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*A
Midsummer
Night's
Dream*

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH DETAILED NOTES

FROM THE WORLD'S

LEADING CENTER FOR

SHAKESPEARE STUDIES

EDITED BY BARBARA A. MORAT
AND PAUL WERSTINE

The Modern Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream

**The Original Play
with**

**A Modern Translation Everyone
Can Understand**

The Modern Shakespeare
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Cast of Characters

Robin Goodfellow (Puck) — A type of fairy called a “puck,” Puck is Oberon’s faithful servant, but is also mischievous and enjoys nothing more than playing tricks and causing trouble. He has all sorts of magical abilities, from changing shape, to turning invisible, to assuming different people’s voices, to transforming a man’s head into an ass’s head. He is not, however, beyond making a mistake, as his mix-up between Demetrius and Lysander makes clear.

Nick Bottom — A weaver who’s supreme confidence in his acting skill convinces the other laborers to give him the lead role of Pyramus in their version of Pyramus and Thisbe. In fact, Bottom is a seriously incompetent actor who understands neither his lines nor theater in general. All this makes him a profoundly funny character. Because he has no idea he’s incompetent, he never ceases to make long, overly dramatic speeches filled with incorrect references and outright absurdities. Even when Puck transforms his head into an ass’s head, Bottom fails to realize it and takes it as unsurprising when Titania falls in love with him. Yet though Bottom is certainly extremely foolish and self-important, he means well.

Hermia — The daughter of Egeus and the beloved of Lysander and Demetrius (at least at the beginning of the play). She is strong-willed, believes in her right to choose her husband based on love, and is fiercely loyal. When crossed, Hermia can become a downright vixen. Hermia is beautiful and has dark hair, though she’s small in stature and somewhat sensitive about it.

Helena — She loves Demetrius, and at one time he returned her love. But before the play begins, he fell in love

with Hermia and left Helena in despair. Because of Demetrius's abandonment of her, Helena lacks self-confidence and self-respect, going so far as to tell Demetrius that she'll love and follow him even if he treats her like his dog. She's also a bit conniving and desperate, willing to betray her friend Hermia's confidence in order to try to win back Demetrius's love. Physically, she's tall and blond.

Lysander — An Athenian nobleman who loves Hermia. In many ways, he is the model of a constant lover. He risks death under Athenian law by coming up with the plan to elope into the woods with Hermia, and only strays from his loyalty to Hermia under the influence of the love juice. When the effect of the spell is removed, he returns to his true love.

Demetrius — An Athenian nobleman who also loves Hermia. Unlike Lysander, Demetrius is an inconstant lover. Before the events of the play, he wooed Helena, then rejected her and pursued Hermia. He can be cruel at times, as when he threatens to abandon Helena in the forest, and there's no indication he would ever have come to return Helena's love without the influence of the love potion.

Oberon — The King of the Fairies and Titania's husband. Oberon is willful and demands obedience from his subjects, including his wife. When he's angry, he's not above using magic and plots to manipulate and humiliate in order to get his way. Yet at the same time he also seems to like using magic to fix problems he sees around him, particularly those having to do with love. He's had numerous extra-marital affairs.

Titania — The Queen of the Fairies and Oberon's wife. Titania is strong willed and independent, willing to fight her husband for control of the changeling boy. She is also powerful. Her fight with her husband causes nature to act

strangely, and her fairies always follow her commands. She is not, however, immune to the power of the juice from the love-in-idleness flower. As a lover, she is doting, though jealous. It also seems that, like her husband, through the years she's had many an extra-marital amorous affair.

Theseus — The Duke of Athens and the fiancé and later the husband of Hippolyta, Theseus is a strong and responsible leader who tries to be fair and sensitive. Though it is his duty to uphold the law, and he does so when both Lysander and Demetrius love Hermia, as soon as the lovers sort themselves out, he overrules Egeus' demand that Hermia marry Demetrius and let the lovers decide for themselves whom to marry. He also treats the laborers decently, despite the fact that their play is atrocious. Though a fearsome warrior (he captured Hippolyta, an Amazon queen, in battle), he is devoted to making her happy. Theseus is, however, extremely literal-minded, and gives little credence to the "fantasies" the lovers recount of their night in the forest.

