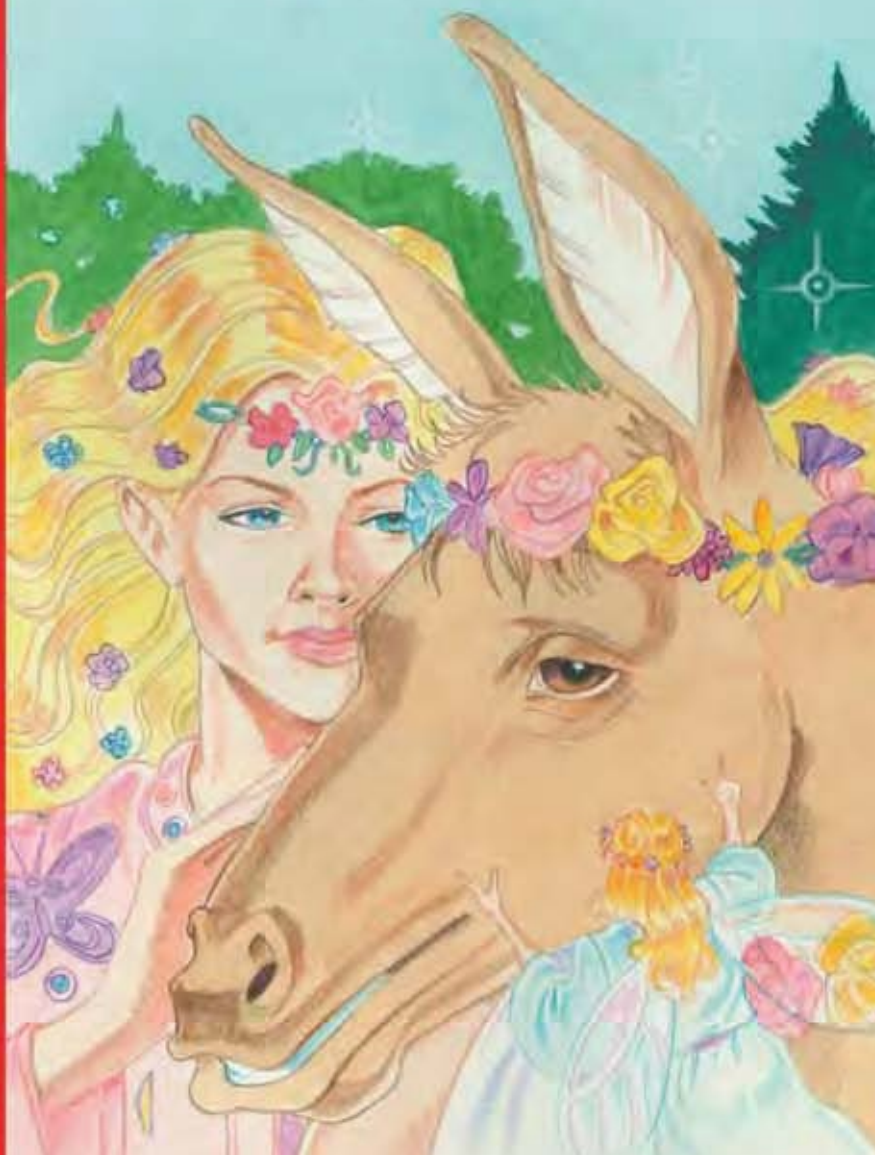


# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SADDLEBACK  
*Classics*



# *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ADAPTED BY

Emily Hutchinson



Hamlet

Julius Caesar

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The Merchant of Venice

**A Midsummer Night's Dream**

Othello

Romeo and Juliet

The Tempest

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## INTRODUCTION

Long ago in Greece, Hermia and Lysander decide to elope. Demetrius, who loves Hermia, follows them into the woods, hoping to stop them. Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, also follows.

In the woods are a group of fairies and several craftsmen, rehearsing a play.

Puck, one of the fairies, tricks each character into falling in love with the first person he or she sees upon awakening. All sorts of humorous confusion follows.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**THESEUS** Duke of Athens

**HIPPOLYTA** Queen of the Amazons, a warrior race of women, defeated in battle by Theseus

**EGEUS** An Athenian citizen

**HERMIA** Egeus's daughter

**LYSANDER** Young man who loves Hermia

**DEMETRIUS** Young man who loves Hermia

**HELENA** Hermia's friend who loves Demetrius

**PETER QUINCE** A carpenter

**NICK BOTTOM** A weaver

**FRANCIS FLUTE** A bellows-mender

**ROBIN STARVELING** A tailor

**TOM SNOT** A tinker (mender of pots and pans)

**SNUG** A joiner (cabinet maker)

**PUCK** (Robin Goodfellow) A fairy

**OBERON** King of the fairies

**TITANIA** Queen of the fairies

**PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED**

Four fairies who serve Titania

**PHILOSTRATE** Theseus's servant

# ACT 1

## Scene 1

*(Theseus and Hippolyta, along with their servants, enter Theseus's palace in Athens.)*

**THESEUS:** Now, fair Hippolyta, our wedding  
hour draws near. Four more days!  
Time seems to go so slowly.

**HIPPOLYTA:** Four days will quickly become night.  
Four nights will dream away the time.  
And then the new moon, like a silver bow,  
Shall look on our wedding night.

**THESEUS:** Go, Philostrate.  
Stir up the youth of Athens to be merry.  
Awaken the spirit of fun.  
Tell all sadness to go to funerals.  
We don't want any sad faces at our  
wedding. *(Philostrate exits.)*

Hippolyta, I wooed you with my sword  
In the heat of battle, and won your love  
while defeating you.

But I will wed you in a different way—  
With celebration, joy, and good times.

*(Egeus and his daughter Hermia enter, along with Lysander and Demetrius.)*

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**EGEUS:** Joy to Theseus, our respected Duke!

**THESEUS:** Thank you, good Egeus.

What's the news with you?

**EGEUS:** I am having trouble with my child,  
My daughter Hermia.

This man, Demetrius, has my consent to  
marry her.

But you, Lysander, have cast a spell on her!

*(turning to Lysander)* You have given her  
poetry and exchanged tokens of love with  
my child;

You have sung insincere songs of love by  
her window in the moonlight.

You have given her rings, flowers, and candy.

You have used all the tricks young men use

On young girls like my daughter.

You have stolen my daughter's heart

And made her disobedient to me.

Now she refuses to marry Demetrius.

I claim my ancient right as a father:

As she is mine, I may give her to the man

I choose or send her to her death.

This is the law of our land, as you know.

**THESEUS:** What do you say, Hermia?

Let me remind you, fair maid,

Your father should be as a god to you.

He is the one who formed your beauty.

To him, you are but as a form in wax

That he has shaped. It is within his rights  
To leave the form as it is or destroy it.  
Demetrius is a good man.

**HERMIA:** So is Lysander.

**THESEUS:** In himself he is. But, in this case,  
Because of your father's wishes,  
The other must be seen as the better man.

**HERMIA:** I wish my father saw it with my eyes.

**THESEUS:** Rather, you must see it his way.

**HERMIA:** I beg your grace to pardon me.  
I do not know if it is proper for me  
To explain my thoughts to you.  
But I beg you to answer one question:  
What is the worst that could happen to me  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius?

**THESEUS:** Either to die or never to marry at all.  
Think hard, fair Hermia!  
Consider your youth and your feelings.  
Ask yourself if you could live as a nun.  
Could you be a childless sister all your life,  
Singing weak songs to the cold, lifeless moon?  
Those who can do so are certainly blessed.  
But would you be happy with such a life?

**HERMIA:** So will I live—or die—my lord,  
Before I would marry a man I do not love.

**THESEUS:** Take time to think about this.  
Tell us your answer in four days,





On the wedding day of my love and me.  
By then you must prepare to die  
For going against your father's will—  
Or wed Demetrius, as your father wishes.  
Or live as a nun for the rest of your life.

**DEMETRIUS:** Give in, sweet Hermia.

And you, too, Lysander.

Let me claim what is rightly mine.

**LYSANDER:** You have her father's love, Demetrius.

Let me have Hermia's. *You* marry him.

**EGEUS:** It is true—Demetrius has my love.

And so, I shall give him what is mine.

Hermia belongs to me. All my rights to her  
I give to Demetrius.

**LYSANDER:** My lord, I am as good a man as he!  
 My family is as well-connected as his.  
 I have as much money as he.  
 My love is greater than his.  
 In every way, I am at least as good as he is,  
 And in some ways, I am better.  
 The beautiful Hermia loves me,  
 Which is the most important point.  
 Why shouldn't I return her love?  
 Demetrius courted Nedar's daughter,  
 Helena, and won her soul.  
 She still loves this faithless man.

**THESEUS:** I have meant to talk to Demetrius  
 about it.  
 But I've been so busy that I forgot to  
 do so.  
 Come with me, Demetrius.  
 You, too, Egeus. I must talk to you  
 privately.  
 As for you, fair Hermia, try  
 To fit your wishes to those of your father.  
 Otherwise the law of Athens will go  
 against you.  
 We can do nothing about it—  
 You must die or vow to live a single life.  
 Come, my Hippolyta.  
 Demetrius and Egeus, you come, too.  
 I must talk to you about our wedding  
 And about something else that concerns you.

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**EGEUS:** We are happy to go with you, my lord.

*(All but Lysander and Hermia exit.)*

**LYSANDER:** My love! Why is your face so pale?

How did your rosy cheeks fade so fast?

**HERMIA:** Perhaps it is from lack of rain.

Only my tears water them.

**LYSANDER:** Oh, my! From everything that I've learned,

The course of true love never did run smooth.

**HERMIA:** Oh, awful! To choose love by another's eyes.

**LYSANDER:** War or death may stand in the way.

Love lasts just a moment, like a sound.

It is swift as a shadow, short as any dream

And as quick as lightning in a storm

That, in a rage, splits heaven and earth.

Before a person can say, "Look at that!"

The jaws of darkness eat it up.

**HERMIA:** If this is truly what love is,

It must be law. So we must be patient

And give to love our thoughts and dreams,

Our wishes and tears.

**LYSANDER:** Good advice, Hermia. Now, hear me.

I have a rich old aunt.

She's a widow with no children.

Her house is only 20 miles from Athens.

