

# *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

William Shakespeare

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## Dramatis Personae

Four lovers:

HERMIA

LYSANDER

HELENA

DEMETRIUS

THESEUS *duke of Athens*

HIPPOLYTA *queen of the Amazons*

EGEUS *father to Hermia*

PHILOSTRATE *master of the revels to Theseus*

NICK BOTTOM *weaver*

PETER QUINCE *carpenter*

FRANCIS FLUTE *bellows-mender*

TOM SNOUT *tinker*

SNUG *joiner*

ROBIN STARVELING *tailor*

OBERON *king of the Fairies*

TITANIA *queen of the Fairies*

ROBIN GOODFELLOW *a "puck," or hobgoblin, in Oberon's service*

A FAIRY *in the service of Titania*

Fairies attending upon Titania:

PEASEBLOSSOM

COBWEB

MOTE

MUSTARDSEED

Lords and Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta

Other Fairies in the trains of Titania and Oberon

# 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, O, methinks how slow  
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires  
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  
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;  
The pale companion is not for our pomp.  
*[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

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,  
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.  
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,  
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers  
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  
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  
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  
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,  
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,  
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,  
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

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)  
You can endure the livery of a nun,  
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,  
To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.  
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood  
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,  
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up  
Unto his Lordship whose unwished 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  
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  
For aye austerity and single life.

DEMETRIUS

Relent, sweet Hermia, and, Lysander, yield  
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

LYSANDER

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

EGEUS

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,  
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.  
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,  
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,  
My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come,  
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  
(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  
Against our nuptial and confer with you  
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

EGEUS

With duty and desire we follow you.

*[All but Hermia and Lysander exit.]*

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

Belike for want of rain, which I could well  
Beteem them from the tempest of 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.  
But either it was different in blood—

HERMIA  
O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER  
Or else misgraffed 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  
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,  
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  
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,  
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,  
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,  
And in the wood a league without the town



(Where I did meet thee once with Helena  
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,  
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,  
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  
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  
More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear  
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.  
Sickness is catching. O, 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.  
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  
O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such  
skill!

HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

O, that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

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  
Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.  
O, 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  
Her silver visage in the wat'ry 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

And in the wood where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.  
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.     *[Hermia exits.]*

Helena, adieu.

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

*[Lysander exits.]*

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.  
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.  
Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;  
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.  
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,  
So he dissolved, and show'rs 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.  
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
To have his sight thither and back again.

*[She exits.]*

## Scene 2

*[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.]*

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 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 Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

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

BOTTOM 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 Phibbus' 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.

QUINCE Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE What is Thisbe—a wand’ring knight?

QUINCE It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

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

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

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

QUINCE 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 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 perfit yellow.

QUINCE Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts, [*giving out the 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.

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

QUINCE At the Duke's Oak we meet.

BOTTOM Enough. Hold or cut bowstrings.  
[*They exit.*]

## Act 2

### Scene 1

*[Enter a Fairy at one door and 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.  
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 her elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The King doth keep his revels here tonight.  
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.  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.  
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,  
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her  
joy.  
And now they never meet in grove or green,  
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

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite

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 huswife churn,  
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,  
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 speakest aright.  
I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
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,  
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob  
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.  
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she  
And “Tailor!” cries and falls into a cough,  
And then the whole choir hold their hips and loffe  
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear  
A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
But room, fairy. Here comes Oberon.

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

*[Enter Oberon the King of Fairies at one door, with his  
train, and Titania the Queen at another, 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  
Then I must be thy lady. But I know  
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,  
Come from the farthest steep 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

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering  
night  
From Perigouna, whom he ravished,  
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,  
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 paved fountain or by rushy brook,  
Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
As in revenge have sucked up from the sea  
Contagious fogs, which, falling in the land,  
Hath every pelting river made so proud  
That they have overborne their continents.  
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,  
The plowman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
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,  
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,  
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  
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  
By their increase now knows not which is which.  
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?  
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 vot'ress of my order,  
And in the spiced Indian air by night  
Full often hath she gossiped by my side  
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
Marking th' embarked traders on the flood,  
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive  
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;  
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.  
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,  
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.  
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.  
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.  
*[Titania and her fairies exit.]*

OBERON

Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove  
Till I torment thee for this injury.—  
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb’rest  
Since once I sat upon a promontory  
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin’s back  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres  
To hear the sea-maid’s music.

