

A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare

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Characters in the Play

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 SNOT, 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. 5

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. 10

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. 15

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. 20

*Enter Egeus and his daughter Hermia, and Lysander
and Demetrius.*

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renownèd duke!

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord, 25
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child,—
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchanged love tokens with my child. 30
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers 35
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)

To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious duke, Be it so she will not here before your Grace 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.	40
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.	50
HERMIA	
So is Lysander.	
THESEUS	55
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.	60
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)	70
You can endure the livery of a nun, For aye to be in shady cloister mewed, To live a barren sister all your life, Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.	75
Thrice-blessèd 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.	80
HERMIA	
So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord, Ere I will yield my virgin patent up Unto his Lordship whose unwishèd yoke My soul consents not to give sovereignty.	
THESEUS	
Take time to pause, and by the next new moon (The sealing day betwixt my love and me	85

For everlasting bond of fellowship),		
Upon that day either prepare to die		
For disobedience to your father's will,		
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,	90	
Or on Diana's altar to protest		
For aye austerity and single life.		
DEMETRIUS		
Relent, sweet Hermia, and, Lysander, yield		
Thy crazèd title to my certain right.		
LYSANDER		
You have her father's love, Demetrius.	95	
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.	100	
LYSANDER, <i>to Theseus</i>		
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)	105	
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,	110	
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,	115	
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,	120	
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.	125	
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.		
<i>All but Hermia and Lysander exit.</i>		
LYSANDER		
How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?	130	
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—

135

HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

Or else misgraftèd in respect of years—

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

140

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 momentany 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.

145

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.

155

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.

160

165

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,

175

180

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! 185
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. 190
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. 195
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! 200
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. 205
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. 210
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. 215
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,	220
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius.— Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.	225
LYSANDER	
I will, my Hermia.	<i>Hermia exits.</i>
Helena, adieu.	230
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!	<i>Lysander exits.</i>
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.	235
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;	240
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.	245
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,	250
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.	255
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.	5
BOTTOM First, good Peter Quince, say what the play	

treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.	10
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.	15
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.	20
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:	25
<i>The raging rocks And shivering shocks Shall break the locks Of prison gates. And Phibus' car Shall shine from far And make and mar The foolish Fates.</i>	30 35
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.	40
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.	45
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!"	50
QUINCE No, no, you must play Pyramus—and, Flute, you Thisbe.	
BOTTOM Well, proceed.	55
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.	60
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. 65

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!" 70

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. 75

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. 80

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. 85

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. 90

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. 95

BOTTOM We will meet, and there we may rehearse
most obscenely and courageously. Take pains. Be
perfit. Adieu. 100

QUINCE At the Duke's Oak we meet.

BOTTOM Enough. Hold or cut bowstrings. 105

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; 5
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; 10
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. 15
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 20

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. 25
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her
joy.

And now they never meet in grove or green,
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. 30

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 35
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? 40
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. 45
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, 50
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 55
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. 60

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
I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania.
TITANIA
What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsown his bed and company.
OBERON
Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord? 65
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, 70
Come from the farthest steep of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskinèd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity? 75

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 80
From Perigouna, whom he ravishèd,
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, 85
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind, But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.	90
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.	95
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 drownèd field, And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.	100
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.	105
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	110
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	115
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd 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.	120
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:	125
The Fairyland buys not the child of me. His mother was a vot'ress of my order, And in the spicèd Indian air by night Full often hath she gossiped by my side And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,	130
Marking th' embarkèd 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	135
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.	140

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.

If you will patiently dance in our round

145

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.

150

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

155

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.

160

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 thronèd by the west,

And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow

165

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 passèd on

In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

170

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.

175

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.

180

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.

185

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

190

(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. 195
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. 200
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. 205

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, 210
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 215
(And yet a place of high respect with me)
Than to be usèd 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. 220

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 225
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, 230
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. 235

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 240
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, 245
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 250
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. 255

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. 260
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 265
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 270
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. 275

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 reremice for their leathern wings
To make my small elves coats, and some keep back 5
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. 10
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. 15
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby.*

FIRST FAIRY

*Weaving spiders, come not here. 20
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. 25
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby. 30*

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. 35
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. 40

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.

45

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.

50

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 interchainèd 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.

55

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!

60

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!

70

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.

75

He sees Lysander.

Night and silence! Who is here?

*Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
This is he my master said
Despisèd the Athenian maid.
And here the maiden, sleeping sound
On the dank and dirty ground.* 80
*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.* 85
*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. 90

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. 95

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,

For she hath blessèd 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, 100

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? 105

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, 110

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 115
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. 120
 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. 125
 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? 130
 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? 135
 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 140
 Should of another therefore be abused!
- 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, 145
 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 150
 To honor Helen and to be her knight.
- 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. 155
 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. 160
 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. 5

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? 10

SNOUT By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done. 15

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. 20

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. 25

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. 30

SNOUT Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion. 35

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. 40

QUINCE Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber, 45

for you know Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.	
SNOUT Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?	50
BOTTOM A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac. Find out moonshine, find out moonshine.	
	<i>Quince takes out a book.</i>
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.	55
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.	60
SNOUT You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?	65
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.	70
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.	75

Enter Robin invisible to those onstage.

