courteous Wall. Jove shield thee well for this!

But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.

O wicked Wall through whom I see no bliss!

175 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS

The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

It's the smartest partition I've ever heard speak, my lord.

PYRAMUS enters.

THESEUS

Pyramus is coming up to the wall. Be quiet!

PYRAMUS

(played by BOTTOM) Oh, grim-looking night! Oh, night that is so black in color! Oh night, which is always there when it is not day! Oh night! Oh night! So sad, sad, sad,

I'm afraid my Thisbe has forgotten her promise!—And you, oh Wall, oh sweet, oh lovely Wall, you stand between her father's property and mine, you Wall, oh Wall, oh sweet and lovely Wall. Show me your hole to stick my eye up against!

WALL holds up two fingers

Thank you, you're such a polite wall. God bless you for doing this. But what's this I see? I don't see any Thisbe. Oh wicked wall, through which I don't see any happiness! Damn your stones for disappointing me like this!

THESEUS

Since the wall is conscious, it should curse back at him.

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is Thisbe's cue. She is to enter now and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Enter THISBE

THISBE

(played by FLUTE)

O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,
185 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice. Now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face. Thisbe?

THISBE

My love thou art, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace.
190 And like Limander am I trusty still.

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, actually, sir, he shouldn't say anything. It's not his turn, it's Thisbe's. "Disappointing me like this" is Thisbe's cue. She's supposed to enter now, and I'll see her through the wall. You'll see, it'll happen exactly like I say. Here she comes.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

(played by FLUTE) Oh wall, you've often heard me moaning because you keep me separated from my handsome Pyramus! My cherry lips have often kissed your bricks, which are stuck together with cement.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice! I'll go to the hole to see if I can hear my Thisbe's face. Thisbe?

THISBE

You are my love, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

I'm your love, no matter what you think. And I'm still faithful to you, just like the famous [Limander](#) .

THISBE

And I'll be as faithful to you as [Helen of Troy](#) , until the day I die.

PYRAMUS

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

PYRAMUS

Oh, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

THISBE

195 I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THISBE

Tide life, tide death, I come without delay.

Exeunt PYRAMUS and THISBE

WALL

Thus have I, Wall, my part dischargèd so.
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

Exit WALL

THESEUS

200 Now is the mural down between the two neighbors.

PYRAMUS

Not even Shafalus was as faithful to his lover Procrus as I am to you.

THISBE

Me too, I'm as faithful as [Shafalus to Procrus](#) .

PYRAMUS

Oh, kiss me through the hole in this nasty wall.

THISBE

But I'm only kissing the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

PYRAMUS

Will you meet me right away at Ninny's grave?

THISBE

Neither death nor life will stop me from coming.

PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.

WALL

I, Wall, have done my part. Now that I'm done, Wall can go away.

WALL exits.

THESEUS

DEMETRIUS

No remedy, my lord, when walls are so willful to hear without warning.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS

The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THESEUS

205 If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves,
they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble
beasts in, a man and a lion.

Enter LION and MOONSHINE

LION

(played by SNUG)

You, ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear

210 The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,

The lovers should've waited around a little longer—the wall between them is down now.

DEMETRIUS

What can you do? That's what happens with talking walls.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest thing I've ever seen.

THESEUS

The best plays are still only illusions, and the worst are just as good, if you just use your imagination to fill them in.

HIPPOLYTA

In that case it's your imagination that's interesting, not the play.

THESEUS

If we imagine these guys as they imagine themselves, then they're first-class actors. Look, here come two noble animals, a man and a lion.

LION and MOONSHINE enter.

LION

(played by SNUG) You, ladies, whose gentle hearts make you afraid of the smallest monstrous mouse that crawls around on the floor, might quake and tremble now when the wild lion roars in his most violent rage. You should know that I, Snug the

When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam.

²¹⁵ For if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

THESEUS

A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

A very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox, for his valor.

THESEUS

²²⁰ True. And a goose for his discretion.

DEMETRIUS

Not so, my lord. For his valor cannot carry his discretion, and
the fox carries the goose.

THESEUS

His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valor, for the goose
carries not the fox. It is well. Leave it to his discretion, and let
us listen to the moon.

MOONSHINE

(played by STARVELING)

carpenter, am not a fierce lion or a lioness, because if I were a
lion and I showed up here to cause trouble, I'd be taking my life
in my hands.

THESEUS

Ah, it's a sensitive animal, with a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

He's the best actor I've ever seen play a lion.

LYSANDER

He's as brave as a fox.

THESEUS

True. And as wise as a goose.

DEMETRIUS

Oh, that's not true, my lord. He's not brave enough to be wise.

THESEUS

He's not wise enough to be brave. Anyway, he is what he is.
Let's listen to the moon.

MOONSHINE

This lantern represents the [horned moon](#) —

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present—

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.
Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be—

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the “man i' th' moon”?

DEMETRIUS

²³⁵ He dares not come there for the candle. For you see, it is already in snuff.

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane. But yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the [horns on his head](#).

THESEUS

He's not a crescent moon, so his horns must be invisible inside the circle.