ROBIN I remember.

OBERON

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 throned by the west,  
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.  
But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft  
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,  
And the imperial vot’ress passed on  
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
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.  
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  
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

I’ll put a girdle round about the Earth  
In forty minutes. *[He exits.]*

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  
(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 off her sight  
(As I can take it with another herb),  
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?  
The one I'll stay; the other stayeth me.  
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

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?  
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.  
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)  
Than to be used as you use 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  
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

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.  
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

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
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

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!  
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.

*[Demetrius exits.]*

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell  
To die upon the hand I love so well. *[Helena exits.]*

OBERON

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.

*[Robin gives him the flower.]*

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet muskroses, and with eglantine.  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
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.  
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.

*[He gives Robin part of the flower.]*

A sweet Athenian lady is in love  
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes,  
But do it when the next thing he espies  
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

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

*[They exit.]*

## Scene 2

*[Enter Titania, Queen of Fairies, with her train.]*

TITANIA

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;  
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence—  
Some to kill cankers in the muskrose buds,  
Some war with rermice for their leathern wings  
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. *[She lies down.]*

*[Fairies sing.]*

FIRST FAIRY

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

CHORUS

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

Weaving spiders, come not here.  
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence.  
Beetles black, approach not near.  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

CHORUS

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.     *[ Fairies exit.]*

*[Enter Oberon, who anoints Titania's eyelids with the  
nectar.]*

OBERON

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,

*Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.  
Wake when some vile thing is near.*     *[He exits.]*

*[Enter Lysander and Hermia.]*

LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood.

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

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!

Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,

So that but one heart we can make of it;

Two bosoms interchained with an oath—

So then two bosoms and a single troth.

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.

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.

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!  
*[They sleep.]*

*[Enter Robin.]*

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.*  
*[He sees Lysander.]*

*Night and silence! Who is here?  
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.  
This is he my master said  
Despised 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.—  
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
All the power this charm doth owe.*  
*[He anoints Lysander’s eyelids  
with the nectar.]*

*When thou wak’st, let love forbid  
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.  
So, awake when I am gone,  
For I must now to Oberon.* *[He exits.]*

*[Enter Demetrius and Helena, 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

Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go. *[Demetrius exits.]*

HELENA

O, 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 blessed and attractive eyes.  
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  
Do as a monster fly my presence thus.  
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine  
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?  
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 up*]

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? O, how fit a word  
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  
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.  
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,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will  
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook  
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  
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  
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.  
O, that a lady of one man refused  
Should of another therefore be abused!     *[She exits.]*

LYSANDER

She sees not Hermia.—Hermia, sleep thou there,  
And never mayst thou come Lysander near.  
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,  
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,  
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.     *[He exits.]*

HERMIA *[waking up]*

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best  
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.  
Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here!  
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.  
Methought a serpent ate my heart away,  
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.  
Lysander! What, removed? Lysander, lord!  
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 are not nigh.  
Either death or you I'll find immediately.  
   *[She exits.]*

## Act 3

### Scene 1

*[With Titania still asleep onstage, enter the Clowns, Bottom, Quince, Snout, Starveling, Snug, and Flute.]*

BOTTOM Are we all met?

QUINCE Pat, pat. And here's a marvels 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 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 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 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 yourself,

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.

BOTTOM 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.]*

QUINCE Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM 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, or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

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 invisible to those onstage.]*

ROBIN *[aside]*  
What hempen homespuns have we swagg'ring 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 *[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.—*  
*But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,*  
*And by and by I will to thee appear.      [He exits.]*

ROBIN *[aside]*  
A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.      *[He exits.]*

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,*  
*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.”

FLUTE O!

*[As Thisbe.]* As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

*[Enter Robin, and Bottom as Pyramus with the ass-head.]*

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

*If I were fair, fair Thisbe, I were only thine.*

QUINCE O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters, fly, masters! Help!

*[Quince, Flute, Snout, Snug, and Starveling exit.]*

ROBIN

I’ll follow you. I’ll lead you about a round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake,  
through brier.