ROBIN, <i>aside</i>	
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.	80
BOTTOM, <i>as Pyramus</i>	
<i>Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet—</i>	
QUINCE Odors, odors!	
BOTTOM, <i>as Pyramus</i>	
...odors savors sweet. <i>So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.—</i>	
<i>But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,</i>	85
<i>And by and by I will to thee appear.</i>	<i>He exits.</i>
ROBIN, <i>aside</i>	
A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.	<i>He exits.</i>
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.	90
FLUTE, <i>as Thisbe</i>	
<i>Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue, Of color like the red rose on triumphant brier, Most briskly juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,</i>	

95

*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." 100

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, 105
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, 110
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. 115

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? 115
Snout exits.

Enter Quince.

QUINCE Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art 120
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 125
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*

130

<i>And dares not answer "nay"—</i>	135
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,	140
So is mine eye enthrallèd 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.	145
TITANIA	
Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.	150
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.	155
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 pressèd flowers dost sleep. And I will purge thy mortal grossness so That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.— Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed!	160
<i>Enter four Fairies: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, and Mustardseed.</i>	
PEASEBLOSSOM Ready.	165
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	170
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!	180
COBWEB Hail!	

MOTE Hail!
MUSTARDSEED Hail!
BOTTOM I cry your Worships mercy, heartily.—I beseech 185
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? 190
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 195
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 200
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, 205
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforcèd 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? 5
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, 10
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. 15
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's noll I fixèd on his head.
Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
 Or russet-pated croughs, many in sort,
 Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
 Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
 So at his sight away his fellows fly, 25
 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls.
 He "Murder" cries and help from Athens calls.
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus
 strong,
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong; 30
 For briars 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, 35
 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— 40
 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? 45
 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 50
 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 55
 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, 60
 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?

65

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!

70

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.

75

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?

80

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.

85

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

90

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.

95

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.

100

I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

ROBIN I go, I go, look how I go,

Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

He exits.

OBERON, *applying the nectar to Demetrius' eyes*

Flower of this purple dye,

Hit with Cupid's archery,

105

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.

110

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!

115

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.

120

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?

125

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.

130

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 congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

140

145

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. 150
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so, 155
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts,
When, I am sure, you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise, 160
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so, 165
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.
And here with all 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. 170

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, 175
There to remain.

LYSANDER Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.
Look where thy love comes. Yonder is thy dear. 180

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; 185
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER		
Lysander's love, that would not let him bide, 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?	190	
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,	200	
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?	205	
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence? We, Hermia, like two artificial gods, Have with our needles created both one flower, Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,	210	
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 moldèd on one stem;	215	
So with two seeming bodies but one heart, Two of the first, like coats in heraldry, Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest. And will you rent our ancient love asunder,		
To join with men in scorning your poor friend? It is not friendly; 'tis not maidenly.	220	
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it, Though I alone do feel the injury.		
HERMIA		
I am amazèd at your words.	225	
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,	230	
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare, Precious, celestial? Wherfore speaks he this To her he hates? And wherfore doth Lysander Deny your love (so rich within his soul)		
And tender me, forsooth, affection, But by your setting on, by your consent?	235	
What though I be not so in grace as you, So hung upon with love, so fortunate, But miserable most, to love unloved? This you should pity rather than despise.		240

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.

245

LYSANDER

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

250

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.

255

260

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!

265

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.

270

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

Out, loathèd med'cine! O, hated potion, hence!

275

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. 280

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? 285
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? 290

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. 295

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, 300
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 305
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? 310
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; 315
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. 320

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, 325
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

- Did not you tell me I should know the man
 By the Athenian garments he had on?370
 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.375
 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.380
 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 sleep385
 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.390
 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,395
 I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
 And then I will her charmèd 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,400
 And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
 At whose approach, ghosts wand'ring here and
 there
 Troop home to churchyards. Damnèd spirits all,
 That in crossways and floods have burial,405
 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.410
 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 blessèd beams,
 Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.415
 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.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this
dear

455

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.

460

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.

470

Enter Hermia.

HERMIA

Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briars,
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.

475

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.

480

*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.*

485

*Jack shall have Jill;
Naught shall go ill;*

490

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?

5

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?

10

15

MUSTARDSEED Ready.

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

20

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.

25

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.

30

TITANIA

Or say, sweet love, what thou desirtest 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.

35

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.

40

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. 45
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, 50
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, 55
Stood now within the pretty flouriet's 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, 60
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 transformèd scalp 65
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. 70
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 blessèd power. 75

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? 80
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!

85

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.

90

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.

95

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.

100

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.

105

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.

110

A Servant exits.

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

115

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.