She thinks of me as her only son.  
 There, gentle Hermia, we can get married.  
 Athenian law cannot touch us there.  
 If you love me, leave your father's house  
 Tomorrow night. Meet me in the woods,  
 Three miles outside of town.  
 Remember where I met you with Helena  
 To gather May flowers one morning?  
 That's where I will wait for you.

**HERMIA:** My good Lysander! I swear to you by  
 Cupid's strongest bow, and  
 By his best arrow, with the golden tip—  
 By all that keeps lovers' souls together—  
 And by all the vows that men have broken  
 (Which are more than women ever made)—  
 Tomorrow I truly will meet you there.

**LYSANDER:** Keep your promise, love.  
 Look, here comes Helena.

*(Helena enters.)*

**HERMIA:** Hello, fair Helena!

**HELENA:** You call me "fair"? You don't mean it.  
 Demetrius loves *your* fairness. You are  
 lucky! To him, your eyes are like stars.  
 Oh, were beauty as catching as sickness!  
 I would want to catch yours, fair Hermia.  
 If the world were mine, and Demetrius, too,  
 I'd give you the world and keep Demetrius.

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Oh, teach me how to look like you, and how  
To lead the dancing of Demetrius's heart!

**HERMIA:** He loves me though I frown upon  
him!

**HELENA:** I wish your frowns would teach my  
smiles such skill!

**HERMIA:** The more I reject him, the more he  
loves me.

**HELENA:** The more I love him, the more he  
rejects me.

**HERMIA:** He's a fool, Helena! It's not my fault.

**HELENA:** It's the fault of your beauty. I wish  
that fault were mine!

**HERMIA:** Be happy. He won't see me again.  
Lysander and I will soon leave this place.  
Before I saw Lysander,  
Athens seemed a paradise to me.  
But I don't feel that way anymore.

**LYSANDER:** Helena, here's our plan:  
Tomorrow night, when the moon sees  
Her silver face in the water,  
We will steal away from Athens.

**HERMIA:** There we will meet new people and  
seek new friends.  
Goodbye, sweet childhood friend. Pray for us.  
And good luck with your Demetrius!  
Keep your word, Lysander, dear.

Meet me tomorrow at midnight.

**LYSANDER:** I will, my Hermia. (*Hermia exits.*)

Goodbye, Helena. As you love Demetrius,  
may he also love you. (*Lysander exits.*)

**HELENA:** Some are so much happier than  
others!

In Athens, I am thought as fair as she. But  
what of that? Demetrius doesn't think so.

He does not see what everyone else does.

I love him just as he loves Hermia.

Love looks not with the eyes, but with  
the mind.

That's why Cupid is always painted blind.

And that's why love is said to be a child—

Because its choices are often so wild.

Love often lies. Before Demetrius saw  
Hermia,

He swore that he was only mine.

(*Suddenly Helena thinks of a way to see Demetrius  
again.*)

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's plan.

He will follow her tomorrow night.

He might even thank me for the news.

If he does, I will not mind the pain,

For perhaps I can get his attention again.

(*Helena exits.*)

## Scene 2

*(Peter Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling enter Peter Quince's house in Athens.)*

**QUINCE:** Are all the actors here?

**BOTTOM:** It would be best if you would call their names, man by man, following your list.

**QUINCE:** Here is the scroll of every man in Athens who is fit to act in our play. We will put on this play for the duke and duchess on their wedding night.

**BOTTOM:** First, good Peter Quince, say what the play is about. Then read the names of the actors. That way you get to the point.

**QUINCE:** All right. Our play is "The Most Sad Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe."

**BOTTOM:** A very good piece of work! Now, good Peter Quince, call your list of actors.

**QUINCE:** I call Nick Bottom, the weaver.

**BOTTOM:** Ready. Name my part, and go on.

**QUINCE:** You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

**BOTTOM:** Who is Pyramus—a lover or a hero?

**QUINCE:** A lover. He kills himself for love.

**BOTTOM:** That will cause some tears. If I do it, let the audience take care of their eyes. I

will move storms! I will make them all feel sad! Yet I'd rather be a hero. I could play Hercules really well. That's a part I could really sink my teeth into! A hero is a great role. A lover is more to be pitied. Now name the rest of the players.

**QUINCE:** Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

**FLUTE:** Here, Peter Quince.

**QUINCE:** Flute, you will play the role of Thisbe.

**FLUTE:** What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

**QUINCE:** Thisbe is the lady that Pyramus loves.

**FLUTE:** No, I don't want to play a woman.

Look! I have a beard coming in.

**QUINCE:** No matter. You shall wear a mask,  
and you may speak as small as you want.

**BOTTOM:** Let me play Thisbe, too. I'll speak in  
a tiny little voice.

*(speaking in a loud voice):* "Thisbe! Thisbe!"

*(then speaking in a small voice):* "Oh, Pyramus,  
my dear lover! I am your lady Thisbe!"

**QUINCE:** No, no, you must play Pyramus.

Flute, you will play Thisbe.

**BOTTOM:** Well, go on.

**QUINCE:** Robin Starveling, you must play  
Thisbe's mother. Next, Tom Snout, the  
tinker.

**SNOUT:** Here, Peter Quince.



**QUINCE:** You will play Pyramus's father. I will play Thisbe's father. Snug, the joiner, you will play the lion's part. I hope these parts work out for all of us.

**SNUG:** Do you have a written copy of the lion's part? If you do, please give it to me now, for I learn slowly.

**QUINCE:** But it is nothing but roaring!

**BOTTOM:** Let *me* play the lion too! My roar will do any man's heart good. My roar will make the duke say, "Let him roar again. Let him roar again!"

**QUINCE:** But you would frighten the duchess and the ladies. They would scream. That would be reason enough to hang us all.

**ALL:** That would hang us, every mother's son.

**BOTTOM:** It's true, friends. If you should frighten the ladies, they would surely hang us! But I will roar as gently as any baby dove. I will roar like a nightingale.

**QUINCE:** You can play no part but Pyramus, for Pyramus is as sweet and proper a man as you would see on a summer day. That is why you must play this lovely gentleman.

*(handing out the parts):* Gentlemen, here are your parts. I beg you to learn them

by tomorrow night. Meet me in the woods three miles outside of town. We will rehearse there. If we rehearse in the city, we will be dogged with company and our plan will be no secret. I will draw up a list of props that we will need for our play. Please, don't fail me!

**BOTTOM:** We will be there and rehearse with great courage until we are perfect. Goodbye.

**QUINCE:** We will meet at the duke's oak tree.

*(All exit.)*

# ACT 2

## Scene 1

*(In a wood near Athens, a **fairy** enters at one door, and **Puck** enters at another.)*

**PUCK:** Hello, spirit! Where do you wander?

**FAIRY:** Over hill, over dale,  
Through bush, through briar,  
Over field, over fence,  
Through flood, through fire,  
I do wander everywhere,  
Faster than the moon.  
And I serve the fairy queen.  
I place her drops of dew upon the grass.  
The tall flowers depend on her.  
In their gold coats, you see tiny spots.  
Those are rubies, fairy favors.  
In those freckles lie the flowers' aromas.  
I must go find some dewdrops here.  
And hang a pearl in every flower's ear.  
Goodbye, lively spirit! Our queen and all  
her elves will be here soon.

**PUCK:** The king gives a party here tonight.  
The queen must not come in his sight.

For Oberon is very angry. The queen has  
 stolen a lovely boy from a king in India.  
 She wants him as her servant.  
 But jealous Oberon wants the child  
 To serve as a knight in the wild forests.  
 Yet she keeps the favored boy to herself.  
 She crowns him with flowers. He's her joy.  
 Now, every time the king and queen meet,  
 In wood or field, by clear water, or in  
 starlight, they argue over the boy.  
 All their elves, out of fear,  
 Creep into acorn cups and hide there.

**FAIRY:** If I'm not wrong, I know you.  
 Aren't you that clever, naughty sprite  
 Called Robin Goodfellow? Aren't you he  
 Who frightens the girls in the village?  
 Don't you steal cream from milk,  
 And play tricks on housewives?  
 Do you not lead travelers the wrong way,  
 Laughing when they get lost?  
 You're the one they call "Sweet Puck"!

**PUCK:** You speak the truth.  
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
 I joke with Oberon, and make him smile.  
 A wise old woman, telling a sad story,  
 Sometimes thinks I am a three-legged  
 stool—until I slip out from under her,  
 And down she falls!

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Then everyone laughs and laughs!  
But look, fairy. Here comes Oberon.

**FAIRY:** And here is Titania, too! I wish that  
Oberon were gone!

*(Oberon enters at one door, with his attendants.  
Titania enters at another door, with hers.)*

**OBERON:** I'm not happy to see you, proud  
Titania.

**TITANIA:** What, Oberon? Fairies, let's go.  
I don't want to see him, either.

**OBERON:** Wait! Am I not your husband?

**TITANIA:** Then I must be your wife. But I  
know how you sing songs of love to all  
the young girls.

Are you back from India so soon?  
Have you come to see Hippolyta,  
Your old love, be married to Theseus?  
Did you come to wish them joy?

**OBERON:** How can you say that? For shame,  
Titania, talking about my love for  
Hippolyta  
When I know of *your* love for Theseus!  
Didn't you lead him to break his promises  
To so many women?

**TITANIA:** These are jealous lies!  
Never, since the beginning of summer,  
Have we been able to dance freely

On hills, in valleys, or in meadows.  
You have disturbed our fun and our dances  
By springs, brooks, and sandy beaches.  
And so the winds whistle to no use.  
In revenge, they suck up water from the sea  
And flood the land. Rivers have grown so  
full they overrun their banks.  
Farmers work and get no crops.  
The green corn has rotted in the fields.  
The sheep die in the muddy fields,  
And crows grow fat on the dead flock.  
The seasons are all mixed up.  
The human mortals want their winter.  
Snow falls in the fresh lap of the red rose,  
And sweet summer flowers bloom in ice.  
The amazed world does not know which  
is which!  
And all this evil comes from our arguing.  
We are their parents.

**OBERON:** Do you want to stop, then?

It's up to you.

Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

All I want is a stolen little boy

To be my page.

**TITANIA:** Set your heart at rest;

I would not sell him for all of Fairyland!

His mother was my friend.