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.

*[He exits.]*

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

*[Enter Snout.]*

SNOUT 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? *[Snout exits.]*

*[Enter Quince.]*

QUINCE Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated! *[He exits.]*

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

*[He 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 *[waking up]*  
What angel wakes me from my flow'ry 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.  
Mine ear is much enamored of thy note,  
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. 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 gleek 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.  
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  
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—  
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!

*[Enter four Fairies: Peaseblossom, Cobweb,  
Mote, and Mustardseed.]*

PEASEBLOSSOM Ready.

COBWEB And I.

MOTE And I.

MUSTARDSEED And I.

ALL 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;  
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs  
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes  
To have my love to bed and to arise;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.  
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM Hail, mortal!

COBWEB Hail!

MOTE Hail!

MUSTARDSEED Hail!

BOTTOM I cry your Worships mercy, heartily.—I beseech  
your Worship's name.

COBWEB Cobweb.

BOTTOM 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?

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 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 wat'ry eye,  
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my lover's tongue. Bring him silently.

*[They exit.]*

## Scene 2

*[Enter Oberon, King of Fairies.]*

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 Goodfellow.]*

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit?

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,  
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,  
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake.  
When I did him at this advantage take,  
An ass's noll I fixed on his head.  
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,  
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,  
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,  
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,  
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

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,  
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

*[Enter Demetrius and Hermia.]*

OBERON

Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

ROBIN

This is the woman, but not this the man.

*[They step aside.]*

DEMETRIUS

O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?  
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe!

HERMIA

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.  
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  
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.  
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.  
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.  
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

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds  
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?  
Henceforth be never numbered among men.  
O, once tell true! Tell true, even for my sake!  
Durst thou have looked upon him, being awake?  
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.  
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 therefor?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so.

See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

*[She exits.]*

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

For debt that bankrout sleep doth sorrow owe,

Which now in some slight measure it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

*[He lies down and falls asleep.]*

OBERON *[to Robin]*

What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite

And laid the love juice on some true-love's sight.

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

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.

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. *[He exits.]*

OBERON *[applying the nectar to Demetrius' eyes]*

*Flower of this purple dye,*

*Hit with Cupid's archery,*

*Sink in apple of his eye.*

*When his love he doth espy,*

*Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky.—  
When thou wak'st, 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,  
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

*Then will two at once woo one.  
That must needs be sport alone.  
And those things do best please me  
That befall prepost'rously.*

*[They step aside.]*

*[Enter Lysander and Helena.]*

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

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

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,

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 *[waking up]*

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!  
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?  
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show  
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!  
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,  
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, 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,  
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,  
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,  
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
With your derision! None of noble sort  
Would so offend a virgin and extort  
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so,  
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.  
And here with all goodwill, 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

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,  
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.

*[Enter Hermia.]*

HERMIA *[to Lysander]*

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;  
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,  
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.

HELENA

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,  
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—O, is all forgot?  
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,  
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;  
So with two seeming bodies but one heart,  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.  
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,  
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?  
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 amazed at your words.  
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

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,  
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?  
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.

HELENA

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,  
You would not make me such an argument.  
But fare you 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

O excellent!

HERMIA *[to Lysander]*

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS *[to Lysander]*

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak  
prayers.—  
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

Quick, come.

HERMIA Lysander, whereto tends all this?

*[She takes hold of Lysander.]*

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS *[to Hermia]*

No, no. He'll

Seem to break loose. [*To Lysander.*] Take on as you would follow,  
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!  
Out, loathed med'cine! 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  
What? Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?  
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA  
What, can you do me greater harm than hate?  
Hate me? Wherefore? O me, what news, my love?  
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—O, the gods forbid!—  
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER Ay, by my life,  
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 turns him loose.]*

HERMIA

O me! [*To Helena.*] You juggler, you cankerblossom,  
You thief of love! What, have you come by night  
And stol'n 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  
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,  
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!  
How low am I? I am not yet so low  
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,  
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst;  
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.

HERMIA "Lower"? Hark, again!