MOONSHINE

This lantern represents the moon. I myself am playing the man in the moon—

THESEUS

Well then, that's the biggest mistake of all. The man should be inside the lantern. How else is he the “man in the moon”?

DEMETRIUS

He can't go in there because of the candle. It's too hot.

HIPPOLYTA

I'm tired of this moon. I wish he'd wax or wane off the stage.

THESEUS

It seems like he's waning, but out of politeness we'll have to wait and see.

LYSANDER

Proceed, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thornbush, my thornbush; and this dog, my dog.

DEMETRIUS

²⁴⁵ Why, all these should be in the lanthorn, for all these are in the moon.—But silence! Here comes Thisbe.

Enter THISBE

THISBE

This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

LION

(roaring) Oh!

THISBE runs off, dropping her mantle

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion!

THESEUS

²⁵⁰ Well run, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

LYSANDER

Go ahead, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All I wanted to tell you is that the lantern is the moon, I'm the man in the moon, this thornbush is my thornbush, and this dog is my dog.

DEMETRIUS

Well, all of these should be in the lantern, because they're all in the moon. But be quiet, here comes Thisbe.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

This is old Ninny's tomb. But where is my love?

LION

(roaring) Hey!

THISBE runs off, dropping her cloak.

DEMETRIUS

Good roaring, Lion!

THESEUS

Good running, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

Well shone, Moon!—Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

LION bloodies **THISBE**'s mantle

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion!

Enter PYRAMUS

DEMETRIUS

And then came Pyramus.

Exit LION

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

PYRAMUS

255 Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.
For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—
But stay, O spite!
260 But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?

Good shining, Moon!—Really, the Moon shines very well.

LION shakes **THISBE**'s cloak around and stains it with blood.

THESEUS

That's good, Lion! Shake it around like a cat with a mouse.

PYRAMUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

And then Pyramus showed up.

LION exits.

LYSANDER

So the lion disappeared.

PYRAMUS

Sweet Moon, I thank you for your sunny beams. I thank you,
Moon, for shining now so bright, because by the light of your
gracious, golden, glittering gleams, I hope to be able to see my
faithful Thisbe.—But wait. Oh no! But, look, poor me, what a
terrible tragedy is here! Eyes, do you see? How can it be? Oh,
dainty duck! Oh, dear! Your cloak so good, what, stained with
blood? Come, terrible Furies, and punish whoever has hurt her!
Oh, Fate, come and cut the thread of my life. Conquer, crush,
conclude, and kill!

O dainty duck! O dear!
265 Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum.
270 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

This passion and the death of a dear friend would go near to
make a man look sad.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

PYRAMUS

O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
275 Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer.
Come, tears, confound!
Out, sword, and wound!
280 The pap of Pyramus—

Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop. (*stabs himself*)

THESEUS

You could get sad watching this actor's passionate lament—if
one of your good friends happened to die right at the same
time.

HIPPOLYTA

Damned if I don't feel sorry for him.

PYRAMUS

Oh, Mother Nature, why did you create lions? A mean and
awful lion has **deflowered** my darling, who is—no, no, who was
the most beautiful lady who ever lived, or loved, or liked, or
looked. Come on, tears, pour over me! Come on out, sword,
and wound Pyramus in the chest—yes, right here on the left
side where his heart is. (*PYRAMUS stabs himself*)

And so I'm dying. Here I go, here I go. Okay, now I'm dead. My
soul has fled to the sky. My tongue shall see no more, It's time

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

285 Now am I dead.

Now am I fled.

My soul is in the sky.

Tongue, lose thy light.

Moon, take thy flight.

Exit **MOONSHINE**

290 Now die, die, die, die, die.

(dies)

DEMETRIUS

No die, but an ace for him, for he is but one.

LYSANDER

Less than an ace, man. For he is dead. He is nothing.

THESEUS

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and prove an ass.

HIPPOLYTA

How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

THESEUS

for the moon to go away.

MOONSHINE *exits.*

Now die, die, die, die, die. (PYRAMUS *dies*)

DEMETRIUS

Is someone throwing dice? I guess it's "die," not dice, since there's only one of him.

LYSANDER

Actually he's a die with no dots, since he's nothing—he's dead.

THESEUS

With a doctor's help he might recover and become an ass again.

HIPPOLYTA

If Moonshine's gone before Thisbe comes back, how will she be able to see in the dark to find her lover dead?

THESEUS

She will find him by starlight. Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

Enter THISBE

HIPPOLYTA

300 Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus.
I hope she will be brief.

DEMETRIUS

A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better. He for a man, God warrant us, she for a woman, God bless us.

LYSANDER

305 She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS

And thus she means, videlicet—

THISBE

Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!

310 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips,

She'll see him by starlight. Here she comes. Her moaning and groaning will end the play.

THISBE enters.

HIPPOLYTA

I don't think a ridiculous Pyramus like that one deserves much moaning. I hope she keeps it short.

DEMETRIUS

I can't decide whether Pyramus or Thisbe is better. God help us if he's a better man. But God help us if she's a better woman.

LYSANDER

Look, she's spotted him with those sweet eyes of hers.