And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,

We often talked as we sat side by side.  
She sat with me on the beach's yellow sands,  
While we watched the tall ships.  
We'd laugh at their sails, full and big-bellied  
With the wind, as she was with that child.  
Pretending to be a ship, she would  
Sail upon the land and bring back gifts.  
But alas! She, being a mere mortal,  
Died when he was born.  
It is for her sake that I raise the boy.  
And for her sake I will not part with him.

**OBERON:** How long will you stay in this wood?

**TITANIA:** Until after Theseus's wedding day.  
If you wish to see our moonlight fun,  
And dance with us, come along!  
If not, then stay away from me,  
And I will stay away from you.

**OBERON:** Give me that boy and I will go  
with you.

**TITANIA:** Not for your entire fairy kingdom!  
Fairies, away!  
We will keep on fighting if I stay.

*(Titania exits with her fairies.)*

**OBERON:** Go, then. You will not leave this  
wood until I get even with you!  
Come, Puck. Do you remember  
That time I sat on a hill near the sea

And spied a mermaid on a dolphin's back?  
 She was singing such a sweet song  
 That the rude sea grew calm to hear it.  
 Certain stars shot madly from their orbits  
 To hear the mermaid's music.

**PUCK:** I remember.

**OBERON:** That same time I saw Cupid  
 Flying between moon and earth.  
 He took aim at a fair maiden below  
 And fired his love arrow at her heart.  
 But she moved out of the way, and  
 Cupid's arrow missed her.  
 I watched the arrow fall on a white flower,  
 Now made purple by love's wound.  
 Young girls call this flower "Love-in-  
 idleness."  
 Get that flower I once showed you.  
 The juice of it, laid on sleeping eyes,  
 Will make the soul fall madly in love  
 With the next live creature it sees.  
 Get it for me! Be back here again  
 Before a whale can swim three miles.

**PUCK:** I'll put a girdle around the earth  
 In 40 minutes.

*(Puck exits.)*

**OBERON:** Once I have this juice,  
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep.



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And drop it on her eyes. When she wakes,  
She'll love the first thing she sees.  
It might be a lion, a bear, a wolf, or a bull.  
It might be a monkey or an ape. Whatever  
it is, she shall chase it with love.  
Before I take this spell away from her sight  
I'll make her give the boy to me.  
But who comes here?  
Let me overhear what they say.

*(Demetrius enters, with Helena following him.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** I do not love you. Don't follow me.  
Where are Lysander and fair Hermia?  
You told me they were coming to this wood.  
Go away, Helena! Follow me no more.

**HELENA:** You draw me like a magnet. My heart  
Is true as steel. Lose your power to draw,  
And I shall have no power to follow you.

**DEMETRIUS:** Draw you? Haven't I spoken fairly?  
Haven't I told you the truth?  
The fact is that I do not and cannot love you.

**HELENA:** And for that, I love you all the more.  
I am your dog, Demetrius. The more you  
beat me, the more I will follow.  
Treat me as you wish. Just let me,  
Unworthy as I am, follow you.

**DEMETRIUS:** It makes me sick to look at you.

**HELENA:** And I feel sick when I *don't* look at you!

**DEMETRIUS:** How can you chase after someone  
Who does not love you? Do you trust the  
night and this lonely place for safety?

**HELENA:** Your virtue will keep me safe.  
It is not night when I can see your face.  
So I think I am not in the night.  
And this wood does not seem lonely,  
For you, in my view, are all the world.  
Then how can it be said I am alone  
When all the world is here to look on me?

**DEMETRIUS:** I'll run and hide in the bushes  
And leave you to the mercy of wild beasts.

**HELENA:** The wildest has a kinder heart than you.  
Run if you wish. I'll change the story.  
The deer can catch the tiger  
When cowardice chases and bravery runs.

**DEMETRIUS:** I won't listen anymore. Let me go.  
Or, if you follow me, do not doubt that  
I will do you harm in the wood.

**HELENA:** Yes, in the temple, the town, the field,  
You do me harm! For shame, Demetrius!  
Your wrongs offend all women.  
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;  
We were not made to woo.

*(Demetrius exits.)*

I'll follow you, and make a heaven of hell,  
If I die by the hand I love so well.

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*(Helena exits.)*

**OBERON:** Farewell, sweet girl.

Before Demetrius leaves this grove,  
You will run, and he will seek your love.

*(Puck enters again.)*

Welcome, wanderer. Do you have the  
flower?

**PUCK:** Yes, here it is.

**OBERON:** Please, give it to me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where every kind of lovely flower grows.  
There Titania often sleeps at night,  
Tired from dances and delight;  
With the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

*(He gives Puck some of the flower.)*

Take this and find in this grove  
A sweet Athenian lady who is in love  
With a man who hates her. Paint his eyes!  
But do it when the next thing he sees  
Will be the lady. You will know this man  
By the Athenian clothes he wears.  
Do this deed with care. Make sure he will  
Love her more than she loves him.  
Meet me here before the first rooster-crow.

**PUCK:** Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall obey.

*(They exit.)*

## Scene 2

*(In another part of the wood, **Titania** enters, along with her **fairies**.)*

**TITANIA:** Come now, a dance and a fairy song.

Then, for a while, go away from here.

*(She points to different fairies.)*

You will kill the worms that eat the roses.

You will war with bats for their wings

To make coats for my elves.

You will keep back the noisy owls that

Come here at night and hoot at us.

Sing me now to sleep.

Then do your jobs and let me rest.

*(The fairies sing.)*

**FAIRIES:** You snakes with double tongues,

Skunks and beetles, don't be seen.

Worms and lizards, do no wrong,

Don't come near our fairy Queen.

*(**Titania** sleeps.)*

**A FAIRY:** All is well. Now, away!

*(**Fairies** exit.)*

*(**Oberon** enters. He places the flower juice on Titania's closed eyelids.)*

**OBERON:** What you see when you awake,

As your true love you will take.

Love and suffer for his sake.  
Be it pig, or cat, or bear,  
In your eyes it will appear,  
When you wake, as your own dear.  
Wake when something vile is near.

*(Oberon exits. Hermia and Lysander enter.)*

**LYSANDER:** Fair love, you are weak  
From wandering in the wood.  
To tell the truth, I have lost our way.  
We'll rest here, Hermia, if you think it good.  
Let us wait here for the light of day.

**HERMIA:** Good, Lysander. Find yourself a bed.  
Upon this bank I will rest my head.

**LYSANDER:** One spot can serve as pillow for us  
both. Our hearts are as one.

**HERMIA:** No, Lysander. For my sake, my dear,  
Lie farther off yet. Do not lie so near.

**LYSANDER:** Do not take me wrong, my sweet!  
I mean that my soul is one with yours.  
So let me make my bedroom by your side.  
For lying that way, Hermia, I have not lied.

**HERMIA:** Lysander, you make a pretty riddle.  
Now forgive my manners and my pride,  
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied!  
But, gentle friend, lie farther off.  
Such separation may well be said to be  
right for an unmarried man and a maid.

So stay at a distance—and good night,  
sweet friend.

May our love not change until life's end!

**LYSANDER:** And may my life end if I end love!

Here is my bed. May sleep give you rest!

**HERMIA:** With all my heart, may you be blessed!

*(They sleep. Puck enters.)*

**PUCK:** Through the forest I have gone

But I have found no Athenian

On whose eyes I might pour

The loving juice of this flower.

*(He comes upon Lysander and Hermia.)*

Night and silence! Who is here?

Clothes of Athens he does wear!

This is the man my master said

Hated the Athenian maid.

And here is the maiden, sleeping sound

On the damp and dirty ground.

Pretty soul! She should not lie

Near this man with no courtesy.

*(He puts the flower juice on Lysander's eyes.)*

Oaf! Upon your eyes I now throw

All the power this charm does know.

When you wake, let love keep

You so alert you cannot sleep.

So awake when I am gone.

I must now go to Oberon.

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



*(Puck exits. Demetrius and Helena enter, running.)*

**HELENA:** Stay—even if you kill me, sweet Demetrius.

**DEMETRIUS:** I tell you, go away! Do not chase me like this.

**HELENA:** Oh, would you leave me alone in the dark? Do not go.

**DEMETRIUS:** Stay at your own risk. I'm going on alone.

*(Demetrius exits.)*

**HELENA:** I am breathless from this chase.  
If I go on, I'm sure to lose face.

Happy is Hermia, wherever she lies,  
 For she has blessed and pretty eyes.  
 Her eyes did not get bright with tears.  
 If so, mine would be prettier than hers.  
 No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,  
 For beasts that meet me run away in fear;  
 So I don't wonder why Demetrius does  
 Like a monster, run from me thus.

*(She sees Lysander sleeping.)*

But who is here? Lysander, on the ground!  
 Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.  
 Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

**LYSANDER** *(waking and seeing Helena)*: And run  
 through fire for you!  
 Dear Helena! Now I can see your heart!  
 Where is Demetrius? Oh, that vile word!  
 That name should perish on my sword!

**HELENA**: Do not say that, Lysander.  
 What does it matter that he loves your  
 Hermia? Fair Hermia still loves you.  
 So be happy.

**LYSANDER**: Happy with Hermia? I'm sorry now  
 For all the boring minutes I've spent with her.  
 I do not love Hermia! It is Helena I love.  
 Who would not trade a raven for a dove?  
 By reason is a man's heart swayed,  
 And reason says you are the worthier maid.  
 So far young reason has not been ripe.



But now I see that Hermia is not my type,  
And reason leads me to your eyes. There I  
see love's stories in love's richest book.

**HELENA:** Why do you mock me like this?  
What did I do to deserve such treatment?  
Isn't it enough, young man, that I never can  
Get a sweet look from Demetrius's eye?  
Now I must hear you make sport of me?  
Goodbye! I must say that, before this,  
I thought you were a gentleman.  
Oh, that a lady by one man refused,  
Should then by another be so abused!

*(Helena exits.)*

**LYSANDER** *(to the sleeping Hermia)*: Stay, Hermia,  
And never again come near Lysander!  
It's as if I've eaten too many sweets.  
My stomach is deeply sick of you.  
I hate you. I turn all my might  
To honor Helena, and be her knight!

*(Lysander exits. Hermia wakes up.)*

**HERMIA** *(alarmed)*: Help me, Lysander! Oh, get  
this crawling snake away from me!  
Oh! I'm awake now! What a dream I had!  
Lysander, look how I shake with fear.  
I thought a serpent was eating my heart  
away—and you sat smiling as he did it.  
Lysander! What, are you gone? Lysander!