HELENA

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.  
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  
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.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

O, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd.  
She was a vixen when she went to school,  
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 Get you gone, you dwarf,  
You minimus of hind'ring 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  
Never so little show of love to her,  
Thou shalt aby it.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

*[Demetrius and Lysander exit.]*

HERMIA

You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.

*[Helena retreats.]*

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. *[She exits.]*

HERMIA  
I am amazed and know not what to say. *[She exits.]*

OBERON *[to Robin]*  
This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,  
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  
By the Athenian garments 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  
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  
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,  
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep  
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.  
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,  
*[He gives a flower to Robin.]*

Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,  
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,  
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

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 wand'ring here and  
there  
Troop home to churchyards. Damned spirits all,  
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

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,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.  
But notwithstanding, haste! Make no delay.  
We may effect this business yet ere day. *[He exits.]*

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 *[in Demetrius' voice]*

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

LYSANDER I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN *[in Demetrius' voice]* Follow me, then, to  
plainer ground. *[Lysander exits.]*

*[Enter Demetrius.]*

DEMETRIUS Lysander, speak again.  
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?  
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy  
head?

ROBIN *[in Lysander's voice]*  
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!  
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled  
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN *[in Lysander's voice]*  
Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.  
*[They exit.]*

*[Enter Lysander.]*

LYSANDER  
He goes before me and still dares me on.  
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. Come, thou gentle day,  
For if but once thou show me thy gray light,  
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.  
*[He lies down and sleeps.]*

*[Enter Robin and Demetrius.]*

ROBIN *[in Lysander's voice]*  
Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?

DEMETRIUS  
Abide me, if thou dar'st, for well I wot  
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
And dar'st not stand nor look me in the face.  
Where art thou now?

ROBIN *[in Lysander's voice]*



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.

By day's approach look to be visited.

*[He 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

From these that my poor company detest.

And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,

Steal me awhile from mine own company.

*[She lies down and sleeps.]*

ROBIN

*Yet but three? Come one more.*

*Two of both kinds makes up four.*

*Here she comes, curst and sad.*

*Cupid is a knavish lad*

*Thus to make poor females mad.*

*[Enter Hermia.]*

HERMIA

Never so weary, never so in woe,

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!

*[She lies down and sleeps.]*

ROBIN

*On the ground*

*Sleep sound.*

*I'll apply*

*To your eye,*

*Gentle lover, remedy.*

*[Robin applies the nectar  
to Lysander's eyes.]*

When thou wak'st,  
Thou tak'st  
True delight  
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;  
Naught shall go ill;  
The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be  
well.

*[He exits.]*

## Act 4

### Scene 1

*[With the four lovers still asleep onstage, enter Titania, Queen of Fairies, and Bottom and Fairies, and Oberon, the King, behind them unseen by those onstage.]*

TITANIA

Come, sit thee down upon this flow'ry bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
And stick muskroses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

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, signior. *[Cobweb exits.]* Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED Ready.

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

MUSTARDSEED What's your will?

BOTTOM Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur, for methinks I am marvels 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  
I have a venturous fairy that shall seek  
The squirrel's hoard and fetch thee new 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, begone, and be all ways away.  
*[Fairies exit.]*

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.  
O, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!  
*[Bottom and Titania sleep.]*

*[Enter Robin Goodfellow.]*

OBERON  
Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?  
Her dotage now I do begin to pity.  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool,  
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;  
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flouriets' eyes,  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
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.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.  
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp  
From off the head of this Athenian swain,  
That he, awaking when the other do,  
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.

*[He applies the nectar to her eyes.]*

*Be as thou wast wont to be.*

*See as thou wast wont to see.*

*Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower*

*Hath such force and blessed power.*

Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

TITANIA *[waking]*

My Oberon, what visions have I seen!  
Methought I was enamored of an ass.

OBERON

There lies your love.

TITANIA How came these things to pass?  
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

OBERON

Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.—  
Titania, music call; and strike more dead  
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

TITANIA

Music, ho, music such as charmeth sleep!