DEMETRIUS

And now she'll start moaning, of course—

THISBE

Are you asleep, my love? What, are you dead, my dove? Oh,

Pyramus, get up! Speak, speak. Can't you talk? Dead, dead?

The dirt of a grave must cover your sweet eyes! Your lily-white lips, your cherry-red nose, and your buttercup-yellow cheeks are gone, gone forever. Lovers, moan and weep. His eyes were as green as leeks. Oh, Fate, come, come to me, with hands as pale as milk. Soak your hands in blood and gore, since you

This cherry nose,
315 These yellow cowslip cheeks
Are gone, are gone.
Lovers, make moan.
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters three,
320 Come, come to me
With hands as pale as milk.
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
325 Tongue, not a word.
Come, trusty sword.
Come, blade, my breast imbrue.*(stabs herself)*
And, farewell, friends.
Thus Thisbe ends.
330 Adieu, adieu, adieu.
(dies)

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

have cut the thread of his life with scissors. Tongue, do not
speak. Come, trusty sword. Come, blade, drench my breast
with blood. *(she stabs herself)* Goodbye, friends! This is how
Thisbe comes to an end. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.
(THISBE dies)

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Yes, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, assure you. The wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse—for when the players are all dead, there needs none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy. And so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

Bergomask dance *Exeunt* **BOTTOM** and **FLUTE**

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

Lovers, to bed. 'Tis almost fairy time.

345 I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatched.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

350 In nightly revels and new jollity.

Exeunt

Enter **ROBIN**

(out of character) No, I assure you. The wall that kept their fathers apart has been taken down. Would you like to see the epilogue or hear a country dance between two of us?

THESEUS

No epilogue, please. Your play doesn't need to be excused afterward with an epilogue. Never apologize—when the actors are all dead, no one can be blamed. As a matter of fact, if the playwright had played Pyramus and hanged himself with Thisbe's belt, it would have been a very good tragedy. It's a good tragedy, very well done. But come on, let's see you do your dance. Forget your epilogue.

The actors dance, and **BOTTOM** and **FLUTE** *exit.*

The clock has chimed midnight. Lovers, it's time to go to bed.

It's almost fairy time. I'm afraid we're going to oversleep in the morning as late as we've stayed up tonight. This blatantly stupid play helped us kill the time until bed. Dear friends, let's go to bed. We'll continue this celebration for two weeks, with nightly parties and new fun.

They all exit.

ROBIN *enters.*

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars
And the wolf howls the moon,
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide.

And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic. Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house.
I am sent with broom before
To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter **OBERON** and **TITANIA**, King and Queen of Fairies, with
all their train*

OBERON

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars and the wolf howls at the moon. The farmer snores, exhausted from his work. The charred logs glow in the fireplace, and the owl's hoot makes the sick man think about his own death. Now is the time of night when graves open wide and release spirits to glide over the graveyard paths.

And we fairies, who run away from the sun just like the goddess of the night, following darkness like a dream, are getting antsy. But I'm here to make sure that not even a mouse disturbs this blessed house. I've been sent to clean house a bit before the fairies come.

***OBERON** and **TITANIA** enter with their servants and followers.*

OBERON

Through the house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire.
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier.

355 And this ditty, after me,
Sing and dance it trippingly.

TITANIA

First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note.
Hand in hand with fairy grace
360 Will we sing and bless this place.

OBERON, TITANIA, and the FAIRIES sing and dance

OBERON

(sings)

*Now until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be.
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be.
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand.*

Let the dying fire shine a glimmering light throughout the house. I want every elf and fairy to hop lightly, like a bird on a twig, and to sing and dance this song along with me.

TITANIA

First rehearse your song from memory, and make sure each note is pretty. We'll all join hands and sing, and bless this place with our fairy grace.

OBERON and TITANIA lead the **FAIRIES** in song and dance.

OBERON

(singing)

Now, until morning, each fairy should walk through this house. Titania and I will go to the royal marriage bed to bless it, and the children conceived in that bed will always have good luck. Each of the three couples will always be faithful and in love, and their children will have no deformities.

*Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despisèd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait.
And each several chamber bless
Through this palace with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blessed
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away. Make no stay.
Meet me all by break of day.*

*Exeunt all but **ROBIN***

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck

*They won't have moles, or harelips, or scars, or abnormal
markings, or anything else that might alarm someone if their
baby was born with it. Use this blessed dew from the fields to
bless each room in the palace with sweet peace. And the blessed
owner will always be safe. Run along. Don't stay long. Meet me at
dawn.*

*They all exit except for **ROBIN**.*

ROBIN

If we actors have offended you, just think of it this way and
everything will be all right—you were asleep when you saw
these visions, and this silly and pathetic story was no more real
than a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, don't get upset with me.
If you forgive us, we'll make everything all right. I'm an honest
Puck, and I swear that if we're lucky enough not to get hissed
at, we'll make it up to you soon. If not, then I'm a liar. So good
night to everyone. Give me some applause, if we're friends,
and Robin will make everything up to you.

Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.
So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

Exit

He exits.