

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA enter along with PHILOSTRATE and others.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

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

PHILOSTRATE exits.

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

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke.

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

THESEUS

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


EGEUS

Full of vexation come I with complaint
 25 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
 Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
 This man hath my consent to marry her.
 Stand forth, Lysander. And my gracious duke,
 This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
 30 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
 And interchanged love tokens with my child.
 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
 With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
 And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
 35 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
 Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers
 Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
 With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
 Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
 40 To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
 Be it so she will not here before your grace
 Consent to marry with Demetrius,

Shakesclore Translation

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA enter along with PHILOSTRATE and others.

THESEUS

Now, beautiful Hippolyta , the hour of our wedding is speeding closer. In four joyful days there will be a new crescent moon, and we will marry. But oh! The old moon seems to me to shrink away so slowly! It delays me from getting what I desire, just like an old rich widow will force her stepson to wait forever to receive his inheritance.

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly pass and turn to night. And each night, we will dream away the time. And soon the moon—like a silver bow newly bent into a curve in the sky—will look down on the night of our wedding celebration.

THESEUS

Go, Philostrate, get the young people of Athens in the mood to celebrate. Wake up the lively and swift spirit of fun. Send sadness out to funerals—that pale emotion has no place at our festivities.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

Hippolyta, I wooed with you by fighting against you, and won your love by injuring you. But I'll marry you in a different way—with splendid ceremonies, public festivities, and celebration.

EGEUS


Joy to you, Theseus—our famous and distinguished duke!


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


THESEUS

Thank you, dear Egeus. What's going on with you?

EGEUS

I've come to you full of anger, to protest against the actions of my daughter, Hermia. Step forward, Demetrius. My noble lord Theseus, this man, Demetrius, has my blessing to marry her. Step forward, Lysander. Yet, my gracious duke, this man, Lysander, has put a spell on my daughter's heart. You, you, Lysander, you have given her poems, and exchanged tokens of love with my daughter. You've come beneath her window in the moonlight and pretended to love her with your fake love songs. And you've stolen her fancy by giving her locks of your hair, rings, toys, trinkets, knickknacks, little presents, flowers, and candies—all of which will powerfully influence an innocent child. You've sneaked and schemed to steal my daughter's heart, transforming the obedience which she owes me into harsh stubbornness. My gracious duke, if Hermia, standing here in front of you, won't agree to marry Demetrius, then I demand my traditional rights as a father in Athens . Since she belongs to me, I can do what I want with her, as

 Hippolyta is the legendary Queen of the Amazons, a group of fearsome women warriors.

 In ancient Mediterranean civilizations, fathers had absolute authority over each family member, including the power of life and death.

I beg the ancient privilege of Athens.
As she is mine, I may dispose of her—
45 Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death—according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

THESEUS

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

HERMIA

55 So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is.
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS

60 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,
65 But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS

Either to die the death or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
70 Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires.
Know of your youth. Examine well your blood—
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
75 To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage.
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
80 Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

HERMIA

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

THESEUS

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

DEMETRIUS

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

the law expressly states for just such a case as this: either
she marries Demetrius, or she dies.

THESEUS

And what do you say, Hermia? Take this advice, pretty girl:
you should see your father as a god, since he's the one who
created your beauty. To him, you're like a figure that he
sculpted out of wax, giving him the power to leave it as it is
or to destroy it. Demetrius is a good man.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

Yes he is. But in this situation, because he lacks your
father's support, you must consider Demetrius to be better.


HERMIA


I wish my father could look at them through my eyes.

THESEUS


Instead, your view of them must be influenced by your
father's wishes.


HERMIA

I beg your Grace  to forgive me. I don't know what is
making me bold enough to do this, or even how speaking
my thoughts to such an important person as you might
harm my reputation for modesty. But I beg you to explain to
me the worst thing that could happen to me in this
situation if I refuse to marry Demetrius.

 "Your Grace" is a form of address
similar to "your Majesty."

THESEUS

You'll either be sentenced to death or to never again
interact with another man. Therefore, beautiful Hermia,
really think about what you want. Think about how young
you are, and explore your feelings—if you do not give in to
your father's wishes, will you be able to tolerate life wearing
the robes of a nun, shut up in a dark convent, living your
whole life without husband or children, chanting quietly to
Diana . Those who can control their passions and remain
virgins their whole lives are three times as blessed. But a
married woman lives happier in this world than a virgin,
who achieves the blessing of chastity but grows, lives, and
witheres to death as a flower on the stem.

 Diana, otherwise known as
Artemis, was the ancient Greek
goddess of the moon and chastity.

HERMIA

That is how I will grow, live, and die, my lord. I will not give
up the ownership of my virginity to my lord father. My soul
refuses to let him command me into the yoke of a marriage
I do not want.

THESEUS

Take some time to consider. By the next new moon—the
day when my beloved and I will be joined in marriage—be
ready either to die for disobeying your father's desires, to
marry Demetrius, as your father wishes. Or else, you can go
to the temple of Diana and vow to spend the rest of your life
as a virgin priestess.

DEMETRIUS

Give in, sweet Hermia. And, Lysander, give up your crazy
claim to possession of what is mine.

LYSANDER

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

EGEUS

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

LYSANDER

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

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

130 With duty and desire we follow you.

They exit, except LYSANDER and HERMIA.

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

135 Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.
But either it was different in blood—

HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

140 Or else misgraffed in respect of years—

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

LYSANDER

Her father loves you, Demetrius. Let me have Hermia, and
you can marry him.

EGEUS

Rude Lysander, it's true, I do love him. And because I love
him, I will give to him what is mine. Hermia is mine, and I'm
giving my rights to her to Demetrius.

LYSANDER

[To THESEUS] My lord, I'm as noble as Demetrius, and as
rich. I love Hermia more than he does. My prospects are in
every way as good as Demetrius', if not better. And, more
importantly than all of those things I just boasted about,
beautiful Hermia loves me. Why shouldn't I be able to
pursue my rights marry her? Demetrius—and I'll declare
this to his face—wooed Nedar's daughter, Helena, and won
her love. Now Helena, that sweet lady, obsesses, deeply
obsesses, obsesses over this stained and unfaithful man,
idolizing him as if he were a god.

THESEUS

I must admit I've heard that too, and meant to speak about
it with Demetrius. But because I was too busy with my own
concerns, I forget about it. But now, Demetrius and Egeus,
come with me. I have some advice for you both that I want
to give in private. As for you, beautiful Hermia, prepare
yourself to shape your desires to match what your father
wants, or else the law of Athens—which I can't modify or
lessen in any way—demands that you either die or take a
vow of chastity and never marry. Come along, Hippolyta.
How are you, my love? Demetrius and Egeus, come with us.
I have some work I need you to do regarding our wedding,
and there's something that concerns the two of you that I
want to discuss.

EGEUS

We follow you because it is our duty, and because we want
to.

They all exit, except LYSANDER and HERMIA.

LYSANDER

How are you, my love? Why are your cheeks so pale? How is
it that the roses in them have faded so quickly?

HERMIA

Probably because they lacked rain, which I could easily give
them from the tears in my eyes.

LYSANDER

Oh dear! In every book that I have ever read, whether a
story or a history, the path of true love is never smooth or
easy. Perhaps the lovers are of different social classes—

HERMIA

Oh, what an obstacle! Being a person of high rank in love
with someone of low stature.

LYSANDER

Or else they were very different ages—

HERMIA

Oh, vicious fate! Being too old to marry someone young.

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

145 Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night;
150 That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and Earth,
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.
So quick bright things come to confusion.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

160 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.
165 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
170 To do observance to a morn of May—
There will I stay for thee.

HERMIA

My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
175 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
180 (In number more than ever women spoke),
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

HERMIA

Godspeed, fair Helena! Whither away?

HELENA enters.

HELENA

185 Call you me "fair?" That "fair" again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!
Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air
More tunable than lark to shepherd's ear
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
190 Sickness is catching. Oh, were favor so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go.
My ear should catch your voice. My eye, your eye.
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,

195

LYSANDER

Or else their ability to choose depended on the wishes of their relatives—

HERMIA

Oh, what a hell, to have someone else's wishes determine who you can love!

LYSANDER

Or—even if two people loved each other and could choose to marry--war, death, or sickness might intervene, so that their love lasts no longer than a sound, is as fleeting as a shadow, short as a dream. Or it's as brief as a bolt of lightning that--like a flash of passion--lights up heaven and Earth but then disappears into darkness before you can even say "Look!" That's how bright things that are full of life are destroyed.

HERMIA

If true lovers are always thwarted, then it proves that destiny is saying that our thwarted love must be true. So let's make sure to approach our problem with patience. Since all true love must be thwarted, then being thwarted is as much a part of love as dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears are.

LYSANDER

That's the right way to think about it. So, listen, Hermia. I have an aunt who is a widow, who has property and great wealth, and doesn't have any children. Her house is about twenty miles from Athens, and she thinks of me as a son. Dear Hermia, I could marry you there, where the harsh laws of Athens can't follow us. So if you love me, sneak out of your father's house tomorrow night. I will wait for you in the woods, three miles out of town, at the spot where I once met you with Helena to celebrate May Day.

HERMIA

My noble Lysander! I swear to you--by Cupid's strongest bow, by his best gold-tipped arrow; by the innocent doves that drive Venus' chariot; by everything that binds souls together and makes love grow; by the bonfire upon which Queen Dido of Carthage burned herself to death when she saw that her lover Aeneas had secretly sailed away from her; and by all the promises that men have ever broken (which outnumber all the promises women have ever made). I will meet you tomorrow at the spot you have asked me to go to.

 Venus, or Aphrodite, was the ancient Greek goddess of love.

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

Welcome, beautiful Helena! Where are you going?

HELENA enters.

HELENA

Did you call me "beautiful?" Take it back. Your beauty is what Demetrius loves. Oh, lucky beauty! Your eyes are like stars, and your sweet voice is more melodic than a lark's song is to a shepherd in the springtime, when the wheat is green and hawthorn buds appear. Sickness is contagious. Oh, I wish beauty was also. I would catch yours, beautiful Hermia, before I left. My ear would be infected by your voice, my eye by your eye, and my tongue would catch your tongue's musical voice. If I owned the world, I'd give it all up--with the exception of Demetrius--to be transformed

The rest I'd give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA

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

HERMIA

200 I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

Oh, that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA

205 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 Oh, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.
Tomorrow night when Phoebe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,

215 Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass
(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

HERMIA

[To HELENA] And in the wood where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,

220 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.

225 And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

HERMIA exits.

Helena, adieu.
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

LYSANDER exits.

into you. Oh, teach me how you look at Demetrius, and the tricks you use to make him fall in love with you.

HERMIA

I frown at him, but he still loves me.

HELENA

Oh, if only your frowns could teach my smiles to have that same ability!

HERMIA

I curse him, but he responds with love.

HELENA

Oh, if only my prayers could arouse that kind of affection!

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

Helena, his foolishness is not my fault.

HELENA

It's only your beauty's fault. I wish I had that fault!

HERMIA

Don't worry. He'll never see my face again. Lysander and I are running away from here. Before the first time I saw Lysander, Athens seemed like paradise to me. But Lysander is so beautiful and graceful that, by comparison, he's turned what I thought was heaven into hell!

LYSANDER

Helena, we'll let you in on our plan. Tomorrow night--when Phoebe ⁶ is reflected on the water and decorates the grass with beads of pearly light (the time of night that always hides lovers on the run--we plan to sneak out through the gates of Athens.

⁶ Phoebe was the ancient Greek goddess of the moon.

HERMIA

[To HELENA] In the woods where you and I used to laze around on the pale primroses, sharing all of the sweet secrets of our hearts--that's where Lysander and I will meet. Then we'll turn away from Athens and look for new friends and the company of strangers. Goodbye, sweet friend of my youth. Pray for us, and may fate give you Demetrius! Keep your promise, Lysander. We must refrain from the pleasure of seeing each other until tomorrow at midnight.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

HERMIA exits.

Goodbye, Helena. May Demetrius love you just as you love him!

LYSANDER exits.

HELENA


How happy some o'er other some can be!
 230 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
 But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.
 He will not know what all but he do know.
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
 So I, admiring of his qualities.
 235 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.
 Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind.
 And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste--
 240 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
 So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
 245 For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
 He hailed down oaths that he was only mine.
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
 250 Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
 Pursue her. And for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again.

HELENA exits.

HELENA

How happy some people can be compared to others!
 Throughout Athens, people think I'm as beautiful as
 Hermia. But what does that matter? Demetrius doesn't
 think so. The only opinion he has is his own. And as he
 wanders, idolizing Hermia's eyes, likewise I admire his
 beauty. Love can transform crude and horrible things of no
 worth into beautiful and dignified things. Love doesn't look
 with eyes, but with the mind. That's why they paint winged
 Cupid blind. And Love doesn't have good judgment or
 taste--wings and blindness make for undue speed in falling
 in love. Thus, Love is thought of as a child, because he
 often makes the wrong choice. Just like mischievous boys
 who go back on their word as they play games, so too does
 the boy Love perjure himself everywhere. Because before
 Demetrius saw Helena's eyes, he swore that he belonged to
 only me. And when he felt attracted to Hermia, he
 dissolved. His promises melted down like hail in the heat. I
 will go and tell him that beautiful Hermia is running away.
 Then he'll got to the forest tomorrow night to pursue her.
 And if he thanks me for this piece of information, it will all
 be worth it. But in this way I plan to make my pain worse,
 by seeing him go there and back again.

HELENA exits.

 Cupid, or Eros, was the ancient Greek god of love.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

QUINCE the carpenter, SNUG the cabinetmaker; BOTTOM the weaver,
 FLUTE the bellows-repairman, SNOUT the tinker; and STARVELING
 the tailor all enter.

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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



QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

15 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.


Shakescleare Translation

QUINCE the carpenter, SNUG the cabinetmaker; BOTTOM
 the weaver, FLUTE the bellows  -repairman, SNOUT the
 repairman ; and STARVELING the tailor all enter.

QUINCE

Are all of us here?

BOTTOM

You'd be best off calling their names generally , one
 person at a time, following the order of the names on the
 list.


QUINCE

Here is the list of the names of every man in Athens who we
 consider good enough to act in the short play we're going
 to perform for the duke and duchess on the night of their
 wedding day.

BOTTOM


First, Peter Quince, tell us what the play is about. Then read
 the names of the actors, and in that way build up to a
 conclusion.


QUINCE


Indeed , I will. Our play is called *The Very Tragic Comedy
 of the Awful Deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe*.


BOTTOM

Believe me, it's a great piece of work, and very funny, too.
 Now, Peter Quince, call out the actors on your list. Men,
 gather around.

 "Bellows," or a "pair of bellows,"
 are a device used to blow air into a
 fire.

 The original text labels Snout a
 "tinker," one who repairs metal
 objects for a living.

 Bottom often mixes up words.
 Here he says "generally" when he
 means "separately."

 The original text's "marry" is a
 mild oath, common in Shakespeare's
 time. It refers to the Virgin Mary.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

20 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

25 Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in to make all split.

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks

30 Of prison gates.

And Phoebus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.

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?

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

40 Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

45 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.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Here. Say which part I'm going to play, and then continue.

QUINCE

Nick Bottom, you will play the role of Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What's Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover who, very nobly, kills himself for love.

BOTTOM

That role will require some tears from me if I am to perform it well. If I perform it, the audience better check their own eyes. I'll make tears fall like rainstorms. I'll make them weep. I'll express grief--just the right amount of grief, of course. Okay, now list the other actors. But, actually, my first choice would be to play a tyrant. I'd make a wonderful Hercules ⁵, or any other part that requires ranting and raving that will bring the house down.