ROBIN *[removing the ass-head from Bottom]*

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

OBERON

Sound music. *[Music.]*

Come, my queen, take hands with me,  
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

*[Titania and Oberon dance.]*

Now thou and I are new in amity,  
And will tomorrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,  
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

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

TITANIA

*Come, my lord, and in our flight  
Tell me how it came this night  
That I sleeping here was found  
With these mortals on the ground.*  
*[Oberon, Robin, and Titania exit.]*

*[Wind horn. Enter Theseus and all his train,  
Hippolyta, Egeus.]*

THESEUS

Go, one of you, find out the Forester.  
For now our observation is performed,  
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.  
*[A Servant exits.]*

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top  
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  
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,  
So flewed, so sanded; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;  
Crook-kneed, and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls;  
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tunable  
Was never holloed to, nor cheered with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.  
Judge when you hear.—But soft! What nymphs are  
these?

EGEUS

My lord, this is my daughter here asleep,  
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,  
Came here in grace of 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.

*[A Servant exits.]*

*[Shout within. Wind horns. They all start up.]*

THESEUS

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.  
Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?

*[Demetrius, Helena, Hermia, and Lysander kneel.]*

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

THESEUS I pray you all, stand up.

*[They rise.]*

I know you two are rival enemies.  
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,  
I cannot truly say how I came here.  
But, as I think—for truly would I speak,  
And now I do bethink me, so it is:  
I came with Hermia hither. Our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,  
Without the peril of the Athenian law—

EGEUS

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

DEMETRIUS

My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither to this wood,  
And I in fury hither followed them,  
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  
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,  
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia.  
But like a 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 forevermore be true to it.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.  
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,  
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.

*[Theseus and his train,*



*including Hippolyta and Egeus, exit.]*

DEMETRIUS

These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

HERMIA

Methinks I see these things with parted eye,  
When everything seems double.

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  
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,  
And by the way let us recount our dreams.

*[Lovers exit.]*

BOTTOM *[waking up]* When my cue comes, call me,  
and I will answer. My next is "Most fair Pyramus."  
Hey-ho! Peter Quince! Flute the bellows-mender!  
Snout the tinker! Starveling! God's my life! Stolen  
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.

*[He exits.]*

## Scene 2

*[Enter Quince, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]*

QUINCE 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 No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraftman 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 the joiner.]*

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

QUINCE Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOTTOM 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 pare 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!

*[They exit.]*

## Act 5

### Scene 1

*[Enter Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, Lords, and Attendants.]*

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.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
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:  
That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to  
heaven,  
And as imagination bodies forth  
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,  
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,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images  
And grows to something of great constancy,  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

*[Enter Lovers: Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena.]*

THESEUS

Here come the lovers full of joy and mirth.—  
Joy, gentle friends! Joy and fresh days of love  
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?  
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 [*coming forward*] Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS  
Say what abridgment have you for this evening,  
What masque, what music? How shall we beguile  
The lazy time if not with some delight?

PHILOSTRATE [*giving Theseus a paper*]  
There is a brief how many sports are ripe.  
Make choice of which your Highness will see first.

THESEUS  
“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.”  
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  
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.  
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  
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  
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,  
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain  
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.  
*[Philostrate exits.]*

HIPPOLYTA  
I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,  
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;  
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,  
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,  
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,  
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

So please your Grace, the Prologue is addressed.

THESEUS Let him approach.

*[Enter the Prologue.]*

PROLOGUE

If we offend, it is with our goodwill.

That you should think we come not to offend,  
But with goodwill. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.  
Consider, then, we come but in despite.

We do not come, as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight

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.

*[Prologue exits.]*

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 this 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 Pyramus (Bottom), and Thisbe (Flute), and Wall (Snout), and Moonshine (Starveling), and Lion (Snug), and Prologue (Quince).]*

QUINCE *[as Prologue]*

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

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.

This man, with lantern, 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)

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,

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,

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

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.

*[Lion, Thisbe, Moonshine, and Prologue exit.]*

SNOUT *[as Wall]*

In this same interlude it doth befall

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.  
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 It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard  
discourse, my lord.

THESEUS Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence.

BOTTOM [*as Pyramus*]  
O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!  
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,  
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine  
eyne.  
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,  
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS The wall, methinks, being sensible, should  
curse again.

BOTTOM 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 (Flute).*]

FLUTE [*as Thisbe*]  
O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans  
For parting my fair Pyramus and me.  
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,

Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

I see a voice! Now will I to the chink

To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face.