Where are you? Say something, if you can  
hear. Speak! I'm almost fainting with  
fear.

No word? Then I know you are not near.  
I'll either find you soon, or die right here!

*(Hermia exits.)*

# ACT 3

## Scene 1

*(Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling enter the wood and see Titania lying asleep.)*

**BOTTOM:** Are we all here?

**QUINCE:** Right on time. Here's a perfect place for our rehearsal. This green area shall be our stage. Those bushes will be backstage. We will act out the play, just as we will perform it before the duke.

**BOTTOM:** Peter Quince!

**QUINCE:** What do you say, Bottom?

**BOTTOM:** There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never do. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself. The ladies won't want to see such a thing! What do you say to that?

**STARVELING:** I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is said and done.

**BOTTOM:** Not at all! I have a plan that will make it all well. Write a prologue for me to speak. Let the prologue say that we will do no harm with our swords. Say

that Pyramus is not really killed. And just to make sure—say that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus but Bottom the weaver. This will make everyone feel better.

**QUINCE:** Good! We will have such a prologue.

**SNOUT:** Won't the ladies be afraid of the lion?

**STARVELING:** I know that *I* will!

**BOTTOM:** You are right. To bring a lion in among ladies would be most dreadful! We should think about this.

**SNOUT:** We must say he that he's *not* a lion!

**BOTTOM:** No, you must say his name, and half his face must show through the lion's neck. He himself should say something like this: "Ladies," or "Fair ladies, I would wish you—" No, maybe it should be this: "I would ask you," or "I beg you not to fear! If you think I am a lion, you are wrong. No, I am no such thing. I am a man like any other." And then, let him say his name, and tell them plainly that he is Snug the joiner.

**QUINCE:** Very well, it shall be so. But there are still two problems. First, how will we bring moonlight in the room? As you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

**SNOUT:** Will the moon shine the night we are to present our play?

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**BOTTOM:** Look at the calendar! Find out when the moon will be shining.

**QUINCE** (*taking out a calendar*): Yes, it does shine that night.

**BOTTOM:** Why, then we may leave a window open in the room where we perform. The moon will shine in at the window.

**QUINCE:** Yes, and someone can come in dressed as the Man in the Moon. He could say he represents the moon. Then there is one more thing: We need a wall in the room. The story says that Pyramus and Thisbe talked through a hole in a wall.

**SNOUT:** You can never bring in a wall. What do you think, Bottom?

**BOTTOM:** One of us must play the wall. He can have plaster or some mud on him, to show he's a wall. Let him hold his fingers open like this, and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper through that hole.

**QUINCE:** If that would work, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin. When you have said your lines, go offstage. Everyone else, do the same.

(*Puck enters, invisible to those onstage.*)

**PUCK** (*aside*): What kind of clowns are here,

So near where the fairy queen is sleeping?  
What—a play? I'll be the audience and  
Perhaps an actor, too, if I see the need.

**QUINCE:** Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, get ready.

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*): Thisbe, as sweet as the  
flowers smell, so is your breath.  
But listen! A voice! Stay here awhile  
And soon I will appear to you.

(*Bottom exits, into the bushes.*)

**PUCK** (*aside*): A stranger Pyramus has never  
been played!

(*Puck exits, following Bottom.*)

**FLUTE:** Must I speak now?

**QUINCE:** Yes, you must. You must understand  
that he goes only to see about a noise he  
heard. He will soon return.

**FLUTE** (*as Thisbe*): Pyramus, white as a red rose,  
Young, lovely, and as true as the truest horse,  
I'll meet you at Ninny's tomb.

**QUINCE** (*exploding*): "*Ninus's*" tomb, man! And  
you don't say that line just yet. That's  
what you answer to Pyramus. Pyramus,  
you must enter. You missed your cue.  
Your cue is "truest horse."

(*Puck enters with Bottom, who is wearing a donkey's  
head without being aware of it.*)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**BOTTOM:** If I were fair, Thisbe, I would be yours alone.

**QUINCE** (*frightened by the donkey's head*): Oh, a monster! We are haunted! Help!

(*Quince, Flute, Snout, Snug, and Starveling exit, leaving only Bottom and Puck.*)

**PUCK:** I'll follow you. We'll go in circles  
Through swamps, bushes, and woods.  
Sometimes I'll be a horse, sometimes a dog,  
A hog, a headless bear, sometimes a fire.  
I'll neigh, bark, grunt, roar, and burn,  
Like horse, dog, hog, bear, fire!

(*Puck exits.*)

**BOTTOM:** Why did they run away? This is a trick they're pulling to make me afraid.

(*Snout enters again.*)

**SNOUT:** Oh, Bottom, you are changed. What do I see on you? (*pointing to donkey's head*)

**BOTTOM:** What do you see? You see a donkey's head like your own, don't you?

(*Snout exits. Quince enters again.*)

**QUINCE:** Bless you, Bottom! You are changed.

(*Quince exits.*)

**BOTTOM:** I see what they're up to. They are trying to make a fool of me, to frighten

me, if they can. But I will not leave this place, no matter what they do. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing. They shall see that I am not afraid.

**(Bottom sings.)**

“The blackbird, with its orange bill  
The robin, with its song so true,  
The wren with its little tail feathers—”

**TITANIA** (*waking up*): What angel wakes me  
from my bed of flowers?

**BOTTOM** (*still singing*):

“The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The gray bird with its song so plain—”

**TITANIA**: Sing again, gentle mortal. My ear is  
full of delight at the sound you make.  
My eye is delighted by your fine looks.  
Everything about you moves me  
To swear I love you at first sight!

**BOTTOM**: I think, lady, you have little reason  
for that. And yet, to tell the truth, reason  
and love are not good friends these days.  
It’s a shame that people won’t link them.  
That’s just a little joke!

**TITANIA**: You are as wise as you are beautiful.

**BOTTOM**: I am neither! But if I were wise  
enough to get out of this wood, that  
would be good enough for me.



## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**TITANIA:** No! You shall stay here whether you want to or not.

I am no common spirit.

The summer is a servant to me.

And I do love you. So, go with me!

I'll give you fairies to bring you jewels  
from the sea.

They will sing, while you sleep on flowers.

And I will take away your mortal  
grossness, so you will be like a spirit  
made of air. Peaseblossom! Cobweb!

Moth! Mustardseed!

*(Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed enter.)*

**PEASEBLOSSOM:** I'm ready.

**COBWEB:** And I.

**MOTH:** And I.

**MUSTARDSEED:** And I.

**ALL:** Where shall we go?

**TITANIA:** Be kind and polite to this gentleman.

Hop before him. Jump about in his view.

Feed him with apricots and berries,

With purple grapes and green figs.

Give him honey from the honey bees.

And for candles, use wax from bees' legs

And light them with a glow-worm's eyes.

Show my love his way to bed and to arise.

Take the wings from painted butterflies,

To use as fans to wake his sleeping eyes.  
Take care of him, fairies! Be considerate.

**PEASEBLOSSOM:** Hail, mortal!

**COBWEB:** Hail!

**MOTH:** Hail!

**MUSTARDSEED:** Hail!

**BOTTOM:** Greetings! What are your names?

**COBWEB:** Cobweb.

**BOTTOM:** I hope to get to know you better,  
good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger,  
I will need you.

*(to Peaseblossom):* And your name, good sir?

**PEASEBLOSSOM:** Peaseblossom.

**BOTTOM:** Please, remember me to Mrs.

Squash, your mother, and to Mr. Peapod,  
your father.

*(to Mustardseed):* And your name, sir?

**MUSTARDSEED:** Mustardseed.

**BOTTOM:** Good Master Mustardseed, I know  
you well. I've eaten many of your family  
with roast beef. I tell you, your relatives  
have made my eyes water! We must see  
more of each other.

**TITANIA** *(to the fairies):* Come, wait on him.

Lead him to my chambers. Tie up my  
love's tongue. Bring him silently.

*(All exit.)*

## Scene 2

*(Oberon enters another part of the wood.)*

**OBERON:** I wonder if Titania is awake yet.

If so, I wonder what came to her eyes next,  
That she now must love dearly?

*(Puck enters.)*

Here's my messenger. How now, mad spirit?  
What mischief have you brought?

**PUCK:** Your wife is in love with a monster.

Near her chambers, while she was sleeping,  
I saw a crew of workers—rude men  
Who work for their bread in Athenian stalls.  
They had met to rehearse a play to act  
On Theseus's wedding day.  
The most stupid and shallow one of them,  
Acting the part of Pyramus, left the stage  
And went into the bushes.

That is when I got my chance with him.  
I set a donkey's head on his shoulders.  
Soon his Thisbe called him. At this cue,  
He left the bushes and went back to the  
grassy stage. The other actors saw him  
With the donkey's head. Afraid of him,  
They flew like wild geese from a hunter.  
They rose and quacked and ran screaming.

One fell and cried out, "Murder!"  
Their sense was weak, their fears were strong.

They began to think that the bushes and  
 thorns were grabbing at their clothes.  
 I led them on in their wild, confused fear  
 And left sweet Pyramus, changed, there.  
 Just at that moment, it came to be  
 That Titania woke, and loved a donkey.

**OBERON:** This is better than I expected!  
 But have you sprinkled the Athenian's eyes  
 With the love-juice, as I told you to?

**PUCK:** Yes, that's done, too. The Athenian  
 woman was by his side. So, when he  
 awoke, he must have seen her first.

*(Demetrius and Hermia enter.)*

**OBERON:** Hide yourself! Here comes the same  
 Athenian.

**PUCK:** But it's not the same man!

**DEMETRIUS:** Why be so cruel to one who loves  
 you so?

You should be so bitter with a bitter foe!

**HERMIA:** I've been patient until now, but I  
 should treat you worse.  
 For you have given me reason to curse.  
 Have you killed Lysander in his sleep?  
 Have your shoes stood in his blood?  
 If so, your knife should kill me, too.  
 The sun was not so true as he to me.  
 Would he have left me sleeping in the wood?

I'd sooner believe that I could dig a hole  
In the earth for the moon to shine through.  
It must be that you have murdered him!  
You look like a murderer—so dead, so grim.

**DEMETRIUS:** The victim would look dead,  
And so should I.

I am cut to the heart with your cruelty!  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright  
As Venus shining on a clear night.