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Will break the locks
Of prison gates.
And Phoebus ⁶' cart
Will shine from afar
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.

That was high art! Now say who the other actors are. That speech was in the style of Hercules, the tyrant's style. A lover would be more weepy.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-repairman?

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you'll play the part of Thisbe.

FLUTE

Who's Thisbe? A knight on a quest?

QUINCE

Thisbe is the lady whom Pyramus loves.

FLUTE

No, really, please don't make me play a woman. I'm growing a beard.

QUINCE

That makes no difference. You'll be wearing a mask, and you can make your voice as high as you want.

BOTTOM

If I can wear a mask, let me play Thisbe too! I'll speak in an amazing high-pitched voice. Pyramus will say: "Thisne, Thisne!" Then I'll say: "Ah, Pyramus, my dear love! I'm your dear Thisbe--your dear lady!"

QUINCE

No, no. You're playing Pyramus. And Flute, you're playing Thisbe.

⁵ Hercules was an ancient Greek mythological hero, famous for his twelve tasks.

⁶ Phoebus was the ancient Greek sun god.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

SNUG

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

Why, what you will.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

90 Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But masters, here are your parts. And I am to entreat you, request you, and desire

BOTTOM

Well, all right. Continue.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You'll play Pyramus' father. As for myself, I'll play Thisbe's father. Snug, the cabinetmaker, you'll play the part of the lion. Now, I hope the play has been well cast.

SNUG

Do you have the lion's part written down? If you do, please give it to me, because I'm a slow learner.

QUINCE

You can improvise the whole thing, because it's just roaring.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

If you roar too terrifyingly, you'll scare the duchess and the other ladies, and make them scream. And that would be enough to get us all hanged.

ALL

They'd hang every single one of us.

BOTTOM

I agree, my friends, that if you scare the ladies out of their wits, they'd have no choice but to hang us. But I'll **aggravate** my voice so that I'll roar as gently as a baby dove. I'll roar like a melodic nightingale.

QUINCE

You can't play any part but Pyramus. Because Pyramus is a good-looking man, the most handsome man you could find on a summer's day, the most lovely gentlemanly man. Therefore you must play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

Very well, I'll do it. What would be the best beard for me to wear for the part?

QUINCE

Why, whichever one you want to wear.

BOTTOM

I'll play the role wearing either a straw-colored beard, or a brownish-yellow beard, or a deep red beard, or a bright yellow beard the color of a **French crown**.

QUINCE

Some French heads have no hair at all, so maybe you could play the role clean-shaven. But, gentlemen, here are your scripts. I beg you, ask you, and desire you to please

Q Bottom thinks "aggravate" means "quiet" or "moderate," when in fact it means the opposite.

Q Bottom refers here to a gold coin, or "crown."

Q Here, Quince makes a joke about bare French "crowns," or heads. He

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
95 our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

At the duke's oak we meet.

They all exit.

learn your lines by tomorrow night. Then meet me by moonlight in the duke's forest a mile outside of town. There we will rehearse, because if we do it in the city, we'll be bothered by crowds of people and everyone will know what we're going to perform. In the meantime, I'll make a list of props that we'll need for the play. Now, I beg you, don't miss the rehearsal.

BOTTOM

We'll be there, and there we'll rehearse obscenely ¹⁰ and courageously. Work hard, memorize your lines perfectly. Farewell.

QUINCE

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

They all exit.

alludes to syphilis, "the French disease," which causes hair loss.

¹⁰ Bottom means "unseen," not obscene.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

A FAIRY and ROBIN GOODFELLOW enter from opposite sides of the stage.

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
5 Thorough flood, thorough fire.
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon's sphere.
And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.
10 The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see.
Those be rubies, fairy favors.
In those freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here
15 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits. I'll be gone.
Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The king doth keep his revels here tonight.
Take heed the queen come not within his sight.
20 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath
Because that she, as her attendant hath
A lovely boy stolen from an Indian king.
She never had so sweet a changeling.
And jealous Oberon would have the child
25 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen.
30 But they do square, that all their elves for fear
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
35 That frights the maidens of the villagery,
Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,

Shakescleare Translation

A FAIRY and ROBIN GOODFELLOW enter from opposite sides of the stage.

ROBIN

How are you, spirit? Where are you going?

FAIRY

Over hill, over valley, through bush, through thorn, over park, over fenced-in pastures, through water, through fire. I wander everywhere faster than the moon revolves around the Earth. I serve the fairy queen, decorating the grass with dew. The tall cowslip flowers are her bodyguards: the spots you see on their gold coats are rubies, fairy gifts. Their sweet smells come from those spots. Now I must go find some dewdrops, and hang a pearl of dew in every cowslip flower. Farewell, you silly unsophisticated spirit. I must go. The queen and her elves will be here soon.

ROBIN

The king is having a party here tonight. Be careful that the queen doesn't come within his sight, because King Oberon is beyond angry. She stole an charming boy from an Indian king to be her servant. She's never kidnapped ¹⁰ such an adorable human child, and Oberon is jealous. He wants the child to be a knight within his own retinue, to wander with him through the wild forests. But the queen refuses to give up the beloved boy. Instead she crowns the boy's head with flowers and treasures him. Now Oberon and Titania refuse to meet each other, whether in the forest or the fields, by the clear water of a stream, or beneath the stars. They just argue, so that all their elves get frightened and sneak off to hide in acorns.

FAIRY

Either I'm completely mistaken, or else you're that mischievous and naughty spirit named Robin Goodfellow. Aren't you the one who plays pranks on the maidens in the village, skimming the cream off the milk; clogging up the flour mill so they can't grind grain into flour; and making housewives breathless by keeping their milk from turning into butter no matter how much they churn? Don't you stop

¹⁰ In Shakespeare's time, fairies were thought to swap children in their cradles. The child substituted for the original child was called a "changeling."

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 speak'st 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 quire hold their hips and laugh,
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.
 But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

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

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

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

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

65 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 buskined mistress and your warrior love,
 To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
 To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

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

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy.
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
 85 By paved 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.
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
 90 As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
 Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
 Have every pelting river made so proud

beer from foaming, and lead people out at night the wrong way while you laugh at them? But those who call you "Hobgoblin," or "sweet Puck"-- you do their work for them and make sure they have good luck. Aren't you him?

ROBIN

You are correct. I am the mischievous wanderer of the night. I joke to Oberon and make him smile. Sometimes I'll trick a fat, well-fed horse by neighing as if I'm a young filly. Sometimes I hide at the bottom of an old gossip woman's cup in the form of a crab apple. When she drinks, I bob against her lips so that she spills the beer on her old wrinkly neck. Sometimes an old woman telling a sad story will mistake me for a three-legged stool and try to sit on me. Then I slip out from underneath her butt and she falls down, crying, "I'm sitting cross-legged like a tailor!" Then she starts to cough, and everyone around holds their bellies and laughs. Their laughter grows, and they sneeze, and I swear none of them has ever wasted an hour in greater fun. But make room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here's my queen. I wish he'd go away!

OBERON

I'm not glad to see you this night, proud Titania.

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


TITANIA

What, are you jealous, Oberon? Fairies, let's leave this place. I've sworn I'll never sleep with him or be near him again.

OBERON

Wait, you impulsive and willful creature. Am I not your lord and husband?

TITANIA


If you were, then I would have to be your lady and wife, to whom you are faithful. But I know that you snuck away from Fairyland disguised as a shepherd , and spent all day playing music and reciting love poems to an infatuated shepherdess. Why have you come here, all the way from the furthest mountains of India? Because, of course, that bouncing Amazon Hippolyta--your half-boot-wearing mistress and warrior lover--is getting married to Theseus, and you've come to bless their wedding bed with joy and prosperity.

OBERON

How can you shamelessly make insinuations about my relationship with Hippolyta, when you know that I know about your love for Theseus? Didn't you entice him through the glimmering night away from Perigouna, whom he had just abducted and raped? And didn't you make him be unfaithful to Aegles, Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are lies that emerge from your jealousy. Not once, since the beginning of midsummer--whether on a hill, in a valley, a forest, or a meadow, by a pebbly spring or rushing brook, or on a beach next to the ocean--have my fairies and I been able to meet and perform our ring dances to honor the whistling wind without you showing up with your shouting to interrupt our fun. Because of that, the winds have gotten angry at our lack of response to their calls. In revenge the winds have made nasty fogs rise up from the sea, and make rain fall upon the land so that rivers have grown so large they flood the land around them. All the

 The original text uses the names "Corin" and "Phillida" to stand in for a shepherd and shepherdess. The names were common in pastoral poetry.

That they have overborne their continents.
 The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
 95 The ploughman 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 fattened with the murrain flock.
 The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
 100 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
 The human mortals want their winter here.
 No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 105 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound.
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 110 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 chiding autumn, angry winter change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
 115 By their increase, now knows not which is which.
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension.
 We are their parents and original.

OBERON

Do you amend it then. It lies in you.
 120 Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
 I do but beg a little changeling boy,
 To be my henchman.

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest.
 The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
 125 His mother was a votaress of my order,
 And in the spiced Indian air by night
 Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,
 130 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
 Following—her womb then rich with my young squire—
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 135 To fetch me trifles and return again
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

140 How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
 If you will patiently dance in our round
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us.
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON

145 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.

OBERON

Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
 Till I torment thee for this injury. *[To ROBIN
 150 GOODFELLOW]*
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
 Since once I sat upon a promontory

work done by farmers' and their oxen has been ruined, and the corn has rotted before it could grow ripe. Animal pens stand empty in flooded fields, and the crows are fat from eating the bodies of sheep and cattle killed by disease. The village greens where men play games together are filled with mud, and the maze-like paths people have made through the high-grown grass have faded away because no one walks on them. The humans have not gotten the winter they should have, and the nights to not receive the blessings of the hymns or carols of that season. As a result the moon, who controls the tides, is pale with anger, and moistens the air so that colds and flu spread everywhere. Because of this disturbance in the normal natural order, the seasons have changed: bitter frosts descend upon red roses. And Old Man Winter wears an icy crown decorated with sweet summer flower buds, like some kind of cruel prank. The spring, summer, fruitful autumn, and angry winter have all changed out of their normal clothes, and now the confused world can't tell one from the other. And all of these bad outcomes are the result of our argument. We are the cause of this.

OBERON

So fix it, then. You have the power to do that. Why would Titania want to argue with her Oberon? All I'm asking for is to have that little human boy to be my attendant.

TITANIA

Calm your little heart. I wouldn't trade the child for all of Fairyland. His mother was one of my priestesses, and we often used to gossip together in the spiced night air in India, or sit on the beach by the ocean watching merchant ships sail by on the water. We'd laugh when we saw the wind fill up the sails, as if that amorous wind had made them pregnant and big-bellied. She would imitate the ships—she was pregnant at the time with the little boy—and she would pretend to sail over the land to get me little presents, and then come back carrying gifts like she was a trading ship returning from a voyage, rich with cargo. But she was a mortal, and she died giving birth to the boy. For her sake I will not give him up.

OBERON

How long do you plan to stay in this forest?

TITANIA

Perhaps until after Theseus' wedding day. If you will join us in our circle dance and moonlight celebrations without causing trouble, then come with us. If not, stay away from me, and I'll avoid your lands.

OBERON

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

TITANIA

Not for your entire fairy kingdom. Fairies, let's go! We're going to have a real fight if I stay any longer.

OBERON

Well, then go on your way. You won't leave this grove until I've made you suffer for this insult.

[To ROBIN GOODFELLOW] My noble Puck, come here. Do you remember that time when I was sitting on a cliff and

And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
155 That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the semaid's music?

TITANIA and her followers exit.

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
160 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
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
165 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passèd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
170 It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.
And maidens call it "love-in-idleness."
Fetch me that flower. The herb I showed thee once.
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
175 Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

ROBIN exits.

DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
195 The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood.
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

205 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?

heard a mermaid riding on a dolphin's back sing with such a
sweet and harmonious voice that the rough waters of the
ocean grew calm, and some stars shot out of the sky in
order to hear her sing?


TITANIA and her followers exit.

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

On that night, I saw Cupid (even though you couldn't);
Cupid with all his arrows, flying from the cold moon to the
earth. He aimed at a beautiful virgin who sat upon a throne
in the western end of the world, and he shot his love arrow
hard enough to pierce a hundred thousand hearts. But I
saw young Cupid's fiery arrow weakened by the virginal
beams of the watery moon, and so the royal virgin was
unaffected by the arrow, and so continued on with her
virginal thoughts, without a care. But I noticed where
Cupid's arrow fell. It fell on a little western flower, which
used to be as white as milk but turned purple when it was
wounded by the arrow of love. Young women call that
flower "love-in-idleness." Bring me that flower. I showed
the plant to you once. If the juice of that flower is dropped
on the eyelids of a sleeping person, that man or woman will
then fall madly in love with the next living creature he or
she sees. Bring me this plant, and return here before
[Leviathan](#) can swim three miles.

 Oberon refers to the biblical sea monster here.

ROBIN

I'll circle the world in forty minutes.

OBERON

Once I get this juice, I'll spy on Titania until she falls asleep
and then drop some of it on her eyes. The first thing she
sees when she wakes up—whether it's a lion, bear, wolf,
bull, monkey, or an ape—she'll fall deeply and madly in love
with. And before I remove the spell from her eyes—which I
can do by using another plant—I'll make her give that little
boy to me. But who's that coming this way? I've made
myself invisible and listen in on their conversation.

ROBIN exits.

DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.

DEMETRIUS

I don't love you, so stop following me. Where are Lysander
and beautiful Hermia? I want to kill Lysander, but Hermia
kills me with her beauty. You told me they snuck into this
forest. And here I am, going crazy in the middle of the
woods because I cannot find my Hermia. Go away, get out
of here, and stop following me.

HELENA

You attract me to you, you heartless magnet! But you must
not attract iron, because my heart is as true as steel. If you
give up your power to attract me, then I won't have any
power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I invite you to follow me? Do I speak to you kindly?
Instead, don't I tell you as clearly and plainly as possible
that that I do not and cannot love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel. And, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
210 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 worse place can I beg in your love—
And yet a place of high respect with me—
215 Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
235 Run when you will, the story shall be changed.
Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase.
The dove pursues the griffin. The mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger—bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valor flies.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
245 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.

ROBIN enters.

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

HELENA exits.

OBERON

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

HELENA

And for that I love you even more. I'm your little dog. And,
Demetrius, the more you beat me, the more I'll love you.
Treat me like a dog—kick me, hit me, ignore me, try to lose
me. Just allow me to follow you, even though I'm not good
enough for you. Is there a worse position I could ask to be
held in your heart than to be treated as you would treat a
dog? And yet I would consider it a place of honor.

DEMETRIUS

Don't tempt me to hate you any more than I already do. It
makes me sick just to look at you.

HELENA

And I am sick when I'm not looking at you.

DEMETRIUS

You shouldn't risk your reputation or your virginity by
leaving the city and putting yourself into the hands of
someone who doesn't love you in the middle of the night in
a deserted place, what with all the bad ideas that occur to
people in deserted places.

HELENA

Your goodness will protect me. And, anyway, the beauty of
your face shines, so it doesn't seem like nighttime to me.
Besides, the forest doesn't seem deserted, because for me
you are the entire world. So how can anyone say I'm alone,
when the whole world is here to look at me?

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

Not even the wildest animal is as vicious as you. Run
whenever you want to. The old story of the lustful god
Apollo chasing the virginal nymph Daphne will be flipped:
Apollo will run, and Daphne will pursue him. The dove will
chase the griffin. The gentle deer will race to catch the tiger.
Speed is useless when the cowardly person is chasing the
brave one.