Thisbe?

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*

My love! Thou art my love, I think.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace,  
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*

I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*

'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

*[Bottom and Flute exit.]*

SNOUT *[as Wall]*

Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so,

And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. *[He exits.]*

THESEUS Now is the wall down between the two  
neighbors.

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 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 (Snug) and Moonshine (Starveling).]*

SNUG *[as Lion]*

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear  
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on  
floor,  
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,  
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;  
For if I should as lion come in strife  
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

THESEUS A very gentle beast, and of a good  
conscience.

DEMETRIUS The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I  
saw.

LYSANDER This lion is a very fox for his valor.

THESEUS 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.

STARVELING *[as Moonshine]*

This lanthorn doth the horned 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.

STARVELING [*as Moonshine*]

This lanthorn doth the horned 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 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.

LYSANDER Proceed, Moon.

STARVELING [*as Moonshine*] All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon, I the man i' th' moon, this thornbush my thornbush, and this dog my dog.

DEMETRIUS Why, all these should be in the lanthorn, for all these are in the moon. But silence. Here comes Thisbe.

[*Enter Thisbe (Flute).*]

FLUTE [*as Thisbe*]

This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

SNUG [*as Lion*] O!

[*The Lion roars. Thisbe runs off, dropping her mantle.*]

DEMETRIUS Well roared, Lion.

THESEUS Well run, Thisbe.

HIPPOLYTA Well shone, Moon. Truly, the Moon shines

with a good grace.

*[Lion worries the mantle.]*

THESEUS Well moused, Lion.

*[Enter Pyramus (Bottom).]*

DEMETRIUS And then came Pyramus.

*[Lion exits.]*

LYSANDER And so the lion vanished.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

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!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see!

How can it be!

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good—

What, stained with blood?

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum,

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.

BOTTOM *[as Pyramus]*

O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,

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

The pap of Pyramus;

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop. *[Pyramus stabs himself.]*

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dead;  
Now am I fled;  
My soul is in the sky.  
Tongue, lose thy light!  
Moon, take thy flight!     *[Moonshine exits.]*  
Now die, die, die, die, die.     *[Pyramus falls.]*

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 yet prove an ass.

HIPPOLYTA How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

THESEUS She will find him by starlight.

*[Enter Thisbe (Flute).]*

Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

HIPPOLYTA 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 She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS And thus she means, videlicet—

FLUTE *[as Thisbe]*  
Asleep, my love?  
What, dead, my dove?  
O Pyramus, arise!  
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?  
Dead? Dead? A tomb  
Must cover thy sweet eyes.  
These lily lips,  
This cherry nose,  
These yellow cowslip cheeks  
Are gone, are gone!

Lovers, make moan;  
His eyes were green as leeks.  
O Sisters Three,  
Come, come to me  
With hands as pale as milk.  
Lay them in gore,  
Since you have shore  
With shears his thread of silk.  
Tongue, not a word!  
Come, trusty sword,  
Come, blade, my breast imbrue!  
[*Thisbe stabs herself.*]  
And farewell, friends.  
Thus *Thisbe* ends.  
Adieu, adieu, adieu. [/*Thisbe falls.*]

THESEUS Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS Ay, and Wall too.  
[*Bottom and Flute arise.*]

BOTTOM No, I 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 need 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.

[*Dance, and the players exit.*]

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.  
Lovers, to bed! 'Tis almost fairy time.  
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  
In nightly revels and new jollity. [/*They exit.*]

[*Enter Robin Goodfellow.*]

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars,  
And the wolf howls the moon,  
Whilst the heavy plowman 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 church-way 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

Through the house give glimmering light,  
By the dead and drowsy fire.  
Every elf and fairy sprite,  
Hop as light as bird from brier,  
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,  
Will we sing and bless this place.  
*[Oberon leads the Fairies in song and dance.]*

OBERON

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.  
Never mole, harelip, nor scar,  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despised 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 blest,  
Ever shall in safety rest.  
Trip away. Make no stay.  
Meet me all by break of day.*

*[All but Robin exit.]*

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 unearned luck  
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.*

*[He exits.]*