**HERMIA:** What is this to Lysander? Where is he?  
Oh, good Demetrius, give him to me.

**DEMETRIUS:** I'd rather give his body to my dogs.

**HERMIA:** Out, dog! You push me past the bounds  
Of my patience. Have you killed him, then?  
If so, you don't deserve to be called a man!  
Oh, tell me the truth, for my own sake!  
Did you kill him while he was sleeping?  
Oh, you brave one! A snake could do as  
much! Yes, a snake did it!  
There was never a snake as bad as you!

**DEMETRIUS:** You are wasting your anger on me.  
I did not kill Lysander.  
He is not dead, as far as I know.

**HERMIA:** Then, please, tell me that he is well.

**DEMETRIUS:** If I could, what would I get for it?

**HERMIA:** This gift: never to see me again.  
Now from your hated presence, I will go.

You won't see me whether he's dead or no.

*(Hermia exits.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** It's no use to follow her  
When she's in such an angry mood.  
I'll stay here for a while and rest.

*(Demetrius lies down and goes to sleep.)*

**OBERON (to Puck):** What have you done?  
You have made a terrible mistake. You've  
put love-juice on true love's eyes!  
Now true love has turned false—  
Not false love turned true!

**PUCK:** Then fate has taken over.  
For every man who stays true to his love,  
A million more break vow after vow.

**OBERON:** Go now, faster than the wind,  
And Helena of Athens try to find.  
Look for a woman who keeps making  
Deep sighs of love, her heart all breaking.  
Use some trick to bring her here.  
I'll charm his eyes when she is near.

**PUCK:** I go, I go, look how I go,  
Swifter than an arrow from a bow.

*(Puck exits. Oberon puts the juice on Demetrius's eyes.)*

**OBERON:** Flower, marked with purple dye,  
When Cupid let his arrow fly,

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Sink in the center of this man's eye.  
When his true love happens by,  
Let her sparkle in his eye,  
Just like Venus in the sky.

*(Puck enters again.)*

**PUCK:** Captain of our fairy band,  
Helena is here at hand.  
And the man, mistook by me,  
Begs her love, as you will see.  
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

**OBERON:** Step aside. The noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

**PUCK:** Then the two will woo her at once.  
That will be amusing to see.  
I always think it's so much fun  
To see humans come undone.

*(Oberon and Puck step aside. Lysander and Helena enter.)*

**LYSANDER:** Why would you think that I'm  
making fun of you?  
No one ever cries when he makes fun.  
Look—I am weeping! Vows made in tears  
Are vows that are true.  
How can my feelings seem false to you?  
I wear love's badge to prove them true.

**HELENA:** The more you say, the more you lie.  
You said the same things to Hermia!

Will you leave her? Weigh your vows to her  
And your vows to me on two scales.

They are the same—both as light as tales!

**LYSANDER:** I had no sense when I made  
promises to her.

**HELENA:** And you have no sense now, by  
breaking those promises.

**LYSANDER:** Demetrius loves Hermia, not you.

**DEMETRIUS** (*waking up and seeing Helena*): Helena,  
my goddess! You are perfect, divine!  
To what shall I compare your eyes?  
Crystal is dull compared to them.  
Your lips, like cherries, perfect to kiss!  
When I see your hand, pure white snow  
On high mountains seems black.  
Oh, let me kiss your white hand now!

**HELENA** (*to both men*): Oh, wickedness!  
I see you both are making fun of me now.  
If you were kind and had some manners,  
You would not do this to me.  
You must hate me to mock me this way.  
If you were men, as you both seem to be,  
You would not abuse a gentle lady  
With your false promises and praise!  
I know you both love Hermia.  
What a manly game—to make fun of a  
poor maid and make her cry!  
No gentleman would act that way.



## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**LYSANDER:** You are not kind, Demetrius.  
Don't be that way. You love Hermia.  
You and I both know it. And here, with  
all good will, with all my heart,  
I give up my claim to her. She's yours.  
So now give up your claim to Helena.  
I love her and will love her until death!

**HELENA:** Never did fools waste more breath!

**DEMETRIUS:** Lysander, keep your Hermia.  
If I ever loved her, all that love is gone.  
My heart only stayed with her as a guest;  
It has come home to Helena.

**LYSANDER:** Helena, it is not so.

**DEMETRIUS:** Don't talk about things you don't  
know. Your words can put you in danger,  
and you may have to pay for them.  
Look who's coming—it is your love.

*(Hermia enters.)*

**HERMIA:** Dark night takes away the eye's power,  
And makes it easier for ears to work.  
As much as it hurts the sense of sight,  
it doubles the sense of hearing.  
I did not find you through my eyes.  
My ears brought me to you, Lysander.  
Why did you leave me that way?

**LYSANDER:** Why should I stay, when love for  
another fair maid is pushing me to go?

**HERMIA:** What love could steal you from me?

**LYSANDER:** My love for fair Helena, who makes  
the night brighter than all the stars.

Why are you looking for me?

Couldn't you see

That I left you because I despise you?

**HERMIA:** You do not mean this! It can't be true.

**HELENA:** Look, she is part of their plan!

Now I see that all three have joined

To make fun of me! Hurtful Hermia!

Most ungrateful friend! In spite of

everything we two have shared, you treat  
me this way? We were like sisters!

We spent hours together!

We would feel sad that time was hurrying by

And parting us. Have you forgotten all  
our school-days' friendship? Hermia, we  
have embroidered one flower together on  
one sampler, sitting on one pillow.

We have sung one song, both in one key,  
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds  
Were one. We were like two lovely berries  
Growing on one stem.

We were two bodies with one heart!

Now will you tear our old love apart,

To join men in scorning your poor friend?

It is not friendly—not how girls should be.

Other women would agree with me

Though I alone do feel the injury.

**HERMIA:** I am amazed at your passion. I don't scorn you. It seems that you scorn me.

**HELENA:** Haven't you sent Lysander after me  
To praise my eyes and face? Haven't you also  
Sent your other love, Demetrius, to call  
me goddess and heavenly? Why does he  
Speak so to one he hates? And why does  
Lysander say he does not love you?  
Why does he declare his love for me,  
unless you told him to?

I may not be as beautiful as you, or as  
lucky—so hung upon with love. But a  
person like me,  
So miserable, loving but not loved—  
Should be pitied rather than hated.

**HERMIA:** I do not understand what you mean.

**HELENA:** Yes, go on, with your fake sad looks.  
Make faces at me when I turn my back,  
Wink at each other. Keep the joke going.  
It will be written down in history.  
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,  
You would not treat me like this.  
Farewell. It's partly my own fault.  
I'll end it by leaving.

**LYSANDER:** Stay, gentle Helena. Listen to me.  
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

**HELENA** (*bitterly*): Oh, that is excellent!

**HERMIA:** Sweet, do not scorn her so.

**LYSANDER:** Your threats are as weak as her prayers.

Helena, I love you. I swear it by my life.

**DEMETRIUS:** I say I love you more than he does.

**LYSANDER:** If you say so, prove it.

**DEMETRIUS** (*getting ready to fight*): I'd be glad to.

**HERMIA** (*taking hold of Lysander*): Lysander, what is the point of all this?

**LYSANDER:** Get away, monkey! Let go of me,  
Or I will shake you from me like a snake.

**HERMIA:** Why have you grown so rude?

Why have you changed so, sweet love?

**LYSANDER:** Sweet love? Get away, hated thing!

**HERMIA:** Are you joking?

**HELENA:** Yes, indeed, and so are you.

**LYSANDER:** Demetrius, my challenge stands.

I will keep my word with you.

**DEMETRIUS:** I wish I had it in writing.

I do not trust your word.

**LYSANDER:** What? Should I hurt her, strike her,  
kill her dead?

Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

**HERMIA:** What? Can you hurt me any worse?

*Hate* me! Why? What is going on, my love?

Am I not Hermia? Are you not Lysander?

I am the same as I was yesterday.

Last night you loved me. Why did you go?  
Oh, the gods forbid! Are you serious?

**LYSANDER:** Yes, by my life!

I do not wish to see you anymore.  
So stop hoping, questioning, and doubting.  
Be sure. There is nothing truer. It is no joke  
That I do hate you and love Helena.

**HERMIA:** Oh, me!

*(to Helena):* You sneak! You thief of love!  
Have you come by night  
And stolen my love's heart from him?

**HELENA:** Fine, I see! Have you no shame?

Would you tear angry answers from my  
gentle tongue? Shame, shame!  
You fake, you puppet, you!

**HERMIA:** "Puppet?" So that is how the game  
goes. Now I see how she has won him.  
She has pointed out that she is taller than I.  
And have you grown so tall in his view  
Because I am so short? How short am I,  
you painted maypole? Speak!  
How short am I? I am not so short  
That my nails can't reach your eyes!

**HELENA:** Gentlemen, though you mock me,  
Do not let her hurt me. I have no gift for  
fighting. I am a lady, indeed. Don't let  
her hit me. Maybe you think, because  
she is something

Lower than myself, that I can match her.

**HERMIA:** “Lower?” Listen to her!

**HELENA:** Please, do not be so bitter with me.

I have always loved you, Hermia, and I  
have never wronged you.

The only thing I did, loving Demetrius,  
Was to tell him of your meeting in this  
wood.

He followed you. Out of love, I followed  
him. But he has told me to leave. And  
now, if you will let me go quietly,  
I will return my foolish love to Athens  
and follow you no more.

Let me go. That’s all I want now.

**HERMIA:** Why, go on! What’s stopping you?

**HELENA:** The foolish heart I leave behind.

**HERMIA:** What? With Lysander?

**HELENA:** With Demetrius.

**LYSANDER:** Don’t be afraid. She shall not harm  
you, Helena.

**HELENA:** Oh, when she is angry, she is strong!  
She was a vixen when she was in school.  
She may be little, but she is fierce.

**HERMIA:** “Little” again! Nothing but “low”  
and “little”!

*(to the men):* Why do you let her talk like  
that?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Let me at her!

**LYSANDER** (*holding Hermia back*): Away, you  
dwarf, you mouse, you bead, you acorn!

**DEMETRIUS** (*to Lysander*): You are too nice to  
Helena, and she does not want you. Leave  
her alone.

Don't take her side. If you show the smallest  
Bit of love for her, you shall pay for it.