DEMETRIUS

I'm not going to wait around listening to your arguments.
Let me go by myself. Or if you follow me, understand that I'll
do bad things to you in the forest.

HELENA

Well, you've already done bad things to me in the church, in
the town, and in the fields. Curse you, Demetrius! Your bad
behavior is an insult to all women. We can't fight for love as
men can. We should be pursued. We weren't made to be the
pursuer.

DEMETRIUS exits.

ROBIN enters.

I'll follow you and turn this hell of mine into a heaven, by
ensuring that I am killed by the one I love so much.

HELENA exits.

OBERON

Goodbye, nymph. Before he leaves this forest, you'll be
running from him and he'll be chasing after your love.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

OBERON

- 255 I pray thee, give it me.
[He takes flower from ROBIN]
 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
 Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
 260 With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.
 There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
 Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
 And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
 Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
 265 And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
 And make her full of hateful fantasies.
[He gives ROBIN some of the flower]
 Take thou some of it and seek through this grove:
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love
 270 With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes.
 But do it when the next thing he espies
 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.
 Effect it with some care, that he may prove
 275 More fond on her than she upon her love.
 And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

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

They all exit, in opposite directions.

ROBIN

Yes, here it is.

Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

OBERON

Please, give it to me. *[He takes the flower from ROBIN.]* I know a hill where wild thyme blooms, and oxlips and violets grow. It's covered with a canopy of luscious honeysuckle, sweet musk-roses, and sweetbrier. Titania sometimes sleeps there at night among the flowers, soothed to sleep by dances and delights. In that place snakes shed their skin, producing clothes just large enough to wrap a fairy in. There I'll wet her eyes with the juice of this flower, and fill her with pathetic fantasies. *[He gives ROBIN part of the flower]* You take some of it and search the forest: there's a sweet Athenian lady who is in love with a young man who does not want her. Put some juice on his eyes, and do it in a way that ensures that the lady will be the next thing he sees. You'll recognize the man by the Athenian clothes he's wearing. Be careful when you do it, so that when it's done he loves her more than she loves him. Then meet me before the rooster's first crow at dawn.

ROBIN

Don't worry, my lord. As your servant, I'll follow your orders.

They exit, in opposite directions.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

TITANIA enters.

TITANIA

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

The FAIRIES sing.

FIRST FAIRY

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

FAIRIES

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

Shakescleare Translation

TITANIA enters.

TITANIA

Come, dance in a circle and sing a fairy song. Then go off for a while to do your work. Some of you can kill the worms plaguing the rosebuds. Others can fight with bats for their leathery wings, so we can use them to make coats for my small elves. And still others of you can keep away the loud owl that hoots in surprise when it sees us pretty fairies. Now sing me to sleep, then go off to your work and let me rest.

The FAIRIES sing.

FIRST FAIRY

[Singing]
 Snakes with spots and forked tongues;
 And prickly porcupines, don't be seen.
 Poisonous lizards, do no harm.
 Don't come near our fairy queen.

FAIRIES

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

FIRST FAIRY

*[Sings] Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near.
Worm nor snail, do no offense.*

FAIRIES

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

TITANIA falls asleep.

SECOND FAIRY

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

OBERON exits.

OBERON

- [Squeezing flower juice on TITANIA 's eyelids]*
30 *What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take.
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce or cat or bear,
Pard or boar with bristled hair,*
35 *In thy eye that shall appear,
When thou wakest, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.*

The FAIRIES exit.

OBERON enters.

LYSANDER

- Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood.
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way.
40 *We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good.
And tarry for the comfort of the day.*

LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.

HERMIA

Be it so, Lysander. Find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER

- One turf shall serve as pillow for us both.
45 *One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.*

HERMIA

Nay, good Lysander. For my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.

LYSANDER

- O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence.
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
50 *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.*
55 *For, lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.*

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride

FIRST FAIRY

[Singing]
*Spiders with your webs, stay away.
You long-legged things, begone!
Black beetles, don't come near.
Worms and snails, don't be bad.*

FAIRIES

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

TITANIA falls asleep.

SECOND FAIRY

Come on, let's go! All is well. One of us can remain alone
and stand guard.

OBERON exits.

OBERON

[Squeezing flower juice on TITANIA 's eyelids] Whatever you
first see when you wake up, take it as your true love. Love
and yearn for him. Whether he's a lynx, a wildcat, a bear, a
leopard, or a wild boar with bristly hair--when you wake, it
will look like your love in your eyes. May you wake up when
something disgusting is close by.

The FAIRIES exit.

OBERON enters.

LYSANDER

My beautiful love, wandering like this in the wood is making
you weaker and weaker. And, to speak truthfully, I'm lost. If
you think it's a good idea, let's take a rest, and wait until it's
daytime and less difficult to travel.

LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.

HERMIA

Let's do that, Lysander. Find yourself somewhere to sleep,
and I will rest my head on this little ridge.

LYSANDER

We can sleep next to each other on the same ground. We'll
have one heart, one bed, two bodies, and one vow.

HERMIA

No, good Lysander. For my sake, my dear, sleep a little
farther away. Don't lie so close to me.

LYSANDER

Oh, my sweetheart, what I was saying was totally innocent.
When lovers talk to each other, they should interpret what
the other has said in a loving way. What I meant is that my
heart is bound to yours, so we can think of them as one
heart. Our two bodies are joined together by our vows of
love, so that's why we have two bodies and one faithful
vow. So if I am lying by your side, I will not be lying to you.

HERMIA

Lysander has some skill with words. A curse upon my
manners and my pride if I was saying that you were a liar.

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep.

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Through the forest have I gone.
 70 But Athenian found I none,
 On whose eyes I might approve
 This flower's force in stirring love.
[Sees LYSANDER and HERMIA]
 Night and silence! Who is here?
 75 Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
 This is he, my master said,
 Despised the Athenian maid.
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound
 On the dank and dirty ground.
 80 Pretty soul! She durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
[Squeezes flower juice on LYSANDER's eyelids]
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe.
 85 When thou wakest, let love forbid
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.
 So awake when I am gone,
 For I must now to Oberon.

ROBIN exits.

DEMETRIUS and HELENA enter, running.

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

90 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

Oh, 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 blessed and attractive eyes.
 How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.
 If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.
 No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,
 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 spherish eye?
 105

But, my noble love, for the sake of love and propriety, sleep
 a little further away. It's proper for a well-behaved bachelor
 and girl to sleep separately. For now, stay a distance away.
 And, good night, my sweet friend. May your love for me
 never change for your whole life!

LYSANDER

I say "amen" to that beautiful prayer. And may my life end if
 my loyalty to you ever does. I'll sleep over here. May the
 god of sleep give you all his rest!

HERMIA

May half that rest be yours.

HERMIA and LYSANDER fall asleep.

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

I've gone all through the forest, but I've found no Athenian
 on whose eyes to use the love juice of this flower. *[Sees*
LYSANDER and HERMIA] Whoa! Who is this? He's wearing
 Athenian clothes. This must be the man who shunned the
 Athenian girl. And here's the girl, sleeping soundly on the
 damp, dirty ground. Pretty girl! She shouldn't lie near this
 hard-hearted, crude man. *[Squeezes flower juice on*
LYSANDER's eyelids] Villain, I throw all the power that this
 magic charm has on your eyes. When you wake up, may
 love stop you from falling back to sleep. Wake up when I'm
 gone, because now I must go to Oberon.

ROBIN exits.

DEMETRIUS and HELENA enter, running.

HELENA

Stop, Demetrius! Even if it's just to kill me.

DEMETRIUS

I demand that you get out of here, and stop following me
 like this.

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

Stay at your own risk. I'm going on my own.

DEMETRIUS exits.

HELENA

Oh, I'm out of breath from this foolish chase of love. The
 more I pray, the less good fortune I am given. Hermia is
 happy, wherever she is, because she has blessed and
 magnetic eyes. How did her eyes become so bright? Not
 from crying salty tears. If that was the cause, well, my eyes
 get washed by tears more often hers. No, no, I'm as ugly as
 a bear, because animals that see me run away in fear. So it's
 not a shock that Demetrius runs from me the way he does--
 as if I were a monster. What cruel and lying mirror made me
 compare my eyes with Hermia's bright ones? *[Sees*
LYSANDER] But who is this here? Lysander, on the ground?

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

LYSANDER

[Waking] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
110 Transparent Helena! Nature shows art
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA

115 Do not say so, Lysander. Say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia? No. I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
120 Not Hermia but Helena I love.
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason swayed,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season.
125 So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

HELENA

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

HELENA exits.

LYSANDER

She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there.
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
145 The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive,
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me.
150 And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight.

LYSANDER exits.

HERMIA

[Waking up] Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.
Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here.
155 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel pray.
Lysander!--What, removed?--Lysander, lord!--
What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word?--
160 Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? Then I well perceive you all not nigh.

Is he dead or asleep? I see no blood or injuries. Lysander,
good sir, wake up if you're alive.

LYSANDER

[Waking up] I'd not just wake up, but run through fire for you. Radiant Helena! Mother Nature shows her magic by letting me see through your body into your heart. Where is Demetrius? Oh, that name deserves to be killed by my sword!

HELENA

Don't say that, Lysander. Don't say that. Why does it matter if he loves Hermia? Lord, what does it matter? Hermia still loves you. So be happy.

LYSANDER

Happy with Hermia? No. I regret all that boring time I spent with her. It's not Hermia I love. It's Helena. Who wouldn't choose a dove over a crow? What a man wants is influenced by his reason, and reason makes it obvious that you are better than Hermia. Just as fruits and vegetables don't ripen until the right season, I--being young--did not until now have a fully mature sense of reason. Now, with fully developed taste and judgment, my reason has more control over my desires. And it's leading me to look into your eyes, where I find the richest collection of love stories ever written.

HELENA

Why is it my destiny to always be made fun of? What have I done to you to deserve this kind of mockery? Isn't it enough, isn't it enough, young man, that I never have and never will get a kind look from Demetrius? Must you also make fun of my defectiveness? Honestly, you are being cruel to woo me so disdainfully, without meaning it. So goodbye, though I have to say that I thought you were a much kinder and nobler person. Oh, how terrible that a lady who's been rejected by one man would then be mocked for that rejection by another man!

HELENA exits.

LYSANDER

She doesn't see Hermia. Hermia, keep sleeping over there, and never come near me again! Eating too many sweet things makes people sick to their stomachs, and the mistakes that people make are always hated most by the one who made them. Hermia, you're my sweet and my mistake, so I hate you more than anyone. Now, I'll use all my love and energy to honor Helen, and be her loyal man.

LYSANDER exits.

HERMIA

[Waking up] Lysander, help me! Help me! Do your best: try to get this slithering snake off of my chest. Oh goodness! What an awful dream I just had. Lysander, look at how I'm shaking with fear! I thought a serpent was eating up my heart, and you just sat there, watching and smiling. Lysander! What, are you gone? Lysander, my lord! What, is he so far away that he can't hear me? Not a sound, not a word in reply? Alas, where are you? Say something if you can hear me. Please, say something! Anything! I'm so afraid that I'm almost fainting. No? Nothing? Then I guess you are

Either death or you I'll find immediately.

HERMIA exits

not nearby. I'll either find you right away, or else I'll die.

HERMIA exits.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

While TITANIA sleeps onstage, BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING enter.

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Peter Quince.

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

15 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.
20 This will put them out of fear.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

25 Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves. To bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing. For there is not a more fearful wildfowl
30

Shakescleare Translation

While TITANIA sleeps onstage, BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING enter.

BOTTOM

Are we all here?

QUINCE

Right on time. And this is a great place for us to rehearse. This clearing will be the stage, and this hawthorn bush will be our dressing room. We'll rehearse the play exactly the same way that we'll perform it for the duke.

BOTTOM

Peter Quince.

QUINCE

What is it, my fine friend Bottom?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please the audience. First of all, Pyramus has to take out a sword and use it to kill himself, which the women in the audience won't be able to stand. What do you think about that?

SNOUT

By the Virgin Mary, that's a serious problem.

STARVELING

I think, in the end, we'll have to leave out all the killing.

BOTTOM

Not at all! I've got an idea that will solve the problem. Write, as I describe, a prologue that explains to the audience that we won't actually hurt anyone with our swords, and that Pyramus isn't really killed. And to make everyone even more comfortable, explain that that while I look like Pyramus I'm not actually him, I'm really Bottom the weaver. That will stop the audience from being afraid.

QUINCE

Good. We'll perform that prologue, and we'll write it in traditional ballad form, with alternating lines of eight- and six-syllables.

BOTTOM

No, add two more. Write it with alternating lines of eight and eight syllables.

SNOUT

Won't the women be frightened by the lion?

STARVELING

I'm very worried about that.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you should all think about this: bringing in—God protect us!—a lion in front of women is really an awful thing

than your lion living. And we ought to look to 't.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM

Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck. And he himself must speak through, saying thus—or to the same defect—"Ladies," or
 35 "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
 40 let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

45 Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

[Takes out a book] Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM

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.
 50

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
 55 and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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


ROBIN enters unseen.


to do. Because there's not a more frightening wild bird living than the lion. We should remember that.

SNOUT

So we'll have another prologue that explains he's not actually a lion.

BOTTOM

No, you should announce to the audience his actual name, and make it so that half of his face is visible through the lion costume. And he himself should say something like the following, or something else to the same defect :
 "Ladies," or "Beautiful ladies," "I would ask you" or "I would request you" or "I would beg you" "not to fear, not to tremble, because I would defend your lives by giving up my own. If you thought I came here as a real lion, it would endanger my life. No, I am no lion. I am a man, just like other men." And at that point he should say his name, and tell them plainly that he's Snug the carpenter.

 Bottom means "effect" when he says defect.

QUINCE

Good, that's what we'll do. But there are two more problems we have to solve. How are we going to bring moonlight into the room where we perform? Because, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet in the moonlight.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

A calendar; we need a calendar! Look in an almanac. Look up when the moon shines, look up when the moon shines!



QUINCE


[He takes out and consults a book] Yes, the moon will shine that night.


BOTTOM

Well then, you could leave a window open in the great room where we'll be performing, and the moon will shine in through the window.

QUINCE

Yes, or else someone will have to come in carrying a bundle of sticks  and a lantern and say he's come to disfigure , or represent, the character of Moonshine. Then there's another problem: we need to have a wall in the great room. Because Pyramus and Thisbe talked to each other through a little hole in a wall, as the story goes.

 English peasants in Shakespeare's time believed that the man in the moon carried a bundle of sticks on his back.

 Quince incorrectly uses the word "disfigure" when he means to say "figure."

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

Someone has to play the part of Wall. For a costume, he can be covered in some plaster or clay with pebbles stuck to him to show that he's a wall. Then he can hold his fingers like this *[He holds up his hand with two fingers split slightly apart]*, and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper to each other through that crack.

QUINCE

If we do that, everything will be fine. Now sit down everyone and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you start. When you've said your lines, go behind that bush as if it were a curtain offstage. Everyone else, do the same according to whether you should be on or offstage.

ROBIN enters, unseen by the other characters onstage.

ROBIN

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

QUINCE

70 Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM

[As PYRAMUS] Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors
sweet—

QUINCE

“Odors,” “odors.”

BOTTOM

[As PYRAMUS]
75 —odors savors sweet,
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear.

BOTTOM exits.

ROBIN

[Aside] A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here.

FLUTE

80 Must I speak now?

ROBIN exits.

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

BOTTOM

95 *[As PYRAMUS]* If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.