120

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;	125
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	130
these?	
EGEUS	
My lord, this is my daughter here asleep,	
And this Lysander; this Demetrius is,	
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena.	135
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	140
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.
	<i>Shout within. Wind horns. They all start up.</i>
THESEUS	
Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.	
Begin these woodbirds but to couple now?	145
	<i>Demetrius, Helena, Hermia, and Lysander kneel.</i>
LYSANDER	
Pardon, my lord.	
THESEUS I pray you all, stand up.	
	<i>They rise.</i>
I know you two are rival enemies.	
How comes this gentle concord in the world,	
That hatred is so far from jealousy	150
To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?	
LYSANDER	
My lord, I shall reply amazèdly,	
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,	155
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.	160
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.	165
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.	170	
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,	175	
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.	180	
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.—	185	
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.	190	
Away with us to Athens. Three and three, We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.		
Come, Hippolyta.		
<i>Theseus and his train, including Hippolyta and Egeus, exit.</i>		
DEMETRIUS		
These things seem small and undistinguishable, Like far-off mountains turnèd into clouds.	195	
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.	200	
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.	205	
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.		
<i>Lovers exit.</i>		
BOTTOM, <i>waking up</i>	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	210 215

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 220
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 225
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 5
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. 10
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, 15
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 20
'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 25
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 30
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, 35
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 40
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!

45

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 5
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, 10
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 15
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination
That, if it would but apprehend some joy, 20
It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together, 25
More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy,
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

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 30
Accompany your hearts!

LYSANDER More than to us

Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

THESEUS

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we
have

35

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.	40
PHILOSTRATE, <i>coming forward</i> 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?	45
PHILOSTRATE, <i>giving Theseus a paper</i>	
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.	50
"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.	55
"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." "Mercy" and "tragical"? "Tedious" and "brief"! That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow!	60
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.	65
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.	70
THESEUS	
What are they that do play it?	75
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.	80
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.	85
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. 90
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.

95

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 purposèd

To greet me with premeditated welcomes,

100

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,

105

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

110

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,

115

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

120

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.

125

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.	130
THESEUS His speech was like a tangled chain—nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?	
<i>Enter Pyramus (Bottom), and Thisbe (Flute), and Wall (Snout), and Moonshine (Starveling), and Lion (Snug), and Prologue (Quince).</i>	
QUINCE, as <i>Prologue</i>	
Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show. But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.	135
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;	140
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.	145
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.	150
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.	155
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.	160
THESEUS I wonder if the lion be to speak.	
DEMETRIUS No wonder, my lord. One lion may when many asses do.	
<i>Lion, Thisbe, Moonshine, and Prologue exit.</i>	
SNOUT, as <i>Wall</i>	
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.	165
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.	170
THESEUS Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?	175
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-looked night! O night with hue so black!
 O night, which ever art when day is not! 180
 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, 185
 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. 190
 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. 195
 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 200
 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. 205
 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. 210
 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? 215
 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. 220
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. 225
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 230
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, 235
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. 240
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. 245
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. 250
Leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the
Moon.
STARVELING, *as Moonshine*
This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.
DEMETRIUS He should have worn the horns on his
head. 255
THESEUS He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible
within the circumference.
STARVELING, *as Moonshine*
This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.
Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be.
THESEUS This is the greatest error of all the rest; the
man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else
"the man i' th' moon"? 260
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. 265

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. 270

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, 275
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. 280

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. 285
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.— 290
But stay! O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see!
How can it be! 295
O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good—
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come, 300
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. 305

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?	310
Come, tears, confound!	
Out, sword, and wound	
The pap of Pyramus;	
Ay, that left pap,	
Where heart doth hop.	<i>Pyramus stabs himself.</i> 315
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.	
Now am I dead;	
Now am I fled;	
My soul is in the sky.	
Tongue, lose thy light!	320
Moon, take thy flight!	<i>Moonshine exits.</i>
Now die, die, die, die, die.	<i>Pyramus falls.</i>
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.	325
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?	330
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, 335 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, <i>videlicet</i> —	340
FLUTE, as <i>Thisbe</i>	
Asleep, my love?	
What, dead, my dove?	
O Pyramus, arise!	
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?	
Dead? Dead? A tomb	345
Must cover thy sweet eyes.	
These lily lips,	
This cherry nose,	
These yellow cowslip cheeks	
Are gone, are gone!	
Lovers, make moan;	350
His eyes were green as leeks.	
O Sisters Three,	
Come, come to me	
With hands as pale as milk.	355
Lay them in gore,	
Since you have shore	
With shears his thread of silk.	
Tongue, not a word!	
Come, trusty sword,	360
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 365
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 370
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 375
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. 380

Lovers, to bed! 'Tis almost fairy time.

I fear we shall oversleep 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.

385

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 behowls the moon,
Whilst the heavy plowman snores, 390
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.

395

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 400
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, 405
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.

410

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.

415

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
Despisèd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blest,
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away. Make no stay.
Meet me all by break of day.

420

425

430

435

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 unearnèd 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.

440

445

450

455

He exits.