**LYSANDER**: Follow me, if you dare. We shall see  
Which one of us has more right to Helena.

**DEMETRIUS**: Follow! No, I'll go with you!

(*Lysander and Demetrius exit, ready to fight.*)

**HERMIA** (*to Helena*): This is all your fault.  
(*Helena backs away.*) No, don't go back.

**HELENA**: I do not trust you. I won't stay here.  
Your hands are quicker for a fight.  
My legs are longer, though, to run away.

(*Helena exits.*)

**HERMIA**: I am amazed. I don't know what to say.

(*Hermia exits.*)

**OBERON** (*to Puck*): Is this another mistake, or  
did you do it on purpose?

**PUCK**: Believe me, my king, I made a mistake.  
Didn't you tell me I would know the man  
By the Athenian clothes he wore?  
So how can I be blamed for putting the

juice on an Athenian's eyes?  
 And so far I am glad that it was done—  
 For watching them fight is so much fun.

**OBERON:** Those men now seek a place to fight.  
 Go quickly, Puck, and make black the  
 night. Lead these rivals so astray  
 That they don't get in each other's way.  
 Talk to each in the other's voice.  
 Talk like Lysander, and stir Demetrius up.  
 Then talk like Demetrius, and stir up  
 Lysander. Lead them back and forth  
 until they fall in deathlike sleep.  
 Then put this juice in Lysander's eye.

*(He gives Puck the flower.)*

It has the power to undo errors.  
 Make his eyes see as they used to see.  
 When he wakes up, all this anger  
 Shall seem like a dream. The four lovers  
 Will go back to Athens. They'll always feel  
 connected by this night. While you are  
 doing this, I'll go see my queen  
 And beg her to give the Indian boy to me.  
 I'll break her love-spell for the donkey.

**PUCK:** My fairy lord, this must be done quickly,  
 For it is almost morning.  
 The ghosts that come out at night  
 Are now going home to churchyards,  
 Seeking their wormy beds. Fearing that



## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

day might look upon their shames,  
They stay away from light  
And only come out in the darkness of  
night.

**OBERON:** But we are spirits of another sort.  
I have often danced in the morning light.  
I've seen the sun rise over the sea.  
But, still, you're right. Make no delay.  
We may finish this business before day.

*(Oberon exits.)*

**PUCK:** 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.

*(Lysander enters.)*

**LYSANDER:** Where are you, proud Demetrius?  
Speak now.

**PUCK** *(speaking as Demetrius):* Here, villain.  
My sword is drawn. I am ready.  
Where are you?

**LYSANDER:** I will be with you right away.

**PUCK** *(as Demetrius):* Follow me, then,  
To flatter ground.

*(Lysander exits. Demetrius enters.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** Lysander, speak again.

You coward, have you run away?  
Do you hide your head in some bush?

**PUCK** (*in Lysander's voice*): You coward, are you  
Bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that you want to fight,  
And not coming out? Come, you child,  
I'll whip you with a rod. It would shame me  
To draw a sword on you.

**DEMETRIUS:** Lysander, are you there?

**PUCK** (*in Lysander's voice*): Follow my voice.  
We won't fight here.

(**Puck** and **Demetrius** exit. **Lysander** enters again.)

**LYSANDER:** He runs and dares me on.  
When I come where he calls, he is gone.  
The villain is much faster than I.  
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,  
Now I am lost in a dark, uneven place.  
I'll rest here. (*He lies down.*) Come, gentle  
day. Once you show me your gray light,  
I'll find Demetrius, and we will fight.

(*Lysander falls asleep. Puck and Demetrius enter again.*)

**PUCK** (*in Lysander's voice*): Ho, ho, ho!  
Coward, why don't you come out?

**DEMETRIUS:** Face me, if you dare.

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

You keep running away. You don't have  
the courage to look me in the face.  
Where are you now?

**PUCK** (*in Lysander's voice*): Come over here.  
Here I am.

**DEMETRIUS**: No, you are mocking me.  
You shall pay for this,  
If I ever see your face by daylight!  
But for now, go your way.  
I must lie down on this cold bed  
And wait for the coming of day.

(*Demetrius lies down and sleeps. Helena enters.*)

**HELENA**: Oh, weary night! Oh, long, terrible  
night! Cut short your hours! Rise, sun, so  
I may go back to Athens by daylight,  
away from these people who hate me.  
Sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,  
Take me awhile from my own company.

(*Helena lies down and sleeps.*)

**PUCK**: Only three? Come one more.  
Two of both kinds makes up four.  
Here she comes, hurt and sad.  
Cupid is a wicked lad,  
Thus to make poor females mad.

(*Hermia enters.*)

**HERMIA**: Never so tired, never so sad,

Damp from the dew, and torn by thorns,  
I can go no farther. Here I will rest  
Till the break of day.  
Heaven protect Lysander if they fight!

*(Hermia lies down and sleeps.)*

**PUCK:** On the ground,  
Sleep sound.  
I'll apply  
This to your eye.

*(He puts the juice on Lysander's eyes.)*

When you wake,  
You will take  
Great delight  
In the sight  
Of your true love's eyes.  
And a saying that is well-known—  
That every man should take his own—  
In your waking shall be shown:  
Jack shall have his Jill,  
Nothing shall go ill.  
The man shall have his mare again,  
And all shall be well.

*(Puck exits.)*

# ACT

## 4

### Scene 1

*(In the wood, Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia are lying on the ground, asleep. Enter **Titania** and **Bottom**, **Peaseblossom**, **Cobweb**, **Moth**, and **Mustardseed**, with other *fairies*. **Oberon** enters just behind, unseen by the others.)*

**TITANIA** *(to Bottom)*: Come, sit on this flowery bed  
While I touch your lovely face.

I'll stick roses in your sleek, smooth hair  
And kiss your fair large ears, my gentle joy.

**BOTTOM**: Where's Peaseblossom?

**PEASEBLOSSOM**: Ready.

**BOTTOM**: Scratch my head, Peaseblossom.  
Where's Mr. Cobweb?

**COBWEB**: Ready.

**BOTTOM**: Mr. Cobweb, get your bow and arrow  
And kill me a red-hipped honeybee  
On the top of a flower. Bring me the  
honeybag.

Take care that it does not break or you'll be  
covered with honey.

Where's Mr. Mustardseed?

**MUSTARDSEED**: Ready.

**BOTTOM:** Lend me your hand, Mr. Mustardseed.  
And please, sir, stop bowing.

**MUSTARDSEED:** What would you like?

**BOTTOM:** Nothing, good sir, but a scratch.  
I must get to the barber's, sir,  
For I think I have too much hair on my face.  
I am such a tender donkey.  
If my hair tickles me, I must scratch.

**TITANIA:** Would you like some music, my love?

**BOTTOM:** I have a good ear for music.  
Let us have the spoons and the bones.

**TITANIA:** And what would you like to eat?

**BOTTOM:** A bag of hay, or I could munch on oats.  
I think I'd prefer hay. Good hay, sweet hay.  
There's nothing like it.

**TITANIA:** I have an adventurous fairy who will get  
nuts for you, from a squirrel's stash.

**BOTTOM:** I would rather have some dried peas.  
But for now, let no fairies disturb me.  
I am suddenly very sleepy.

**TITANIA:** Sleep, then. I will hold you in my arms.  
Fairies, be gone.

*(Fairies exit.)*

Oh, how I love you!

*(Bottom and Titania sleep. Puck enters.)*



**OBERON** (*coming forward*): Welcome, Puck!

Do you see this sweet sight?

I now begin to pity her foolish love.

A while ago, I met her in the wood,

Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool.

I had an argument with her about it.

She'd put a crown of fresh and fragrant  
flowers on his hairy head.

Beads of dew stood

Within the pretty little flowers' eyes,

Like tears crying about their own disgrace.

When I told her what I thought,

She begged me mildly not to tease her so.

I then asked her about the child, which

she gave me right away.  
 A fairy carried him to my chamber in  
 Fairyland.  
 And now that I have the boy, I will undo  
 The magic that I placed on her eyes.  
 Now, gentle Puck, take this donkey's head  
 Off the head of this Athenian man.  
 Let him awake when the others do.  
 May all go back to Athens and think no  
 more about this night's events.  
 Let them see it all as a dream.  
 But first I will set free the fairy queen.  
*(touching Titania's eyes)*: Be as you used to be.  
 See as you used to see.  
 This sweet bud shall have the power  
 To undo the magic of Cupid's flower.  
 Now, wake up, my sweet queen!

**TITANIA:** My Oberon! What a dream I had!  
 I thought I loved a donkey!

**OBERON** *(pointing to Bottom)*: There lies your love.

**TITANIA:** How did these things come to pass?  
 Oh, how I hate the sight of him now!

**OBERON:** Silence awhile. Puck, take off his head.

*(Puck removes the donkey's head from Bottom's shoulders.)*

Titania, call for music. As for these five  
 mortals, let them think they've been  
 sleeping all night.



## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**TITANIA:** Let's have music to charm their sleep.

**OBERON:** Play, music. Come, my queen,  
Hold my hand, and  
Rock the ground on which these sleepers lie.

*(Music plays. Oberon and Titania dance.)*

Now you and I are like new friends.  
Tomorrow at midnight we will dance in  
triumph at Duke Theseus's house.  
We shall bless the house for the future.  
And there, these two pairs of lovers,  
Will happily be wedded.

**PUCK:** Fairy king, listen and hear:  
A lark tells us that morning is near.

**OBERON:** Come, my queen, just like the moon,  
Let's fly around the earth so soon.

**TITANIA:** Come, my husband, and in our flight,  
Tell me what happened this night.  
Why was I, sleeping, to be found,  
With these mortals on the ground?

*(Oberon, Titania, and Puck exit. A horn sounds.  
Theseus, his servants, Hippolyta, and Egeus enter.)*

**THESEUS:** Go, one of you! Find the man  
Who takes care of the forest and its  
animals.  
The May Day rite is finished,  
And it is still early enough to go hunting.  
Let my dogs loose in the western valley.

Go, I say, and find the forest keeper.

(A **servant** exits.)

(to *Hippolyta*): We will go, fair queen.  
On the mountaintop we will hear the  
music

Of dogs and their echo joined together.

**HIPPOLYTA:** I was with Hercules once  
Hunting in the woods of Crete. They used  
dogs of Sparta to hunt for bear.  
Never have I heard such wonderful sounds!  
The trees, the skies, the fountains, and  
every place nearby  
Echoed together. I never heard  
So musical a sound! Such sweet thunder!