BOTTOM enters, with an ass' head instead of his own. ROBIN also enters.

QUINCE

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

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

ROBIN

[To himself] Who are these country bumpkins making so
much noise so close to the fairy queen's bed? What? Are
they about to perform a play? I'll be the audience. And I'll
act in it, too, if I see a reason to.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

[As PYRAMUS] Thisbe, flowers with odious smelling sweet—

QUINCE

“Odors,” “odors.”

BOTTOM

[As PYRAMUS] —odors smelling sweet, are like your breath,
my dearest Thisbe dear. But listen, a voice! Wait here for a
moment, and I'll be back soon!

BOTTOM exits.

ROBIN

[To himself] A stranger Pyramus has never been performed
anywhere.

FLUTE

Should I talk now?

ROBIN exits.

QUINCE

Yes, you should. You're supposed to show that you think
that Pyramus just went to check on a noise he heard and
will soon come back.

FLUTE

[As THISBE] My shining Pyramus, you are as white as a lily,
the color of a red rose on a splendid rosebush, a lively
young man and also a lovely Jew, as trustworthy as a horse
that never gets tired. I'll meet you, Pyramus, at Ninny's
grave.

QUINCE

That's “Ninus' grave,” man. And also, don't say that part yet,
because you're supposed to say it to Pyramus. You just said
all your lines at once, cues and all. Enter, Pyramus. You
missed your cue. It's “never gets tired.”

FLUTE

Oh! *[As THISBE]* As trustworthy as a horse that never gets
tired.

BOTTOM

[As PYRAMUS] If I were handsome, my lovely Thisbe, I
would still be entirely yours.

BOTTOM enters, with a donkey's head instead of his own. ROBIN also enters.

QUINCE

Oh! A monster! How strange! We're being haunted. Pray,
gentlemen! Run, gentlemen! Help!

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

ROBIN

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

ROBIN exits.

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT enters.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT exits. QUINCE enters.

QUINCE

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

QUINCE exits.

BOTTOM

I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me, to
fright me if they could. But I will not stir from this
place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here
and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.
115 *[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

120 *[Waking]* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM

[Sings]
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plainsong cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
125 And dares not answer "Nay"—
For indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird?
Who would give a bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo"
never so?

TITANIA

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
130 Mine ear is much enamored of thy note.
So is mine eye entrallèd 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,
135 I can gleek upon occasion.

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll lead you all in circles, through bogs,
through bushes, through hedges, and through thorns.
Sometimes I'll take the shape of a horse, sometimes a dog
or a pig or a headless bear. Sometimes I'll be A fire! And I'll
neigh like a horse, bark like a dog, grunt like a pig, growl
like a bear, and burn like a fire wherever you run.

ROBIN exits.

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT enters.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

What do you think I have on my head? You see something
you've imagined with your own asinine head, right?

SNOUT exits. QUINCE enters.

QUINCE

God bless you, Bottom, God bless you. You've been
transformed.

QUINCE exits.

BOTTOM

I see what joke they're trying to pull. They want to make an
ass of me, to scare me if they can. But I won't move from
this spot, whatever they do. I'll walk back and forth and
sing a song so that they'll hear me and know I'm not afraid.
[Singing]
The blackbird, so black in color
With an orange-and-tan beak,
The thrush with its beautiful voice,
The wren with its high piping voice—

TITANIA

[Waking up] What angel wakes me from my bed of flowers?

BOTTOM


[Singing]
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The gray cuckoo with his unchanging song
Whose voice so many men hear
But don't dare say no to it—
Indeed, who would try to win an argument with a stupid
bird?
Who would say that a bird was lying, now matter how many
times the bird called out that his wife was cheating on
him?

TITANIA

Noble human, I beg you, sing again. My ears cannot get
enough of your voice, and my eyes are entranced by your
looks. Though this is the first time I have ever seen you, the
power of your beauty compels me to swear that I love you.

BOTTOM

I don't think you should have a good reason to love me. And
yet, to be honest, reason and love are seldom found
together these days. It's a shame that some mutual friend
of theirs doesn't introduce them. Ha, I've been known to
tell a joke from time to time.

 The similarity of the words
"cuckoo," seen in the original text, and
"cuckold" led to common jokes about
cuckoos and men with unfaithful
wives.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.
Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate.

145 The summer still doth tend upon my state.
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.
150 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

MOTH

155 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.
160 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes
165 To have my love to bed and to arise.
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

COBWEB

170 Hail.

MOTH

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

175 Cobweb.

TITANIA

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

That's not true, either. But if I were wise enough to get out
of this forest, I'd have all the wisdom I needed.

TITANIA

Please don't wish that you could leave this forest. You will
stay here whether you want to or not. I'm not some
ordinary fairy. The summer itself serves me as one of my
followers. And I love you. So come with me. I'll give you
fairies to serve you, and they'll bring you jewels from the
ocean depths, and sing to you as you sleep on a bed of
pressed flowers. And I'll remove you from your physical
body, so you will be a spirit of the air. Peaseblossom,
Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, come here!

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

COBWEB

Me too.

MOTH

Me too.

MUSTARDSEED

Me too.

ALL

Where should we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and considerate to this gentleman. Follow where he
walks. Run and jump joyfully where he can watch you. Feed
him apricots and blackberries, along with purple grapes,
green figs, and mulberries. Steal honey from the
bumblebees, and make candles from beeswax taken from
the bees' legs. Then light the candles with the fire from
glowworms' eyes so that my love will have light when he
goes to bed and wakes up. Pluck the wings from colorful
butterflies, then use them to fan moonbeams away from his
sleeping eyes. Fairies, bow and curtsy to him.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hello, mortal!

COBWEB

Hello!

MOTH

Hello!

MUSTARDSEED

Hello!

BOTTOM

I beg your pardon, sirs, very much. Will you tell me your
names, sirs?

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

180 Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

185 Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

They exit.

BOTTOM

I would like to get to know you better, good Mister Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I'll use you as a bandage. And your name, good sir?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

Good Mr. Mustardseed, I know how you have patiently suffered, and how those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have caused so many of your family members to get eaten. I promise you that many of your mustard relatives have made my eyes water before now. I'd like to get to know you better, good Mr. Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Serve him well, and lead him to the place I sleep. I think the moon looks sad, and when she cries, every little flower cries, lamenting the fact that they are forced to remain chaste. Make my lover stay quiet. Bring him to me in silence.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

The Fairy King OBERON enters.

OBERON

I wonder if Titania be awaked. Then, what it was that next came in her eye, Which she must dote on in extremity.

ROBIN enters.

Here comes my messenger.

5 How now, mad spirit? What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

ROBIN

10 My mistress with a monster is in love. Near to her close and consecrated bower, While she was in her dull and sleeping hour, A crew of patches, rude mechanicals That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, Were met together to rehearse a play Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day. The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort, Who Pyramus presented in their sport, Forsook his scene and entered in a brake, When I did him at this advantage take, An ass's nolle I fixèd on his head. Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd, 15 And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy, As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, Or russet-pated coughs, many in sort, Rising and cawing at the gun's report,

Shakescleare Translation

The Fairy King OBERON enters.

OBERON

I wonder if Titania is awake. And, if she is, I wonder what thing she saw first that she must love completely now.

ROBIN enters.

Here comes my messenger. What's going on, crazy spirit? What fun have you had tonight around this haunted forest?

ROBIN

My mistress is in love with a monster. While she was sleeping nearby in her secret bed beneath a canopy of flowers, there came a bunch of fools--ignorant manual workers who earn their money working in shops in Athens. They met to rehearse a play they hope to perform on Theseus' wedding day. The silliest blockhead of that whole dumb group, who played Pyramus in their play, finished his scene and went offstage to sit in the bushes. While he sat there I played a prank on him, and stuck an ass' head on him. Soon it was time for him to respond to his Thisbe, and he came out of the bushes. When they saw him, his friends ran away, like wild geese that spot an approaching hunter, or like a flock of red-headed jackdaws rising, cawing, and madly flying across the sky at the sound of a gunshot. When one of the friends heard my footsteps, he fell head over heels, shouted "Murder!" and called for help from Athens. Their fear was so strong that they lost their common sense,

Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
 25 So at his sight away his fellows fly;
 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls.
 He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
 30 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
 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.
 35 When in that moment so it came to pass,
 Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.

OBERON

[Aside to ROBIN] Stand close. This is the same
 Athenian.

ROBIN

45 *[Aside to OBERON]* This is the woman, but not this the
 man.

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
 Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA

Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse.
 50 For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
 If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
 Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
 And kill me too.
 The sun was not so true unto the day
 55 As he to me. Would he have stolen away
 From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
 This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon
 May through the center creep and so displease
 Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.
 60 It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.
 So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

So should the murdered look, and so should I,
 Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.
 Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
 65 As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou drivest me past the bounds
 70 Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
 Henceforth be never numbered among men!
 Oh, once tell true, tell true even for my sake—

and began to think that inanimate objects were trying to
 get them, such as thorns that caught at their clothing,
 sleeves, and hats. I led them away in their frightened
 confusion, and left sweet, transformed Pyramus there. At
 that moment, it just so happened that Titania woke up and
 fell in love with an ass.

OBERON

This has turned out even better than I could have planned.
 But have you put the love juice on the eyes of that
 Athenian, as I told you to?

ROBIN

I did it while he was sleeping, so that task is completed too.
 And the Athenian woman was sleeping near him. So, when
 he woke up, he certainly must have seen her.

DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.

OBERON

[To ROBIN so only he can hear] Be quiet. This is the
 Athenian we were talking about.

ROBIN

[To OBERON so only he can hear] That's the woman I saw,
 but that is not the man.

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why be so mean to someone who loves you so much?
 You should aim such cruel language only at your worst
 enemy.

HERMIA

I'm scolding you at the moment, but I should be treating
 you even worse than that. I'm frightened that you've given
 me good reason to curse you. If you killed Lysander while
 he was sleeping, then you're already knee-deep in blood,
 and you should just plunge in deeper and kill me too. He is
 more faithful to me than the sun is to the day. Would he
 have snuck away from me while I was asleep? I'll only
 believe that's true when a hole appears through the center
 of the Earth, and the moon sneaks through it to surprise her
 brother, the sun, on the other side of the world. The only
 possibility is that you murdered him. A murderer should
 look like you do--so pale and grim.

DEMETRIUS

That's how someone who's been murdered should look.
 And that's how I should look, too, because you've pierced
 me through the heart with your cruelty. And yet you, the
 murderer, look as bright and shining as the planet Venus,
 glimmering in its orbit in the sky.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

Get away, you dog! Go away, you mutt! You've driven me
 past what any woman could endure. Have you killed him,
 then? From now on you should not even be thought of as a
 human being. Oh, tell the truth for once. Tell the truth, for

Durst thou have looked upon him being awake,
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
75 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it, for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood.
80 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so.
85 See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

There is no following her in this fierce vein.
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe,
90 Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.
[Lies down and sleeps]

OBERON

[To ROBIN] What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken
quite,
95 And laid the love juice on some true love's sight.
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

100 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.
105 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.

ROBIN exits.

OBERON

[Squeezing flower juice into DEMETRIUS's eyes]
Flower of this purple dye,
110 Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
115 When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

ROBIN enters.

my sake. You wouldn't have even dared to look at him when he was awake, but then you murdered him while he was sleeping? Oh, how brave of you! A snake, a poisonous snake, would do it just the same. And in fact a snake did do it, because no snake has ever had a more forked, lying tongue than you have, you serpent.

DEMETRIUS

You're working yourself into a rage out of a misunderstanding. I'm not guilty of killing Lysander. As far as I know, he's not dead.

HERMIA

I beg you, then: tell me he's all right.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

The privilege of never seeing me again. Now I'm going to depart from your presence, which I hate. I hope you never see me again, whether he's dead or not.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

There's no point in following her when she's so angry. So, for a while I'll just stay here. Sadness becomes harder to bear when it's combined with a lack of sleep. Now I'll try to lighten my sadness by getting a little sleep. *[He lies down and falls asleep]*

OBERON

[To ROBIN] What have you done? You've made a complete mistake and put the love-juice on someone who was truly in love. Because of your mistake someone's true love has been turned false, instead of someone's false love being turned into a true love.


ROBIN

That's the fate of love. For every man who's faithful to his love, a million others cancel out each oath of love they make with a new one, over and over again.

OBERON

Race all through the forest, moving faster than the wind, and find Helena of Athens. She's lovesick, and her face is pale because of all of her sighing, which is bad for the blood. Use some magic illusion to bring her here, and I'll put the love juice on his eyes for when she arrives.

ROBIN


I'm going, I'm going. See how I go? Faster than an arrow from a Tartar's bow .

ROBIN exits.

OBERON

[Squeezing flower juice on DEMETRIUS's eyelids] Purple flower, hit by Cupid's arrow, sink into the pupils of his eyes. When he sees the girl he should love, make her seem to him as bright as Venus shining in the sky. When you wake up, if she's nearby, beg her to answer your love with love.

ROBIN enters.

 In Shakespeare's day, Tartars were renowned for their skill at archery.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

LYSANDER and HELENA enter.

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
130 Scorn and derision never come in tears.
Look, when I vow, I weep. And vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
155 You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so
160 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,
165 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort

ROBIN

Leader of fairies, Helena is coming. So, too, is the young man whom I mistook for this one sleeping here, and he's begging her to love him. Should we watch this absurd show? Lord, mortals are such fools!

OBERON

Stand out of the way. The noise they're making is going to wake up Demetrius.

ROBIN

Then both of them will pursue one girl at the same time. Watching that will be unparalleled entertainment. Ridiculous things are the things I like best.

LYSANDER and HELENA enter.

LYSANDER

Why would you think that I'm making fun of you when I tell you of my love for you? Mockery is never accompanied by tears. Look, I cry when I swear my love for you. And when vows are made by someone who is crying, that shows how true and since the vow is. How can you think I am mocking you, when my tears are like a badge of honesty?

HELENA

You display your sneaky ways more and more clearly. What a nasty fight it will be, when one "true" vow invalidates another "true" vow you made earlier. These promises you're making to me belong to Hermia. Are you going to just jilt her? If you weigh the vows you've made to Hermia against the vows you made to me, they'll cancel each other out, and weigh nothing. They'll be as weightless as lies.

LYSANDER

I had no true power of reason when I swore those vows to her.

HELENA

In my opinion, you don't have any reason now, as you are breaking those vows.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

[Waking up] Oh, Helena, goddess! Divine, perfect nymph! My love, to what can I compare your eyes? Crystal is like mud compared to them. Oh, your lips look like ripe, tempting cherries just touching together! The pure white snow on the tops of the Taurus mountains, fluffed by winds from the east, look as black as a crow in comparison to the whiteness of your hands. Oh, let me kiss your pure white hand in a pledge of happiness!

HELENA

Oh cruelty! Oh hell! I see you've all joined together to humiliate me for your own enjoyment. If you were civilized or had good manners, you wouldn't hurt me this way. Can't you just hate me, as I know you do? Do you have to team up to mock me too? If you were true men, as you pretend to be, you wouldn't treat a noble woman this way--making vows and promises and praising my beauty in such over-the-top ways when I know you both hate me in your hearts. You're both competing for Hermia's love, and now you're competing to see who can mock me more. What an impressive feat, what a manly thing to do, to put tears in a poor girl's eyes through your mockery! No truly noble person would offend an innocent girl like this, or torture a poor soul's patience just so you can have some fun.

Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

170 You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.
For you love Hermia. This you know I know.
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part.
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

HELENA

175 Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

180 Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen is it home returned,
There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

185 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.
190 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

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

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

200 Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
205 To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—oh, is it all forgot?
210 All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
215

LYSANDER

You're being mean, Demetrius. Don't be. You love Hermia.
You know I know it. And here, with everyone's best interests
in mind, and with all my heart, I give up all my claim to
Hermia's love and give it to you. Now you give up your claim
to Helena's love and give it to me, because I love her, and
will continue to love her, until I die.

HELENA

No one has ever put in so much pointless effort just to make
fun of someone.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep your Hermia. I'm not interested. If I ever
loved her, all that love is now gone. My heart visited her as if
it was on a little journey, but how my heart has returned
home to Helena and it will remain with her.

LYSANDER

Helena, it's not true.

DEMETRIUS

Don't insult a true love you don't know anything about, or
else you risk paying a terrible price. Look, your love is
coming. Over there is the one you love.

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

While the darkness of night makes eyes work less well, it
helps ears to work better. While it blocks the ability to see, it
more than makes up for that by increasing the ability to
hear. My eyes couldn't find you, Lysander. But thankfully my
ears heard your voice. Why did you so cruelly leave me
alone?

LYSANDER

Why should I stay, when love pushed me to go?

HERMIA

What love could make you move from my side?

LYSANDER

I could not wait because of my love for beautiful Helena,
who shines in the night more brightly than all those fiery
orbs and stars. Why are you looking for me? Wasn't it
obvious that I left you because of the hatred I feel toward
you?

HERMIA

You don't believe what you're saying. It can't be.

HELENA

So, she's a part of your little gang! Now I see that all three of
them have joined together to create this game of lies in
order to hurt me. Hurtful Hermia! Ungrateful girl! Have you
conspired and schemed to torment me with this awful
mockery? Have you forgotten about all the confidential
conversations we've shared, the vows of sisterhood we
made, the hours we spent together while scolding time for
moving so fast and forcing us apart? Our schoolgirl
friendship, our childhood innocence? Hermia, we used to
sit together like two gods of craftsmanship, and sew one
flower with our two needles, working on the same single
piece of cloth. We would sit on the same cushion, singing
the same song in perfect tune, as if our hands, our sides,
our voices and our minds were joined as one. We grew up
together, like two cherries—which seem to be separate but

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—

220 Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
225 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

I am amazèd at your passionate words.
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

230 Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius—
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot—
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
235 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
240 What though I be not so in grace as you—
So hung upon with love, so fortunate—
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

245 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,
250 You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

255 Oh, excellent!

HERMIA

[To LYSANDER]
Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

260 Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak
prayers.
Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.
I swear by that which I will lose for thee
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

265 I say I love thee more than he can do.

are also joined together. Two loving cherries sharing one stem. That's just how it was with us, who seemed to have two bodies but one heart, like doubled coats of arms that belong separately to a husband and wife who also share a single crest. Are you really going to rip apart our old friendship by joining these men to humiliate your poor friend? It's not friendly, and it's not ladylike. All women, not just me, will scold you for acting this way, even though I'm the only one who's getting hurt.

HERMIA

I'm shocked by your angry words. I don't hate you. It seems like you hate me.

HELENA

Didn't you get Lysander to mock me by following me around, praising my eyes and face? And didn't you make your other love, Demetrius—who just before kicked me with his foot—to call me a goddess, a nymph, and some divine, rare, precious angel? Why would he say that to a girl he hates? And why does Lysander deny that he loves you, when he loves you all the way down to his very soul, and offer me his affection, unless you told him to and he agreed to it? Why do you care that I'm not as blessed as you are—so surrounded by love, so fortunate—and am instead completely miserable, my love unreturned? You should pity me for it, not despise me.

HERMIA

I don't understand what you're saying.

HELENA

Yes, do that. Keep it up, pretend to be serious, but then make faces at me behind my back, wink at each other, and keep the joke going. You're doing such a good job with this prank it will go down in history. If you had any compassion, refinement, or manners, you wouldn't pretend to fight over me. But goodbye. It's partly my own fault (given how I've acted), but I can fix it by leaving, or dying.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

Oh, nice one!

HERMIA

[To LYSANDER] My love, don't mock her like that.

DEMETRIUS

[To LYSANDER] If Hermia's pleas don't get you to stop, I can force you to.

LYSANDER

You can't force me to stop any more than Hermia can plead for me to. Your threats aren't any stronger than her weak begging. Helena, I love you. On my life, I swear I do. I swear on my life, which I will risk by fighting this man to prove he's lying when he says that I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

HERMIA holds LYSANDER back.

LYSANDER

[To HERMIA] Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS

270 No, no. He'll
Seem to break loose. 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

275 Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

280 Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

285 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?

290 I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.
Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

295 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.

LYSANDER

If that's what you say, draw your sword and prove it.

DEMETRIUS


You're on. Let's do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, what does all this mean?

HERMIA holds LYSANDER back.

LYSANDER

[To HERMIA] Go away, you African !

DEMETRIUS

No, no. He's just pretending like he's trying to break loose.

[To LYSANDER] Act like you're going to follow me, but then
you won't. You're a coward. Go away!

LYSANDER

[To HERMIA] Let go of me, you cat, you clinging burr. Let go
of me, vile thing, or I'll shake you off of me like a snake.

HERMIA

Why have you become so rude? What's changed you, my
sweet love?

LYSANDER

Your love? Get away from me, you dark-skinned Tartar! Get
away, you disgusting poison. You hated potion, get away!

HERMIA

Are you joking?

HELENA

Yes, of course he is, and so are you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I'll honor what I said and fight you.

DEMETRIUS

I wish I had that in writing, because it seems to me that
Hermia's rather weak arms somehow seem to be holding
you back. I don't trust your word that you actually want to
fight.

LYSANDER


What? Should I hurt Hermia, hit her, kill her? Although I hate
her, I'm not going to harm her.

HERMIA

What, do you think you could hurt me any more than by
saying you hate me? Hate me? Why? What's happened, my
love? Am I not Hermia? Are you not Lysander? I'm as
beautiful now as I was just before. You loved me last night.
But last night you left me. So—God forbid—did you actually
leave me?

LYSANDER

Yes, I swear on my life that I did, and I never wanted to see
you again. So give up your hopes, your questions, and your
doubts. You can be sure that there's nothing more true than
this: it's not a joke that I hate you and love Helena.

 Here Lysander draws attention to Hermia's darker complexion as a brunette, compared to Helena's fair complexion. He continues to do so by comparing Hermia to a "Tartar" a few lines down.

HERMIA

O me! *[To HELENA]* You juggler! You canker-blossom!
 300 You thief of love! What, have you come by night
 And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!
 Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
 No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
 305 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
 Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
 Now I perceive that she hath made compare
 Between our statures. She hath urged her height,
 310 And with her personage, her tall personage,
 Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
 And are you grown so high in his esteem
 Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
 How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak.
 315 How low am I? I am not yet so low
 But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

[To LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS]
 I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
 Let her not hurt me. I was never cursed.
 320 I have no gift at all in shrewishness.
 I am a right maid for my cowardice.
 Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
 Because she is something lower than myself,
 That I can match her.

HERMIA

325 "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,
 330 I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
 He followed you. For love I followed him.
 But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
 To strike me, spurn me—nay, to kill me too.
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 335 To Athens will I bear my folly back
 And follow you no further. Let me go.
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA

340 What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

Oh no!

[To HELENA] You trickster, you little worm, feasting on
 flower buds! You thief of love! What, did you sneak in at
 night and steal my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Really, honestly! Have you no modesty, no decency, not
 even a little bit of shame? What, do you want to make me
 mad enough that I'll respond to you, despite my usual
 gentleness? You disgust me! You liar, you doll!

HERMIA

"Doll?" Why do you say that? Ah, I see where you're taking
 this. She's comparing our difference in height. She's shown
 off how tall she is, and used her body--her tall body, her
 height--to win him over. Does he admire you so highly
 because I'm so small and short? So how short am I, you
 painted pole? Tell me. How short am I? I'm not so short that
 I can't reach up to gouge your eyes out with my fingernails.

HELENA

[To LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS] I beg you--even though
 you're making fun of me, gentlemen--don't let her hurt me.
 I've never been good at trading insults. I'm not mean like
 her. I'm shy, like a girl should be. Don't let her hit me. You
 might be thinking that I could overpower her because she is
 somewhat shorter than me.

HERMIA

"Shorter?" See, there it is again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, please don't be so angry with me. Hermia, I
 always loved you, and kept your secrets confidential. I
 never did anything to hurt you--other than, out of love for
 Demetrius, telling him about your plan to sneak into this
 forest. He followed you. And I followed him, out of love. But
 he shouted at me to go away and threatened to hit me, kick
 me--and to kill me too. And now, so that you'll let me go
 without attacking me further, I'll carry my foolishness back
 with me to Athens and won't follow you anymore. Let me
 go. You see how naïve and foolish I can be.

HERMIA

So, get going! Who's stopping you?

HELENA

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

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

No, sir, she won't, even if you take Hermia's side.

HELENA

Oh, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
 345 She was a vixen when she went to school.
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "low" and "little"!
 Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
 Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

350 [To *HERMIA*] Get you gone, you dwarf,
 You minims of hindering knotgrass made,
 You bead, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious
 In her behalf that scorns your services.
 355 Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.
 Take not her part. For if thou dost intend
 Never so little show of love to her,
 Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HELENA exits.

HERMIA

I am amazed and know not what to say.

HERMIA exits.

OBERON

370 [To *ROBIN*] This is thy negligence. Still thou
 mistakest,
 Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

380 Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight.
 Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night.
 The starry welkin cover thou anon
 With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
 And lead these testy rivals so astray
 385 As one come not within another's way.
 Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
 Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.

HELENA

Oh, when she's angry, she gets vicious and mean. She was a
 hellcat when we were in school. And though she's little,
 she's fierce.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing but "short" and "little!" Why do you
 allow her to mock me like this? Let me at her!

LYSANDER

[To *HERMIA*] Get out of here, you dwarf, you tiny little
 creature made of knotgrass weed, you tiny bead, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

You're trying too hard to help a woman who doesn't want
 anything from you. Leave Helena alone. Don't talk about
 her. Don't try to help her. And if you plan on showing so
 little love to Hermia, you'll pay for it.

LYSANDER

Hermia's not holding me anymore. So follow me, if you
 dare, to find out through a duel which of us has more right
 to Helena.

DEMETRIUS

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

DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.

HERMIA

You, mistress, are the cause of all this fighting. No, don't
 walk away from me!

HELENA

I don't trust you. And I'm not going to stay anywhere near
 you. You may have faster hands in a fight than I do, but I can
 run away faster because my legs are longer.

HELENA exits.

HERMIA

I'm shocked and don't know what to say.

HERMIA exits.

OBERON

[To *ROBIN*] This is your fault. You continually make
 mistakes, or else you're making trouble on purpose.

ROBIN

Believe me, King of Shadows--it was a mistake. Didn't you
 tell me that I'd recognize the man by the Athenian clothes
 he was wearing? I can't be blamed for what I've done—I put
 the love juice on an Athenian's eyes. And so far I'm glad it
 worked out this way, as I find all this uproar entertaining.

OBERON

You can see that these lovers are looking for a place to fight.
 Therefore, rush, Robin, and make the night dark and
 cloudy. As quickly as possible, cover the starry sky with a
 low fog as dark as hell, and lead around these manic rivals
 so that they get so lost that they won't run into each other.
 Imitate Lysander's voice to get Demetrius all riled up with
 insults. Then rage a bit in Demetrius' voice. And in that way
 you'll lead them away from each other until tiredness

And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.
 And from each other look thou lead them thus,
 390 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
 With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
[Gives ROBIN another flower]
 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property
 395 To take from thence all error with his might
 And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
 When they next wake, all this derision
 Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.
 And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
 400 With league whose date till death shall never end.
 Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
 I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy.
 And then I will her charmèd eye release
 From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

*OBERON exits.***ROBIN**

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

*LYSANDER enters.***LYSANDER**

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

ROBIN*[As DEMETRIUS]*

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

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

[As DEMETRIUS] Follow me then
 To plainer ground.

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER exits. DEMETRIUS enters.

creeps over them with its heavy legs and bat-like wings that they fall dead asleep.*[He gives a different flower to ROBIN]*
 Then crush this flower over Lysander's eyes, because its juice has the ability to remove from his eyes the mistaken love he was given by the first love juice--and to make his eyes see the way he would normally. When they wake, all this mockery and fighting will seem like a dream or an insignificant hallucination. Then the lovers will return to Athens, bound together by love until they die. While you're working on this job I've given you, I'll go visit Titania and ask her for the Indian boy. And then I'll reverse the spell on her eyes and she will stop loving that monster. Then everything will be at peace.

ROBIN

My fairy lord, all this must be done quickly. The dragons that pull the night's chariot are speeding through the sky. In the distance the morning star, which appears just before the dawn, is shining, and all the ghosts that wander in the night are marching back to their graveyards. The damned souls of all those who committed [suicide](#), buried at crossroads or at the bottom of a river, have already returned to their wormy graves. They fear that day will expose their shame, and so they avoid all sunlight and remain forever in darkest night.

OBERON

But we're a different sort of spirit. I've often enjoyed the pleasures of the morning, and like a forest ranger, wander the woods until in the East the sun rises, all fiery red--spreading its rays over the ocean and turning the salty green water to gold. But anyway, hurry. Don't delay. We can get all this done before it's day.

*OBERON exits.***ROBIN**

Here and there, here and there,
 I will lead them here and there.
 I am feared in the country and in town.
 Goblin, lead them here and there.
 Here comes one of them.

*LYSANDER enters.***LYSANDER**

Where are you, arrogant Demetrius? Say something.

ROBIN

[In DEMETRIUS' voice] I'm over here, you villain. I have my sword out and am ready to fight. Where are you?

LYSANDER

I'll find you in a moment.


ROBIN

[In DEMETRIUS' voice] Then follow me to flatter ground,
 which will be better for fighting.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, say something! You quitter, you coward, have you run away? Say something! Are you in some bush? Where are you hiding?

LYSANDER exits. DEMETRIUS enters.

 In Shakespeare's day, people who committed suicide were not allowed a Christian burial, and thus were interred in the places Robin mentions.

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN

[As LYSANDER] Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood
445 here.

DEMETRIUS and ROBIN exit.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,
450 That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me.
[Lies down]
Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
455 I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.
[Sleeps]

ROBIN and DEMETRIUS enter.

ROBIN

[As LYSANDER]
Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?

DEMETRIUS

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

ROBIN

[As LYSANDER] Come hither. I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear
465 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.
[Lies down and sleeps]

HELENA enters.

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,
475 Steal me awhile from mine own company.
[Lies down and sleeps]

ROBIN

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

ROBIN

[In LYSANDER's voice] You coward! Are you bragging to the stars and telling the bushes that you're looking for a fight, but then you won't actually come find me? Come here, coward! Come here, you child! I'll whip you with a stick. You're such a coward, anyone who tries to fight you with a sword would be disgraced.

DEMETRIUS

Hey, are you there?

ROBIN

[In LYSANDER's voice] Follow my voice. This isn't a good place to test our manhood in a fight.

DEMETRIUS and ROBIN exit.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

He walks ahead of me and keeps daring me to follow him. But when I get to the spot where he's calling from, he's not there. This scoundrel is much quicker than I am. I chased him as fast as I could, but he ran away from me even faster, and now I'm lost in this dark part of the forest with uneven ground. I'll rest here. *[He lies down]* May the comfort of daytime arrive soon! Because as soon as I see the gray light of morning, I'll find Demetrius and get my revenge for this insult. *[He falls asleep]*

ROBIN and DEMETRIUS enter.

ROBIN

[In LYSANDER's voice] Ha, ha, ha! Coward, why aren't you coming?