**THESEUS:** My dogs are that same kind, with  
Hanging jowls and sand-colored coats.  
Their heads are hung with long ears that  
Sweep away the morning dew.  
And their voices are matched like bells,  
Each tuned to each. A cry more musical  
was never cheered on with hunter's horn.  
Judge when you hear.

(He sees the sleeping mortals.)

But, look! Who is this?

**EGEUS:** My lord, this is my daughter here asleep.  
And these are Lysander and Demetrius.  
This is Helena, old Nedar's daughter.

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

I wonder why they are here together.

**THESEUS:** No doubt they rose up early to watch  
The May Day rite. They must have heard  
That we planned to watch it  
And came here to be with us.  
But speak, Egeus. Isn't this the day  
That Hermia must tell you of her choice?

**EGEUS:** It is, my lord.

**THESEUS** *(to a servant)*: Go, have the hunters  
Wake them with their horns.

*(A servant exits. A shout is heard from offstage. Horns sound. The sleepers awake and kneel to Theseus.)*

Good morning, friends. Valentine's is past.  
Do these birds just start to pair off now?

**LYSANDER:** Pardon, my lord.

**THESEUS:** Please, all of you, stand up.

*(They rise.)*

*(to Lysander and Demetrius)*: I know you two  
are rival enemies.

How, with your feelings of jealousy,  
Can you sleep so close and fear no danger?

**LYSANDER:** My lord, I am still half-asleep.

I am amazed at this. Yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came to be here.  
For I believe—in fact, I know—that  
I came here with Hermia. We planned

To leave Athens and go where we might  
Be free from Athenian law—

**EGEUS:** My lord, you've heard enough!  
I beg you, bring the law upon his head.  
If they had run away, Demetrius,  
They would have cheated you and me.  
You of your wife, and me of my consent—  
My consent that she should be your wife.

**DEMETRIUS:** My lord, Helena told me their plans.  
In anger I followed them. Helena followed  
me. Now I don't know what power—  
But some power it is—made my love for  
Hermia melt like the snow. Now it seems  
Like the memory of some toy  
I loved when I was a child.  
Today, my love, my heart, and my feelings  
Belong only to Helena. To her, my lord,  
I was engaged before I saw Hermia.  
But, like a sickness, I turned from her.  
Now, as in health, I have come back to her.  
Now I want her, love her, and long for her,  
And will be forever true to her.

**THESEUS:** Fair lovers, you are lucky we found  
you. We will hear more from you later.  
Egeus, I must rule against your will.  
For in the temple, by and by, with us  
These couples shall be wed.  
And, as the morning is flying by,

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Our hunting trip shall be set aside.  
Come with us to Athens, all of you.  
We'll stand together, three by three,  
What a joyful wedding it will be!  
Come, Hippolyta.

*(Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and servants exit.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** These things seem like far-off  
mountains that are only clouds.

**HERMIA:** I see these things with a sleepy eye,  
And everything seems double.

**HELENA:** I think the same.  
And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,  
Mine, and yet not mine.

**DEMETRIUS:** Are you sure  
That we are awake? It seems to me  
That we are still sleeping and dreaming.  
Do you think the duke was just here,  
And told us to follow him?

**HERMIA:** Yes, and my father.

**HELENA:** And Hippolyta.

**LYSANDER:** And he told us to follow them to  
the temple.

**DEMETRIUS:** Why, then, let's follow him.  
And along the way, let us tell our dreams.

*(The four lovers exit.)*

**BOTTOM (awakening):** When my cue comes, call

me, and I will answer. My next line is “Most fair Pyramus.” Hello? Peter Quince? Flute, the bellows-mender? Snout, the tinker? Starveling? God’s my life! They left me here asleep! I have had a most rare vision, a dream that even I can’t explain! I thought I was—and I thought I had—Any man is a fool if he tries to say what I thought I had. The eye of man has not heard it. The ear of man has not seen it. Man’s hand is not able to taste it. His tongue cannot think of it. His heart cannot feel what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad about this dream. It shall be called “Bottom’s Dream” because it has no bottom. I will sing it for the duke toward the end of the play.

*(Bottom exits.)*

## Scene 2

*(Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling enter Peter Quince’s house in Athens.)*

**QUINCE:** Have you sent anyone to Bottom’s house? Is he home yet?

**STARVELING:** He hasn’t been heard from. No doubt something has happened to him.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**FLUTE:** If he doesn't come, the play is ruined.  
It can't go on, can it?

**QUINCE:** It is not possible. No man in all  
of Athens is able to play Pyramus but  
Bottom.

**FLUTE:** I agree. He is simply the most talented  
working man in Athens.

**QUINCE:** Yes, and the best-looking, too.  
He has the sweetest voice!

*(Snug enters.)*

**SNUG:** Masters, the duke is coming. And there  
are more lords and ladies who were just  
married. If our play had gone on, we'd  
have made a fortune.

**FLUTE:** Oh, Bottom! He just lost sixpence a  
day for the rest of his life. He could not  
have escaped it. If the duke had not  
given him sixpence a day for playing  
Pyramus, I'll be hanged! He would have  
deserved it, too.

*(Bottom enters.)*

**BOTTOM:** Where are my friends?

**QUINCE:** Bottom! Oh, great day! Oh, most  
happy hour!

**BOTTOM:** Masters, I have wonders to tell you.  
But don't ask me about them! If I tell

you, I am not a true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

**QUINCE:** Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

**BOTTOM:** Not a word from me. All that I will say is that the duke is coming. Get your costumes together and tie up your beards! Meet at the palace. Every man look over his part. Let Thisbe wear clean clothes. And don't let the lion cut his nails, for they must hang out as the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions or garlic. This is a sweet comedy, and we must have sweet breath! No more words. Away, go, away!

*(All exit.)*



# ACT 5

## Scene 1

*(Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate, lords, and servants enter the palace of Theseus in Athens.)*

**HIPPOLYTA:** My Theseus, it is a strange  
Story that these lovers speak of.

**THESEUS:** More strange than true.  
I don't believe in fairy tales.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething  
brains. They have more fantasies than  
Cool reason ever understands.  
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Have a lot in common.  
The madman sees more devils than vast  
hell can hold—the lover, just as crazy,  
Sees Helen's beauty in the plainest face.  
The poet's eye rolls from heaven to earth,  
From earth to heaven. His imagination  
Brings forth wonders and his pen gives them  
shape with homes and names.  
Strong imagination plays such tricks! If you  
Imagine some joy, then there is imagined  
Some bringer of that joy.

Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easily a bush can seem like a bear!

**HIPPOLYTA:** But all the stories they told  
Are so alike! Their minds saw the same  
fantasy. It seems like more than just  
imagination.

*(Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena enter.)*

**THESEUS:** Here come the lovers, full of joy and  
happiness. Joy to you, gentle friends.  
May joy and fresh days of love follow you  
And remain in your hearts!

**LYSANDER:** More to you than to us!

**THESEUS:** Come, now. What plays and dances  
Shall we have to while away these hours  
Between our supper and bedtime?  
Come, Philostrate, tell us!

*(Philostrate comes forward.)*

**PHILOSTRATE:** Yes, lord.

**THESEUS:** Say, what entertainment do you have  
for this evening? What play?  
What music? How shall we spend  
This lazy time, if not with some delight?

**PHILOSTRATE** *(handing Theseus a paper):* Here,  
mighty Theseus, is a list of all who are  
here this evening to bring you joy with  
music or other entertainment. Choose  
the one you like the best.

**THESEUS** (*reading from the list*): "The battle with  
the centaurs,  
To be sung by an Athenian with a harp."  
We'll have none of that.  
"The riot of the drunken party-goers,  
Attacking the singer in their rage."  
That is an old play. I have already seen it.  
"The three muses mourning for the death  
Of learning." That is a sharp satire.  
Not suitable for a wedding day.  
"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe. A tragic comedy."  
A tragic comedy? Tedious and brief?  
That is like "hot ice." It doesn't make  
sense. What does this mean?

**PHILOSTRATE**: If this play had only ten words,  
It would be too long, my lord.  
The words are what makes it tedious, for  
In the whole play, there isn't one good word!  
My noble lord, it is tragic  
Because Pyramus kills himself in the play.  
When I saw it rehearsed, I must say,  
It made my eyes water. But my tears  
Came from loud laughter.

**THESEUS**: Who are the actors?

**PHILOSTRATE**: Hard-working men of Athens,  
Who never labored with thought until now.  
It's especially for your wedding day.

**THESEUS:** So we will hear it.

**PHILOSTRATE:** No, my noble lord,  
It is not for you. I have seen it already,  
And it is not worth seeing.

**THESEUS:** I will hear that play.  
For nothing can be wrong if it is done  
With simple good wishes. Go, bring them  
in. And take your places, ladies.

*(Philostrate exits.)*

**HIPPOLYTA:** I hate to see people embarrassed  
By trying to do something they can't.

**THESEUS:** Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no  
such thing!

**HIPPOLYTA:** But he says the play is terrible.

**THESEUS:** Let us be kind and thank the actors.  
Good efforts by sincere people mean a lot  
to me.

*(Philostrate enters again.)*

**PHILOSTRATE:** Your grace, the actors are ready.

**THESEUS:** Let them begin.

*(Trumpets sound. Quince, Bottom, Flute, Snout,  
Snug, and Starveling enter.)*

**QUINCE** *(reciting the prologue):* If we offend, it is  
with our good wishes.  
To show our simple skill is the true  
beginning of our end.

We do not come, as wanting to please you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight  
We are not here. That you should feel sorry  
The actors are here. By their show,  
You shall know all that you want to know.

**THESEUS:** This fellow does not make any sense.

**LYSANDER:** He says his lines like a rough colt.  
He doesn't know where to stop.  
A good lesson, my lord: It is not enough  
just to speak. You must try to speak true.

**HIPPOLYTA:** He talks like a child playing a flute.  
He makes noise, but it's all confused.

**THESEUS:** His speech was like a tangled  
chain—nothing broken, but all mixed  
up. Who is next?

**QUINCE** (*continuing the prologue*): Gentle persons,  
perhaps you wonder about this show,  
But wonder on until truth makes all  
things plain.  
This man is Pyramus, if you must know.  
Thisbe is the beautiful lady.  
This man is the Wall, through which these  
lovers whisper.  
This man is Moonlight. You must know  
By moonlight did these lovers meet  
At Ninus's tomb, there to woo.  
This is the Lion that scared Thisbe away.  
As she ran, her coat fell to the ground.