DEMETRIUS

Wait for me, if you dare! You keep running away from me, dashing all over the place, but you don't dare to stand and face me eye to eye. Where are you now?

ROBIN

[In LYSANDER's voice] Come this way. I'm over here.

DEMETRIUS

No, you're just mocking me. You'll pay dearly for this if I ever see your face in the daylight. Now run wherever you want. I'm so tired I need to lie down and sleep on this cold ground. But expect me to come find you by the dawn. *[He lies down and falls asleep]*

HELENA enters.

HELENA

Oh, exhausting, long, and boring night, please end already! You reassuring dawn, start shining in the east, so I can go back to Athens in the daylight and leave behind these people who hate spending time with me. Now sleep, which can make us forget our sorrows, help me escape for a while from my own company. *[She lies down and falls asleep]*

ROBIN

Still only three? One more is needed. Two men and two women make four. Now here she comes, angry and sad. Cupid is a tricky, deceitful boy to drive poor girls crazy like this.

*HERMIA enters.***HERMIA**

Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briars,
I can no further crawl, no further go.

485 My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!
[Lies down and sleeps]

ROBIN

On the ground

490 Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye.
Gentle lover, remedy.
[Squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER's eyes]

495 When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye.

500 And the country proverb known--
That every man should take his own--
In your waking shall be shown.
Jack shall have Jill.
Nought shall go ill.

505 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

*ROBIN exits.**HERMIA enters.***HERMIA**

I've never been so exhausted or so sad. I'm covered in dew and scratched by thorns, and I can't crawl any farther. I can't go any further. My legs can't keep moving, even though I want them too. This is where I'll rest until the morning comes. May the gods protect Lysander if he and Demetrius do end up fighting! *[She lies down and falls asleep]*

ROBIN

Sleep soundly on the ground. And I'll apply a remedy to your eye, dear lover. *[He squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER's eyes]* When you wake up, you will be truly delighted to see the lady you once loved. And you'll be a walking reminder of that country saying--each man should take what's his. Yes, Jack will have his Jill. Nothing can go wrong. The man will have his lady again, and everything will be all right.

ROBIN EXITS.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA continue to sleep onstage. TITANIA enters with BOTTOM (who still has a donkey's head) and the fairies PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED. OBERON enters behind them, unseen by the others.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

5 Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

Ready.

BOTTOM

10 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
15 honey bag, signor.

Shakescleare Translation

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA continue to sleep onstage. TITANIA enters with BOTTOM (who still has a donkey's head) and the fairies PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED. OBERON enters behind them, unseen by the others.

TITANIA

[To BOTTOM] Come and sit here on this flowery bed while I
caress your lovable cheeks, and stick roses into the fur of
your silky, smooth head, and kiss your big, beautiful ears,
my gentle darling.

BOTTOM

Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

At your service.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

At your service.

BOTTOM

Monsieur Cobweb, my good sir, get out your weapons and
kill for me a red-tailed bumblebee that has landed on a
thistle. And, good sir, bring me its honey. Now don't
overwork yourself too much in doing it, sir. Oh, and good
sir, be careful not to break the honey-sac. I'd be sad if you
drowned in honey, sir.

COBWEB exits.

Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

Ready.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

What's your will?

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

30 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.

TITANIAI have a venturesome fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard and fetch thee new nuts.**BOTTOM**

35 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.

TITANIASleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.*THE FAIRIES exit.*

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle

Gently entwine. The female ivy so

40 Enrings the barked fingers of the elm.

Oh, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

*BOTTOM and TITANIA fall asleep.**COBWEB exits.*

Where's Sir Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

At your service.

BOTTOM

Give me your first, Sir Mustardseed. Please, no need to take off your hat and bow, good sir.

MUSTARDSEED


What would you like?


BOTTOM

Nothing, good sir, except for you to help Sir Cobweb scratch my head. I should go to the barber's, sir, because I think I'm getting amazingly hairy on my face. And I am such a sensitive ass that if my hair even tickles me even slightly, I have to scratch.

TITANIA

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

BOTTOMI have a fairly good ear for music. Let's have someone play the triangle and smack some sticks together. 

 The triangle and sticks were played as a kind of clapper, and were not instruments that anyone with a good ear for music would regularly listen to.

TITANIA

Or tell me, sweet love, what you want to eat.


BOTTOM


Actually, I'd like two gallons of animal feed. Or I wouldn't mind munching on some good dry oats. Though I think I would also really like a bundle of hay. Good, sweet hay has no equal.

TITANIA

I have an adventuresome fairy who'll go find a squirrel's secret stockpile and get you fresh nuts.

BOTTOM

I'd rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, please, don't let any of your attendants wake me up. An exposition  for sleep has come over me.

 Bottom means "disposition" rather than "exposition," and is trying to say simply that he's in the mood to sleep.

TITANIA

Sleep my love, and I will put my arms around you. Fairies, get out of here. Go off in all directions.

THE FAIRIES exit.

I'll wrap my arms around you just as the tendrils of the woodbine plant gently twist around the sweet honeysuckle, and just as the female ivy curls around the branches of the elm tree. Oh, how I love you! How I love to take care of you!

BOTTOM and TITANIA fall asleep.

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,
 45 Seeking sweet favors from this hateful fool,
 I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
 For she his hairy temples then had rounded
 With a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers,
 And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
 50 Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
 Stood now within the pretty flowerets' 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,
 55 I then did ask of her her changeling child,
 Which straight she gave me and her fairy sent
 To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.
 And now I have the boy, I will undo
 This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
 60 And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
 From off the head of this Athenian swain,
 That, he awaking when the other do,
 May all to Athens back again repair
 And think no more of this night's accidents
 65 But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
 But first I will release the fairy queen.
[Squeezing flower juice into TITANIA's eyes]
 Be as thou wast wont to be.
 See as thou wast wont to see.
 70 Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
 Hath such force and blessèd power.
 Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

ROBIN enters.

TITANIA

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

OBERON

75 There lies your love.

TITANIA

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

OBERON

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

TITANIA

Music, ho! Music such as charmeth sleep!

Music.

ROBIN

[Taking the ass' head off BOTTOM]
 Now when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

OBERON

Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
 85 And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
[Dances with TITANIA]
 Now thou and I are new in amity,
 And will tomorrow midnight solemnly
 Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
 90 And bless it to all fair prosperity.
 There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
 Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Do you see this sweet sight? I've now begun to pity Titania for her obsessive crush. I met her a while ago near the edge of the forest as she was searching for pretty flowers for this intolerable idiot, and I scolded her and fought with her. She had put a little crown of fresh, sweet-smelling flowers around his hairy forehead. And the dew, which used to decorate the flowers like the most beautiful pearls, now lay in the center of the flowers like tears of shame for being forced to sit on that ass' head. After taunting her as much I wanted to, she quietly asked me to stop, and then I asked her for the Indian boy. Right away she agreed to give him to me, and sent a fairy to bring him to my chamber in Fairyland. Now that I have the boy, I'll undo the awful flaw affecting Titania's eyes. And, gentle Puck, remove the ass' head from the head of this Athenian yokel, so that when he wakes up along with the others, they can all return to Athens and remember the craziness of this night as nothing more than the wild troubles of a bad dream. But first I'll cure the fairy queen. *[Squeezing juice from the second flower into TITANIA's eyes]* Be the way you used to be, and see the way you used to see. This juice comes from a flower bud belonging to [Diana](#), and it has the power to overturn the effects of the juice from Cupid's flower. Now, Titania, wake up, my sweet queen.

Once again, we see a reference to [Diana](#), the goddess of the hunt and virginity.

ROBIN enters.

TITANIA

[Waking up] My dear Oberon, what a wild dream I had! I dreamed I was in love with an ass.

OBERON

Your love is lying right there.

TITANIA

How did all this happen? Oh, my eyes can't stand to see his face now!

OBERON

Be quiet for a while. Robin, remove his ass' head. Titania, call to your fairies for some music, so that these five humans will sleep more deeply than is normal.

Oberon refers to the four Athenian lovers and Bottom here.

TITANIA

Music, now! Play music that magically makes people sleep.

Music plays.

ROBIN

[Taking the ass' head off BOTTOM]
 Now when you wake up, you'll see things with your own foolish eyes once more.

OBERON

Play the music! Come here, my queen, take my hands. And we'll dance on the ground where these sleepers are lying, and so rock them to sleep. *[Dances with TITANIA]* Now that you and I are again at peace, tomorrow at midnight we will perform a ceremonial dance at Duke Theseus' palace to celebrate and bless his marriage with good fortune. These two pairs of faithful lovers will get married along with Theseus, all in great joy.

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

TITANIA

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

OBERON, TITANIA, and ROBIN exit.

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

THESEUS

Go, one of you, find out the forester.
For now our observation is performed.
105 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.

One of the servants exits.

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

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
110 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
115 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THESEUS

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flewed, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls,
120 Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never hollaed to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.
Judge when you hear.
125 But, soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS

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

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

135 It is, my lord.

ROBIN

Fairy King, pay attention, and listen. I can hear the singing
of the lark, which sings when it is morning.

OBERON

Then, my queen, let's quietly and seriously follow after the
night, crossing the earth faster even than the moon.

TITANIA

Come, my lord, and as we fly you can tell me what
happened in the night that resulted in me sleeping with
these humans on the ground.

OBERON, TITANIA, and ROBIN exit.

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

THESEUS

Go, one of you, and find the forest ranger. Now that we've
completed the May Day ceremonies, and since we are still in
the early part of the day, my love will get to hear the
musical barking of my dogs as we go hunting. Unleash the
dogs in the western valley. Let them go. Now go, I say, and
find the forest ranger.

One of the servants exits.

My beautiful queen, we'll go up the mountaintop and listen
to the musical chaos of the dogs' barking and their echoes.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus ⁵ once, when their
Spartan hunting dogs surrounded a bear. I'd never before
heard barking that courageous. Not just the forests, but also
the skies, the waterfalls, everything nearby seemed to be
part of the same communal cry. I'd never heard such wild
music, such lovely thunder.

⁵ These are two of ancient Greece's most famous mythological heroes.

THESEUS

My dogs are bred from Spartan line. They have the same
fleshy folds around their jaws, the same sandy color, and on
their heads they have the same ears that hang low enough
to brush the morning dew from the grass. They have
crooked knees, and folds of skin hang down under their
necks, like bulls from the region of Thessaly. Though they're
not very fast when chasing prey, their barks sound like a set
of bells—different notes, but all perfectly in tune. No one
has ever blown a hunting horn in answer to a more melodic
pack of dogs—not in Crete, or Sparta, or Thessaly. Judge for
yourself when you hear them. But wait! Who are these girls?

EGEUS

My lord, this is my daughter, asleep. And that's Lysander.
This one here is Demetrius. This is Helena—old Nedar's
daughter Helena. I wonder why they're all here together.

THESEUS

Most likely they woke up early to celebrate May Day and,
knowing we would be here, they came to attend and honor
our ceremony. But tell me, Egeus, isn't today the day when
Hermia has to tell us whether she's chosen Demetrius,
death, or to become a virgin priestess?

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

One of the servants exits.

Wind, horns, and shouts within. LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA wake and start up.

THESEUS

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

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all kneel.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all stand up.

140 *[To LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS]*
I know you two are rival enemies.
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy
To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER

145 My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking. But as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here.
But as I think—for truly would I speak,
And now do I bethink me, so it is—
150 I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law—

EGEUS

[To THESEUS] Enough, enough, my lord. You have enough!
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
155 They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

DEMETRIUS

[To THESEUS] My lord, fair Helen told me of their
160 stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood.
And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power—
165 But by some power it is—my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon.
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
170 The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia.
But like in sickness did I loathe this food.
But as in health, come to my natural taste,
175 Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will.
180 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.

THESEUS

Go tell the hunters to wake them by blowing their horns.

One of the servants exits.

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

THESEUS

Good morning, my friends. Valentine's Day is over. Have you lovebirds only begun to couple up now?

LYSANDER

Forgive us, my lord.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all kneel.

THESEUS

Please, all of you, stand up.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all stand up.

[To LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS] I know you two are bitter rivals. What has happened to make the world such a gentle place that two people who hate each other somehow don't distrust each other, and in fact are willing to sleep next to an enemy without fear of being harmed?

LYSANDER

My lord, I can only respond that I am also baffled, and feel as if I am half asleep, half awake. I can't honestly say how I wound up here. But I think—and I want to speak honestly, and now that I think about it, I'm sure it's true. I came here with Hermia. Our plan was to escape from Athens so that we could, without the threat of Athenian law—

EGEUS

[To THESEUS] Enough, enough, my lord. You've heard enough: I ask that the law, the law, be brought down upon his head. Demetrius, these two were going to run away in order to trick us, stealing your wife from you and stealing from me of my ability to order that she should be your wife.

DEMETRIUS

[To THESEUS] My lord, the beautiful Helena told me they were going to sneak away to escape into this forest. In a fury, I followed them here, and the lovely Helena followed me because of her love for me. Now, my good lord, I don't know what made this happen—but by some power it did happen—my love for Hermia melted away like snow. That love seems to me now like a memory of some worthless trinket I used to love when I was a child. Now the only person to whom I want to be faithful, who owns my entire heart, who is the greatest pleasure to my eye, is Helena. I was engaged to her before I ever met Hermia. But then, like a sick man who can't stand the food that sustains him, I hated her for a time. But now, healthy once again, my normal taste has returned. Now I want Helena. I love her, and long for her, and will always be true to her.

THESEUS

Beautiful lovers, it's lucky that you've met me here. You'll tell me more about all of this later. Egeus, I'm overruling your commands. Later on in the temple these couples will be married alongside Hippolyta and me. And now, because the morning is nearly over, we'll set aside our planned hunting. Come with us to Athens. Three men and three

185 Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and the servants and followers exit.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

So methinks.
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

DEMETRIUS

195 Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

HERMIA

Yea, and my father.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

200 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.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA exit.

BOTTOM

205 *[Waking]* When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer.
My next is "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho! Peter Quince?
Flute the bellows-mender? Snout the tinker? Starveling?
God's my life, stol'n hence, and left me asleep? I have
had a most rare vision. I have had a dream--past the
wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass
if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I
210 was--there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and
methought I had--but man is but a patched fool if he
will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man
hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand
is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his
215 heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter
Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be
called "Bottom's Dream" because it hath no bottom. And I
will sing it in the latter end of a play before the
duke. Peradventure, to make it more gracious, I shall
220 sing it at her death.

BOTTOM exits.

women, we'll throw a feast and celebration. Come along,
Hippolyta.

*THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and their servants and
followers exit.*

DEMETRIUS

Everything that happened seems distant and difficult to
figure out, like mountains that look like clouds from far
away.

HERMIA

It seems to me that my eyes are out of focus, and
everything looks double.

HELENA

Me too. It's like I came upon Demetrius like a jewel I found
by accident, so that while he is in my possession, he might
really belong to someone else.

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure that we're awake? It seems to me like we are
sleeping, and dreaming. Do you think the duke was really
just here, and told us to follow him?

HERMIA

Yes I do, and my father was here too.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

And he told us to follow him to the temple.

DEMETRIUS

Well, then, we're awake. Let's follow him. And as we go, why
don't we tell each other our dreams?

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA exit.

BOTTOM

[Waking up] When it's my cue, call me--and I'll say my line.
My next cue is "Most handsome Pyramus." Hey there! Peter
Quince? Flute the bellows-repairman? Snout the
repairman? Starveling? My God, they went away from here,
and left me asleep? I have had the strangest dream. I have
had a dream so strange that it's beyond explanation. A man
would be a fool if he tried to explain this dream. I thought I
was--well, nobody could describe what I was. I thought I
was, and I thought I had--but a man would have to be a true
fool to try and say what I thought I had. My dream was so
odd that no man's eyes have heard, or his ears have seen,
or his hands have tasted, or his tongue felt, or his heart
described what it was like. I will get Peter Quince to write a
ballad about this dream. It will be called "Bottom's Dream"
because it's so complex that it has no bottom. And I'll sing it
for the duke at the end of the play. Or, better yet, to make it
more pleasing, I'll sing it when Thisbe dies.

BOTTOM exits.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

QUINCE

Have you sent to Bottom's house? Is he come home yet?

Shakescleare Translation

QUINCE

Have you checked Bottom's house? Has he come home yet?

QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING enter.

STARVELING

He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

FLUTE

If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward. Doth it?

QUINCE

5 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 handicraft man in Athens.

QUINCE

10 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.

SNUG

15 Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

SNUG enters.

FLUTE

20 O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life. He could not have 'scaped sixpence a day. An the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged. He would have deserved it. Sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

BOTTOM enters.

BOTTOM

Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?

QUINCE

Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

BOTTOM

25 Masters, I am to discourse wonders—but ask me not what, for if I tell you I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

QUINCE

Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOTTOM

30 Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps. Meet presently at the palace. Every man look o'er his part. For the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen. And let not him that plays the lion pair his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath. And
35 I do not doubt but to hear them say, "It is a sweet comedy." No more words. Away, go away!

QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING enter.

STARVELING

No one's heard from him. There's no question he's been kidnapped by fairies.

FLUTE

If he doesn't come, then the play will be ruined. We won't be able to perform it. Will we?

QUINCE

It wouldn't be possible. There's not another man in all of Athens who can play Pyramus besides Bottom.

FLUTE


It's true. To be blunt, he's the smartest craftsman in Athens.

QUINCE

Yea, and the best looking too. And his voice is the paramour of sweetness.

FLUTE

You mean "paragon." A "paramour" is, God bless us, something naughty.

 A "paramour" is an adulterous lover.

SNUG

Gentlemen, the duke is leaving the temple, along with two or three additional lords and ladies who were also married. If we could only have performed our play, we would all have gotten rewards and been set for life.

SNUG enters.

FLUTE

Oh that sweet, good guy, Bottom! By not being here he's missed out on a pension of six pence a day for the rest of his life. He wouldn't have been able to avoid getting six pence a day, even if he'd wanted to. If the duke wouldn't have given him six pence a day for playing Pyramus, I'd go jump off a bridge. And he would have deserved it. Pyramus is worth six pence a day, or nothing at all.

BOTTOM enters.

BOTTOM

Where are my boys? Where are my good fellows?

QUINCE

Bottom! Oh, what a great day! Oh, what a happy moment!

BOTTOM

Gentlemen, I have incredible stories to tell you—but don't ask me what, because if I told you, then I would not be a true Athenian citizen. I'll tell you everything, exactly how it happened.

QUINCE

Tell us, good Bottom.

BOTTOM

You won't get a word out of me! All that I'll tell you is that the duke has had his dinner. Gather your costumes, some new strings for your false beards, and some new ribbons to decorate your shoes. Then meet me at the palace as soon as you can. We should each look over our lines again. In sum, our play is going to be performed! So make sure that Thisbe has clean underpants. And make sure whoever is playing the lion doesn't cut down his nails, because they are going to need to stand in for the lion's claws. And, my most dear fellow actors, please don't eat onions or garlic. We must have sweet-smelling breath so the audience will say, "it's a sweet play." Enough talk. Come on, let's go!

They exit.

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE, with other attendant lords

HIPPOLYTA

'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

THESEUS

More strange than true. I never may believe
 These antique fables nor these fairy toys.
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 5 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact.
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold—
 10 That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
 The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to Earth, from Earth to heaven.
 And as imagination bodies forth
 15 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,
 That if it would but apprehend some joy,
 20 It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.
 Joy, gentle friends! Joy and fresh days of love
 30 Accompany your hearts!

The lovers enter: LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA.

LYSANDER

More than to us
 Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

THESEUS

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we have
 To wear away this long age of three hours
 35 Between our after-supper and bedtime?
 Where is our usual manager of mirth?
 What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
 Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

40 Here, mighty Theseus.

Shakescleare Translation

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE enter, along with other lords and servants.

HIPPOLYTA

My dear Theseus, what these lovers are describing is strange.

THESEUS

I think the story is more strange than it is true. I don't believe any of these ancient stories or fairy tales. Lovers and madmen have so much going on in their heads, such active imaginations, that they see and hear things that cool, calm, rational people can't understand. Madmen, lovers, and poets all are all controlled by their imaginations: The ones who see devils and monsters all over the place—those are the madmen. Lovers, who are just as wild, see a gypsy's face and think it is as beautiful as Helen of Troy's. Poets, who are always glancing around as if they are overcome by passion, make constant connections between things that are earthly and things that are heavenly. And they take the unreal things that tumble out of their imagination and write about them as if they were actual places or things. When people who have such strong imaginations feel some kind of joy, they imagine that it must be some entity or power that brings or creates that joy. Or if, in the night, they feel some fear, they see a bush and imagine it's a bear!

HIPPOLYTA

But the full story that the lovers are telling about last night—along with the fact that they all described it the same way—suggests that it's something that they really experienced rather than some imagined fantasy. It has a consistency to it that suggests truth, even if it is strange and unbelievable.

THESEUS


Here come the lovers, full of joy and laughter. Joy to you, kind friends! May joy and sweet days of love be with you always.

The lovers --LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA-- enter.

LYSANDER


May even more joy than you wish for us await you--on your royal journeys, at your table, and in your bed!

THESEUS

Now, what performances and dances will we see to pass these three hours between dinner and bedtime? Where is our Master of the Revels ? What entertainments do we have ready? Isn't there a play for us to watch to ease the torture of free time? Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

I'm here, Theseus.

 The original text refers to a "manager of mirth," or Master of the Revels-- a member of court who organizes entertainments.

THESEUS

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

PHILOSTRATE

[Giving THESEUS a paper]

- 45 There is a brief, how many sports are ripe.
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

THESEUS

[Reads]

*"The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."*

- 50 We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
*"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."*
That is an old device, and it was played
55 When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
*"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary."*
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
60 *"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe. Very tragical mirth."*
"Merry" and "tragical?" "Tedious" and "brief?"
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE

- 65 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.
70 And tragical, my noble lord, it is.
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water—but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS

- 75 What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labored in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play against your nuptial.

THESEUS

- 80 And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord.

It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world—
Unless you can find sport in their intents,

- 85 Extremely stretched and conned with cru 'l pain
To do you service.

THESEUS

I will hear that play.

For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.

- 90 Go, bring them in. And take your places, ladies.

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'er charged
And duty in his service perishing.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

THESEUS

Tell us, what entertainment do you have that will shorten
the evening? What plays, what music? How will we enjoy
this boring time without some entertainment?

PHILOSTRATE

[Giving THESEUS a piece of paper] That is a list of all of the
performances that are ready to go. Choose which one your
highness would like to see first.

THESEUS

[Reading] *"The battle between Hercules and the Centaurs
at the wedding feast of Pirothous, sung by an Athenian
eunuch accompanied by a harp."* No, we don't want that.
I've already told that story to Hippolyta, telling her of the
glory of my cousin Hercules. What else? *"The riot of the
drunk Bacchanals who in the grip of their drunken frenzy
rip the singer Orpheus to shreds."* That's a story often told in
plays, and I saw it when I returned from conquering Thebes.
*"The nine Muses mourning the death of learning and the
arts, which lately have become so reduced."* That's a satire--
a sharp and critical satire--and wouldn't be right to perform
at a wedding. *"A boring short drama about young Pyramus
and his love Thisbe. Very sad and funny."* Funny and sad?
Short but still boring? That's like hot ice and very strange
snow. What will we think of this play which claims to be
such contradictory things?

PHILOSTRATE

My lord, it is a play that's about ten words long, which is the
shortest play I've ever encountered. But, my lord, it's ten
words too long, which is what makes it tedious. In the
entire play, there is not one well-placed word, and not one
actor is a good fit for his part. It is tragic, my noble lord,
because Pyramus does kill himself. When I saw the suicide
during rehearsal, I must admit that it brought tears to my
eyes—but I've never cried tears of such loud and merry
laughter.

THESEUS

Who are the people performing it?

PHILOSTRATE

Manual workers from here in Athens who have never until
now spent much doing anything that required thinking.
Now they've overburdened their under-exercised brains to
create this play for your wedding.

THESEUS

And we will watch it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord. It's not something you'll like. I've seen it,
and it's worthless, as worthless as anything ever
created—unless you find their sad attempt funny, with their
bad acting and incorrectly remembered lines.

THESEUS

I'll watch this play. Because nothing can be bad when it's
motivated by a simple desire to bring pleasure to a person's
betters. Go and bring them in. And find your seats, ladies.

HIPPOLYTA

I don't enjoy seeing incompetent people overwhelmed and
made to look bad when they are only trying to serve.

PHILOSTRATE exits.

THESEUS

Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS

- 95 The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake,
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposèd
100 To greet me with premeditated welcomes,
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practiced accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
105 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome,
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
110 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

PHILOSTRATE enters.

PHILOSTRATE

So please your grace, the Prologue is addressed.

THESEUS

Let him approach.

QUINCE enters, performing as the PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUE

- If we offend, it is with our good will.
115 That you should think we come not to offend,
But with good will. 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 contest you,
120 Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

- 125 He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt. He knows
not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to
speak, but to speak true.

HIPPOLYTA

Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a
recorder—a sound, but not in government.

THESEUS

- 130 His speech was like a tangled chain. Nothing impaired,
but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter BOTTOM as PYRAMUS; FLUTE as THISBE; SNOUT as WALL;
STARVELING as MOONSHINE; and SNUG as LION.*

PROLOGUE

- 135 Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

THESEUS

Why, my noble love, you won't see any such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

Philostrate says they're not good at acting.

THESEUS

Then we're even more kind, for giving them thanks for something they're not good at. Our entertainment will be to watch their mistakes, and what their own poor talent can't accomplish. Our noble generosity will see the effort they are giving rather than the quality of their performance. When I have visited foreign cities, great scholars have tried to greet me with speeches they've rehearsed. And I have seen them shiver and turn pale from nervousness, and pause incorrectly in the middle of their sentences, and mess up the tones of voice they've practiced, and then finish by suddenly breaking off without even welcoming me. Trust me, my love, even in their silence I could sense the welcome they meant to give. I can understand the same meaning from those who are modest and frightened but also want to do their duty as I can from those who can rattle off a speech with wit, talent, and eloquence. As I see it, my love, tongue-tied simplicity says the most precisely by saying the least.

PHILOSTRATE enters.

PHILOSTRATE


If it please your Grace, the actor who will deliver the prologue is ready.


THESEUS

Let him come forward.

QUINCE enters, performing as the PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUE

If our play offends you, it is our intention . That you know we have not come here to offend, but it is our intention. Showing off the little skill we have in acting will end up getting us executed. Understand, then, that we come in a spirit of ill will. We don't come here with the purpose of making you happy. We did not come here for your complete delight. You should regret that the actors are ready. By watching their show, you'll find out everything you're likely to know.

 As the Prologue, Quince completely alters the meaning of his speech by speaking it with the punctuation in the wrong places. Thus, he paints a very different picture of the acting company than he intends to.

THESEUS

This guy doesn't pay attention to punctuation.

LYSANDER

He rode his prologue like a wild colt. He didn't know how to make it stop. The moral here, my lord, is that it's not enough to speak. You have to speak correctly.

HIPPOLYTA

Yes, he's performed the prologue like a child plays a recorder—he can make sounds, but not with any purposeful control.

THESEUS

His speech was like a tangled chain. Unbroken, but all jumbled up. Who's next?

BOTTOM enters as PYRAMUS; FLUTE as THISBE; SNOUT as WALL; STARVELING as MOONSHINE; and SNUG as LION.

PROLOGUE

Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps you're wondering about the subject of this play. Keep on wondering, until the truth makes everything clear. This man is Pyramus, if you'd like to

This beautiful lady Thisbe is certain.
This man, with lime and roughcast, doth present
Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

140 This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine. For, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb—there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which "Lion" hight by name,
145 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,
150 And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain.
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
155 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEMETRIUS

No wonder, my lord. One lion may when many asses do.

WALL

In this same interlude it doth befall
160 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.

PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS

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

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!

PYRAMUS enters.

PYRAMUS

O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
175 O night, O night! Alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot!
And thou, O Wall, O sweet, O lovely Wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine.
Thou Wall, O Wall, O sweet and lovely Wall,
180 Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne!

WALL holds up two fingers, spread a bit apart.

Thanks, courteous Wall. Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.
O wicked Wall through whom I see no bliss!
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

know. It's certain that this beautiful lady is Thisbe. This man, dusted in lime and plaster, is playing the Wall, that awful wall that separated these lovers. Through a little hole in the Wall, the poor souls are content to whisper. And no one should be amazed by that. This man, who has the lantern, dog, and thorn bush, is playing the role of Moonshine. Because, if you'd like to know, the lovers didn't think it was shameful to meet each other in the moonlight by Ninus's tomb—there, they would woo each other. This dreadful beast, which is called "Lion," scared away, or rather frightened, the faithful Thisbe when she arrived first at the meeting place one night. And, as she ran away, she dropped her cloak, which the awful Lion stained with his bloody mouth. Soon Pyramus arrives, a sweet and tall young man, and finds his faithful Thisbe's cloak covered in blood. Because of that, he raised his sword—his bloodthirsty responsible blade—and bravely stabbed his raging, ferocious chest. Then Thisbe, waiting in the shade of the mulberry bushes, took out his dagger and killed herself. To hear the rest of the story, let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and the two separated lovers explain it more fully while they stand here on the stage.

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion will speak.

DEMETRIUS

It wouldn't be shocking, my lord. When a bunch of asses are up on stage talking, a lion might talk too.

WALL

At this moment of the play I, Snout, play a wall. I want you to know that this wall has a little hole in it, through which the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe often secretly whispered. This clay, this plaster, and this stone that I have on me show that I'm that wall. That's the truth. And this is the crack, running horizontally right to left, through which the fated lovers will whisper.

PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.

THESEUS

Would you ever hope to hear plaster speak more eloquently?

DEMETRIUS

It's the smartest barrier that I've ever heard speak, my lord.

THESEUS


Pyramus is approaching the wall. Be quiet!


PYRAMUS enters.

PYRAMUS

Oh, grim-looking night! Oh, night colored so black! Oh night, which always exists when day does not! Oh night, oh night! Sad, sad, sad. I'm afraid my Thisbe has forgotten her promise! And you, oh Wall, oh sweet, oh lovely Wall, which stands between Thisbe's father's land and mine. You Wall, oh Wall, oh sweet and lovely Wall. Show me your hole that I can peer through with my eye!

WALL holds up two fingers, spread a bit apart.

Thanks, considerate Wall. May Jove  protect you for doing this. But what do I see? I don't see Thisbe. Oh wicked Wall, through which I see no happiness! Curse your stones for tricking me like this!

 Jove, or Zeus, was the ancient chief God in classical Mediterranean civilizations.

THESEUS

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

BOTTOM

No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is Thisbe's cue. She is to enter now and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

190 O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice. Now will I to the chink,
195 To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face. Thisbe?

THISBE

My love thou art, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

PYRAMUS

200 Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

PYRAMUS

Oh, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

THISBE

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

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THISBE

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

PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.