The lion tore it with his bloody mouth.  
 Along came Pyramus, a sweet and tall youth.  
 He found his beloved Thisbe's bloody coat.  
 With a blade, he bravely stabbed his  
     burning breast.

And Thisbe, hiding in the shade nearby,  
 Drew his dagger out, and killed herself.  
 Let Lion, Moonlight, Wall, and lovers two  
 Tell the whole story through and through.

**THESEUS:** I wonder if the Lion will speak.

**DEMETRIUS:** I wouldn't be surprised, my lord.  
 One lion may, if many donkeys do.

**SNOUT (*as the Wall*):** In this play, I, Snout,  
 Do play a Wall that has a hole. Through  
     this hole,  
 The lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,  
 Did whisper often, and very secretly.  
 This plaster and this stone do show  
 That I am that Wall. The truth is so.

**THESEUS:** Could a real wall speak any better?

**DEMETRIUS:** It is the cleverest wall I have ever  
 heard, my lord!

**THESEUS:** Pyramus is coming. Silence!

**BOTTOM (*as Pyramus*):** Oh, blackest night!  
 Oh, night, which always is when day is not!  
 Oh, night! Oh, night! Alas, alas, alas!  
 I fear that Thisbe has forgotten her promise.

And you, oh, sweet and lovely Wall,  
That stands between her father's land  
and mine,  
Show me a hole to look through.

*(The Wall holds up his fingers.)*

Thanks, Wall. May the gods protect you!  
But what do I see? No Thisbe do I see.  
Oh, curse you, wicked Wall, for lying to me!

**THESEUS:** The Wall should curse back.

**BOTTOM:** No, truly, sir, he should not.

"Lying to me" is Thisbe's cue.  
She will enter now, And I will see her  
through the Wall. You'll see. It will  
happen as I told you. Here she comes.

**FLUTE (as Thisbe):** Oh, Wall.

You have often heard me cry for  
separating my fair Pyramus and me!  
My lips have often kissed your stones.

**BOTTOM (as Pyramus):** I see a voice! Now I will  
look through the Wall  
To see if I can hear my Thisbe's face.  
Thisbe!

**FLUTE (as Thisbe):** My love!  
You are my love, I think.

**BOTTOM (as Pyramus):** Your true love I embrace.  
I am faithful still.

**FLUTE (as Thisbe):** And I, too, until the gods kill!

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*): Oh, kiss me through the hole in this vile Wall.

**FLUTE** (*as Thisbe*): Alas! I kiss the Wall's hole, not your lips at all.

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*): Will you meet me at Ninny's tomb right away?

**FLUTE** (*as Thisbe*): Alive or dead, I come without delay.

(*Bottom and Flute exit.*)

**SNOUT** (*as the Wall*): I have played my part just so, And, being done, this Wall away does go.

(*Snout exits.*)

**HIPPOLYTA**: I never heard such silly stuff!

**THESEUS**: The best actors are only shadows.  
The worst are no worse, if imagination changes them.

**HIPPOLYTA**: It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

**THESEUS**: Let us imagine no worse of them  
Than they do of themselves. That will make them pass as excellent men.  
Look! Here come a man and a lion.

**SNUG** (*as Lion*): Ladies, your hearts do fear  
The smallest mouse upon the floor.  
You may now both shake and tremble  
When a wild lion roars in rage.





Just know that I, Snug the joiner, am.  
I'm not really a lion, just a man.

**THESEUS:** A most gentle and good animal.

**DEMETRIUS:** The very best beast I ever saw!

**STARVELING (as Moonlight):** This lantern is the  
moon. And I am the Man in the Moon.

**THESEUS:** This is the biggest mistake of all.  
The man should be put into the lantern.  
How else can he be the Man in the Moon?

**DEMETRIUS:** He must be afraid of getting too  
close to the candle.

**HIPPOLYTA:** I am tired of this moon. I wish he  
would set!

**THESEUS:** He seems to be rather dim.

But, to be polite, we must stay and watch.

**DEMETRIUS:** Silence! Here comes Thisbe.

*(Flute enters again.)*

**FLUTE** *(as Thisbe)*: This is old Ninny's tomb.

Where is my love?

**SNUG** *(as Lion, roaring)*: Roar!

*(Flute, as Thisbe, runs off, dropping her coat. Snug, as Lion, tears at it with his teeth.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** Well roared, Lion!

**THESEUS:** Well run, Thisbe!

**HIPPOLYTA:** Well shone, Moon!

*(Bottom enters. Snug exits.)*

**DEMETRIUS:** Here comes Pyramus.

**LYSANDER:** That's why the Lion left.

**BOTTOM** *(as Pyramus)*: Sweet Moon, I thank you

For your sunny light.

I thank you, Moon, for shining bright.

I trust you to bring Thisbe to my sight.

But wait! Oh, no!

What dreadful sadness is here?

Eyes, do you see? How can it be?

Oh, sweet duck! Oh, dear!

You coat so good—

What? Stained with blood?

Come near, oh, terrible gods!  
Cut the thread of my life! Crush me!  
End me! Let me die!

**THESEUS:** This strong feeling,  
And the death of a dear friend,  
Would indeed make a man look sad.

**HIPPOLYTA:** Curse my heart, but I pity the man!

**BOTTOM** (*as Pyramus*): Oh, Nature, why did you  
make lions?

A vile lion has eaten my dear.  
She is—no, no—she *was* the fairest lady  
That ever loved and looked with cheer.

Come, tears! Destroy me!  
Out, sword, and wound me!

Cut the left side of Pyramus  
Where his heart does beat.

(*He pretends to stab himself.*)

So I die, like so, like so, like so.

Now I am dead. Now I have fled.

My soul is in the sky.

Tongue, lose your light!

Moon, make your flight.

(*Starveling, as Moonlight, exits.*)

Now die, die, die, die, die.

(*Bottom, as Pyramus, pretends to die.*)

**HIPPOLYTA:** Why does Moonlight leave before  
Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

*(Flute, as Thisbe, enters again.)*

**THESEUS:** She will find him by the stars.

Look! Here she comes.

Her speech ends the play.

**HIPPOLYTA:** I hope she will be brief. Such a  
Pyramus doesn't deserve a long speech.

**LYSANDER:** She has seen him already  
With those sweet eyes.

**DEMETRIUS:** And so she cries, as follows:

**FLUTE** *(as Thisbe)*: Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

Oh, Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak! Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover your sweet eyes.

These white lips, this cherry-red nose,

These yellow cheeks are gone, are gone!

Lovers, cry with me!

His eyes were green as leeks.

Oh, death, come to me

With hands as pale as milk.

Lay them in blood.

Tongue, not a word.

Come, happy sword;

Come, blade, soak my breast in blood.

*(She pretends to stab herself.)*

Now farewell, friends.

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

So Thisbe ends.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye!

*(She pretends to die.)*

**THESEUS:** Moonlight and Lion are left to bury the dead.

**DEMETRIUS:** Yes, and Wall, too.

*(Bottom and Flute stand up.)*

**BOTTOM:** No, I promise you. Their fathers have  
Torn down the wall that parted them.  
Would you like to see the epilogue?  
Or would you rather hear us dance?

**THESEUS:** No epilogue, please. Your play needs  
no explanation. Never explain.  
When the players are dead, none is to blame.  
If the writer had played Pyramus  
And hanged himself with Thisbe's stocking,  
It would have been a fine tragedy.  
And so it is, and very well-performed.  
But, come, let's see your dance.  
Forget the epilogue.

*(The **players** dance, and exit.)*

The iron tongue of midnight has rung 12.  
Lovers, to bed! It's almost fairy time.  
I fear we will sleep too late in the morning  
Because we have stayed up so late tonight.  
This play goes well with this night's slow

pace. Sweet friends, to bed!  
Two weeks from now, once more let's meet.  
We'll celebrate with another feast.

*(All exit. Puck enters, with a broom.)*

**PUCK:** Now the hungry lion roars,  
And the wolf howls at the moon.  
Now the tired farmer snores,  
With his weary work all done.  
Now the firelight burns low.  
Now the night owl, with its cry,  
Reminds the man who lies in woe  
That someday he will have to die.  
Now it is the time of night  
For the graves to open wide.  
Each one lets out its sprite.  
In the dark paths they will glide.  
And we fairies now will run  
By the moonlight's shining beam.  
We flee the presence of the sun,  
Following darkness like a dream.  
Now we play. Not a mouse  
Shall disturb this happy house.  
I've been sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door.

*(Oberon and Titania enter, with their fairies.)*

**OBERON** *(to the fairies):* Give glimmering light.  
By the dead and sleepy fire

Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from briar.  
Sing this song, after me,  
Sing and dance—one, two, three!

**TITANIA:** Let the music gently float.  
For each word, a musical note.  
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
We will sing and bless this place.

*(Oberon leads the fairies in song and dance.)*

**OBERON:** Now, until the break of day,  
Through this house we'll go our way.  
We'll visit every bride and groom  
And bless the air in every room.  
Bless the children they create,  
And make them always fortunate.  
So shall all the couples three  
Ever true in loving be.  
And ugly marks from Nature's hand  
Shall not in their children stand.  
With this magic fairy dew,  
Bless this palace, through and through.  
Through each room shall fairies race  
Bringing peace to this sweet place.  
And the owner of it, blessed,  
Always shall in safety rest.  
Dance away without delay.  
Meet me all by break of day.

*(All but Puck exit.)*

**PUCK:** If we players have offended,  
Think just this, and all is mended:  
That you have been sleeping here  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and silly theme,  
Means no more than just a dream.  
Good people, do not hiss and boo.  
Pardon! We'll make it up to you.  
And, as I am an honest Puck,  
If we have somehow had the luck  
To escape your angry tongue,  
We'll mend what's wrong before too long.  
Or else the Puck a liar call.  
So, goodnight unto you all.  
Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
And Puck will soon make amends.

*(Puck exits.)*



# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*“Lord, what fools these mortals be!”*

Some playful fairies decide to make mischief with unsuspecting humans. Can true love overcome all obstacles? Two young Athenian couples are put to the test. Comedy reigns in this enchanting fantasy about the nature of romantic love.

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