WALL

Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so.
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

WALL exits.

THESEUS

Now is the moon down between the two neighbors.

DEMETRIUS

210 No remedy, my lord, when walls are so willful to hear
without warning.

THESEUS

Since the wall has thoughts and feelings, I think it should curse back at him.

BOTTOM

[As himself] No, in fact, sir, he shouldn't. "Tricking me" is the cue for Thisbe to speak. She's going to enter now, and I'll spot her through the wall. You'll see, it'll happen just as I am telling you. There she comes.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

Oh Wall, you've so often heard my moans because you separate me from my handsome Pyramus! My cherry lips have often kissed your stones which are held together by plaster.

PYRAMUS

I see a voice! Now I'll go to the hole to find out if I can hear my Thisbe's face. Thisbe?

THISBE

You are my love, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

Whatever you think, I am your gracious lover. And, like [Limander](#) ⁴, I'm still faithful to you.

THISBE

And I'll be as faithful as [Helen of Troy](#) ⁵, until the day I'm destined to die.

PYRAMUS

Not even Shafalus was as faithful to his lover Procrus ⁶ as I am to you.

THISBE

I'm as faithful to you as Shafalus was to Procrus.

PYRAMUS

Oh, kiss me through the hole in this awful wall.

THISBE

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

PYRAMUS

Will you meet me at Ninny's grave right now?

THISBE

No matter what comes in life or death, I will be there without delay.

PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.

WALL

In this way, I, Wall, have played my part. Now, since I'm done, Wall can go away.

WALL exits.

THESEUS

With the wall gone, now the two lovers will see each other by the light of the moon.

DEMETRIUS

There's nothing you can do about it, my lord, when walls have ears.

⁴ Here, Bottom gets his words wrong again. The reference should be to the Greek hero Leander, instead of the non-existent Limander.

⁵ The correct reference should be to the Greek heroine Hero, who was Leander's faithful lover. Helen of Troy was notoriously unfaithful.

⁶ The correct reference here should be to Cephalus and Procris, who were famous lovers in Greek myth.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS

The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THESEUS

215 If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

LION

You, ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
220 May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam.
For if I should as lion come in strife
225 Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

LION and MOONSHINE enter.

THESEUS

A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox for his valor.

THESEUS

True. And a goose for his discretion.

DEMETRIUS

230 Not so, my lord. For his valor cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose.

THESEUS

His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valor, for the goose carries not the fox. It is well. Leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

MOONSHINE

235 This lantern doth the hornèd moon present—

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

MOONSHINE

240 This lantern doth the hornèd moon present.
Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be.

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest thing I've ever seen.

THESEUS

The best plays are a kind of illusion, and the worst are no worse if you use your imagination to fix them up.

HIPPOLYTA

Then it's your imagination that's good, not theirs.

THESEUS

If we imagine these actors as being no worse than they imagine themselves to be, then they'd seem like accomplished actors. Here come two noble beasts, a man and a lion.

LION

You gentle-hearted ladies--who fear even the smallest monstrous mouse that sneaks along the floor--may shake and tremble when the wild lion roars in its most violent rage. Therefore, know that I, Snug the carpenter, am neither a cruel lion nor a lioness, because if I were a lion that had come to this place in order to fight, then it would cost me my life.

LION and MOONSHINE enter.

THESEUS

It's a noble beast, with a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

He's the best actor at being a beast that I've ever seen, my lord.

LYSANDER

This lion seems like a fox, by being more sly than courageous.

THESEUS

True. And he's just about as wise as a goose--that is, not wise at all!

DEMETRIUS

Not true, my lord. He's not courageous enough pull off being discreet, just as the fox pulls along the goose by carrying it in its mouth.

THESEUS

He's not discreet enough to be brave, actually, just as the goose can't carry the fox. It doesn't matter. Let's leave all this to his discretion, and listen to the what the moon has to say.

MOONSHINE

This lantern symbolizes the horned moon ⁷.

⁷ The "horned moon" is the crescent moon.

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head ⁸.

⁸ The horns on the head were a traditional symbol for the cuckold, or a man whose wife has been unfaithful to him.

THESEUS

He's not shaped like a crescent moon, so his horns are probably invisible inside the circle.

MOONSHINE

This lantern represents the crescent moon. I am pretending to be the man in the moon.

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the "man i' th' moon?"

DEMETRIUS

245 He dares not come there for the candle. For you see, it is already in snuff.

HIPPOLYTA

I am aweary of this moon. Would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane. But yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYSANDER

250 Proceed, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thornbush, my thornbush; and this dog, my dog.

DEMETRIUS

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

THISBE enters.

THISBE

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

LION

[Roaring] O!

THISBE runs off, leaving her cloak behind.

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion!

THESEUS

Well run, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

260 Well shone, Moon! Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

LION bites and shakes THISBE's cloak, staining it with blood.

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion!

PYRAMUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

And then came Pyramus.

LION exits.

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

PYRAMUS

265 Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams. I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright. For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams, I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight. But stay, O spite!

270 But mark, poor knight,

THESEUS

That's a bigger mistake than all the others. The man should be put inside the lantern. How else can he be the "man in the moon?"

DEMETRIUS

He doesn't dare to go in there on account of the candle. Because, you see, the candle must first be put out.

HIPPOLYTA

I'm tired of this moon. If only he would wane away.

THESEUS

It seems by the meager amount of light he's giving off that he is waning. But, to be polite, we'll have to wait to find out.

LYSANDER

Continue, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All I have to say is that the lantern is the moon. I'm the man in the moon. This thorn bush is my thorn bush. And this dog is my dog.

DEMETRIUS

Well, all of these should be in the lantern, because all of them are in the moon. But be quiet! Here comes Thisbe.

THISBE enters.

THISBE

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

LION

[Roaring] Grr!

THISBE runs off, leaving her cloak behind.

DEMETRIUS

Nice roar, Lion!

THESEUS

Nice running, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

Nice shining, Moon! Really, the Moon shines quite well.

LION bites and shakes THISBE's cloak, staining it with blood.

THESEUS

Way to shake that mantle around the way a cat shakes a mouse, Lion!

PYRAMUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

And then Pyramus arrived.

LION exits.

LYSANDER

So then the lion disappeared.

PYRAMUS

Sweet Moon, I thank you for your sunny beams. I thank you, Moon, for shining now so bright, because by the light of your helpful, golden, glittering beams, I will be able to see my faithful Thisbe. But wait. Oh, misfortune! Look, you poor knight, what an awful sight! Eyes, do you see? How can this be? Oh, my dainty duck! Oh, my dear! What? Your beautiful

What dreadful dole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!

275 Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood?
Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut thread and thrum.
280 Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

This passion and the death of a dear friend would go near to make a man look sad.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

PYRAMUS

O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
285 Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer.
Come, tears, confound!
290 Out, sword, and wound!
The pap of Pyramus—
Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop. [*Stabs himself*]
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
295 Now am I dead.
Now am I fled.
My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light.
Moon, take thy flight.

MOONSHINE exits.

DEMETRIUS

300 No die, but an ace for him, for he is but one.

Now die, die, die, die, die.
[*He dies*]

LYSANDER

Less than an ace, man. For he is dead. He is nothing.

THESEUS

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and prove an ass.

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

She will find him by starlight. Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

THISBE enters.

HIPPOLYTA

Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus.

310 I hope she will be brief.

DEMETRIUS

A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better. He for a man, God warrant us, she for a woman, God bless us.

cloak, is it stained with blood? Come, you cruel Furies!
Come, come you Fates, and cut the thread of my life.
Conquer, crush, bring to an end, and kill!

THESEUS

Watching this performance would be almost enough to make a man sad--so long as a good friend of yours died while you were watching it.

HIPPOLYTA

Curse my heart, but I feel sorry for this man.

PYRAMUS

Oh why, Mother Nature, did you create lions? A dreadful lion has deflowered ⁹ my darling, who is—no, no—who was the most beautiful woman that ever lived, loved, liked, or smiled. Come, tears, overwhelm me! Come out, sword, and wound me in the chest—yes, on the left side where the heart beats. [*He stabs himself*] And so, I die, so, so, so. Now I am dead. Now my soul has flown from my body. Tongue, see no more. Moon, disappear.

⁹ Bottom means to say "devoured," not deflowered.

MOONSHINE exits.

DEMETRIUS

This guy is just a single face of a die ¹⁰—the one, because he's a true original.

¹⁰ Demetrius interprets Pyramus' use of the word "die" as in the singular of "dice," used for gaming.

Now die, die, die, die, die. [*He dies*]

LYSANDER

He's a die with even fewer than one dot. He's dead, so he's nothing.

THESEUS

With the help of a doctor he might recover and become an ass.

HIPPOLYTA

What's going to happen since Moonshine has left before Thisbe comes back. How will she be able to find her lover?

THESEUS

She'll see him by starlight. Here she comes. Her crying will end the play.

THISBE enters.

HIPPOLYTA

I don't think this Pyramus deserves a whole lot of crying. I hope she does her part quickly.

DEMETRIUS

The difference in who's better between Pyramus and Thisbe is razor thin. God save us from him, as a man. But God save us from her, as a woman.

LYSANDER

She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS

315 And thus she means, videlicet —

THISBE

Asleep, my love?
 What, dead, my dove?
 O Pyramus, arise!
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
 320 Dead, dead? A tomb
 Must cover thy sweet eyes.
 These lily lips,
 This cherry nose,
 These yellow cowslip cheeks
 325 Are gone, are gone.
 Lovers, make moan.
 His eyes were green as leeks.
 O Sisters three,
 Come, come to me
 330 With hands as pale as milk.
 Lay them in gore,
 Since you have shore
 With shears his thread of silk.
 Tongue, not a word.
 335 Come, trusty sword.
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue. [*Stabs herself*]
 And, farewell, friends.
 Thus Thisbe ends.
 Adieu, adieu, adieu.
 340 [*She dies*]

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

[*Out of character*] No, assure you. The wall is down
 that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the
 345 epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of
 our company?

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse.
 Never excuse—for when the players are all dead, there
 needs none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had
 350 played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it
 would have been a fine tragedy. And so it is, truly,
 and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask.
 Let your epilogue alone.

The actors dance. BOTTOM and FLUTE exit.

355 The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve. Lovers,
 to bed. 'Tis almost fairy time.
 I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn
 As much as we this night have overwatched.
 This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
 The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed. A
 360 fortnight hold we this solemnity,
 In nightly revels and new jollity.

LYSANDER

She's seen him already with those sweet eyes of hers.

DEMETRIUS

And so she'll start moaning, as we expected—

THISBE

Are you asleep, my love? What, are you dead, my dove? Oh,
 Pyramus, wake up! Speak, speak. Can you talk? Dead,
 dead? A tomb must cover your sweet eyes. Your lily-white
 lips, your cherry-red nose, your marigold-yellow cheeks are
 gone, gone. Lovers, moan. His eyes were as green as leeks.
 Oh, you three Fates, come, come to me, with hands as pale
 as milk. Place your hands in blood, since you have cut with
 scissors the thread of his life. Tongue, don't say a word.
 Come, trusty sword. Come, trusted sword, stain my breast
 with blood. [*She stabs herself*] Goodbye, friends! This is how
 Thisbe dies. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. [*She dies*]

THESEUS

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Yes, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

[*As himself*] No, I assure you. The wall that separated their
 fathers' land has been taken down. Would you like to see
 the epilogue or see two of our actors perform a country
 dance?

THESEUS

No epilogue, please. Your play does not need to offer any
 apology for itself through an epilogue. Never
 apologize—when the actors are all dead, no one must be
 blamed. In fact, if the man who wrote the play had
 performed as Pyramus and hanged himself with Thisbe's
 stockings, it would have been a very good tragedy. And
 that's exactly what it is, honestly, and remarkably
 performed. Now please, perform your country dance. But
 don't worry about performing your epilogue.

Everyone dances. BOTTOM and FLUTE exit.

The hands of the clock have struck midnight. Lovers, let's
 go to bed. It's almost fairy time. I'm afraid we're going to
 sleep past morning because we've stayed up so late
 tonight. This obviously idiotic play has done a good job to
 help us pass the tired hours of night. Sweet friends, let's go
 to bed. For two weeks we will continue to celebrate, with
 parties and new fun every night.

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars
 And the wolf howls the moon,
 Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
 365 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.
 370 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the churchway paths to glide.
 And we fairies, that do run
 375 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.
 380 I am sent with broom before
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

OBERON and TITANIA enter with all their servants and followers.

OBERON

Through the house give glimmering light,
 By the dead and drowsy fire.
 Every elf and fairy sprite
 385 Hop as light as bird from brier.
 And this ditty, after me,
 Sing and dance it trippingly.

TITANIA

First, rehearse your song by rote,
 To each word a warbling note.
 390 Hand in hand with fairy grace
 Will we sing and bless this place.

OBERON

[Sings] Now until the break of day,
 Through this house each fairy stray.
 To the best bride bed will we,
 395 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.
 400 And the blots of Nature's hand
 Shall not in their issue stand.
 Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despised in nativity,
 405 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.
 410 And the owner of it blessed
 Ever shall in safety rest.
 Trip away. Make no stay.
 Meet me all by break of day.


OBERON and TITANIA and the FAIRIES sing and dance.


All exit except for ROBIN.

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
 415 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,
 420

ROBIN

Now the hungry lion roars and the wolf howls at the moon,
 while the tired farmer snores, exhausted from all the work
 he's done. The embers of the fire glow, while the owl's
 screeching hoot makes the man lying in his sickbed think
 about the shroud that will cover him in death. Now is the
 time of night when the graves all open wide, and release
 their spirits to glide over the paths of graveyards. And we
 fairies—who run from the sun just like Hecate , following
 darkness like a dream—are jolly. I will ensure that not even
 a mouse will disturb this blessed house. I've been sent
 ahead with a broom to sweep the dust behind the door.

 Hecate was the ancient Greek goddess of dark places.

OBERON and TITANIA enter with all their servants and followers.

OBERON

The dying fire gives off a glimmering light throughout the
 house. Now every elf and fairy, hop as lightly as a bird on a
 twig, and sing this little song along with me, and dance.

TITANIA

First rehearse your song from memory, and sing each word
 with a bird-like note. With everyone holding hands, we'll
 sing and bless this place with fairy grace.

OBERON

[Singing]
 Now, until the dawn,
 Each fairy wander through this house.
 Titania and I will go
 To the bless the royal marriage bed,
 So that the children conceived in it
 Will have good luck.
 All three of the couples will always be
 Faithful in love,
 And none of the defects of nature
 Will appear in their children.
 They won't have moles, or cleft lips, or scars,
 Or abnormal birthmarks,
 All of which will cause upset
 If a baby is born with it.
 Fairies, take this holy dew from the fields,
 And as you walk
 Through the rooms of the palace,
 Bless them with sweet peace.
 And the owner of the palace
 Will always be blessed and safe.
 Now go, but don't stay long.
 Meet me at dawn.

OBERON and TITANIA and the FAIRIES sing and dance.

They all exit except for ROBIN.

ROBIN

If we actors have offended you, simply think about it this
 way, and everything will be better: you just slept here, and
 saw these visions in a dream. This foolish and silly plot was
 only a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, don't rebuke me. If
 you forgive us, we'll make everything better. And since I,
 Puck, am honest, I promise to make everything better—if

Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
425 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.

ROBIN exits.

we're lucky enough to escape your boos and hisses.
Otherwise, call me a liar. So, good night to all of you. If we
are friends, please give us a round of applause--and Robin
will make it all up to you.

ROBIN exits.

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