Hippolyta — The Queen of the Amazons and Theseus's fiancé, she is both a fearsome warrior and a loving woman. She also has good common sense and is willing to disagree with Theseus's assessments of events and to calm him down when he can't wait for their marriage.

Egeus — Hermia's father, Egeus is an overbearing and rigid man who cares more about what he wants than his daughter's desires. He is so vain and uncaring, he is willing to let his daughter die if she won't do as he tells her.

Peter Quince — A carpenter and the director and main writer of the laborer's version of Pyramus and Thisbe. In Pyramus and Thisbe, he plays the Prologue.

Francis Flute — A bellows-mender who plays the part of Thisbe in Pyramus and Thisbe.

Tom Snout — A tinker who plays the part of Wall in Pyramus and Thisbe.

Snug — A joiner who plays the part of Lion in Pyramus and Thisbe.

Robin Starveling — A tailor who plays the part of Moonshine in Pyramus and Thisbe.

Philostrate — The Master of Revels for Theseus, he's in charge of arranging entertainments for the court.

Peaseblossom — One of Titania's fairies.

Cobweb — One of Titania's fairies.

Mote — One of Titania's fairies.

Mustardseed — One of Titania's fairies.

The Original Play + Modern Translation

Act 1, Scene 1

[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.

*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 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.

*Four days will quickly pass and turn to night. And each
night, we will dream away the time. And soon the moon,*

*looking in the sky like a silver bow newly bent into a curve,
will look down on the night of our wedding celebration.*

THESEUS

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

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

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

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

*Hippolyta, I flirted 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 enters with his daughter HERMIA, along with
LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.]

EGEUS

(20) Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke.
Joy to you Theseus, our famous and distinguished duke!

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

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

I've come, 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 her obedience (which she owes me) into harsh stubbornness. And, my gracious duke, if she, 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 the law expressly states for just such a case as this: either she marries Demetrius, or she dies.

THESEUS

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

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.
So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is.
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
(55) The other must be held the worthier.
Yes he is. But in this situation, because he lacks your father's support, you must consider Demetrius to be better.

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

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

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

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

HERMIA

I do entreat your grace to pardon me.

I know not by what power I am made bold

(60) Nor how it may concern my modesty

In such a presence here to plead my thoughts,

But I beseech your grace that I may know

The worst that may befall me in this case,

If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

I beg your grace to forgive me. I don't know what is making me bold enough to do this, nor 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.

THESEUS

(65) Either to die the death or to abjure

Forever the society of men.

Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires.

Know of your youth. Examine well your blood—

Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,

(70) You can endure the livery of a nun,

For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,

To live a barren sister all your life,

Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.

Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood

(75) To undergo such maiden pilgrimage.

But earthlier happy is the rose distilled

Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

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, goddess of the cold moon and chastity. Those who can control their passions and remain virgins their whole lives are three-times blessed. But a married woman more fully develops and is happier in this world than is a virgin who achieves the blessing of chastity but grows, lives, and withers to death as a flower on the stem.

HERMIA

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

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

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 to go to the temple of Diana and vow to spend the rest of your life as a virgin priestess.

DEMETRIUS

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

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.

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

EGEUS

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

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

LYSANDER

(to THESEUS) I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
(100) As well possessed. My love is more than his.
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked,
(If not with vantage) as Demetrius'.
And—which is more than all these boasts can be—
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
(105) Why should not I then prosecute my right?

Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul. And she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry

(110) Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

(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's, 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 as if he was a god.*

THESEUS

I must confess that I have heard so much
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof,
But being overfull of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come.

(115) And come, Egeus. You shall go with me.

I have some private schooling for you both.

For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself

To fit your fancies to your father's will,

Or else the law of Athens yields you up

(120) (Which by no means we may extenuate)

To death, or to a vow of single life.

Come, my Hippolyta. What cheer, my love?

Demetrius and Egeus, go along.

I must employ you in some business

(125) Against our nuptial and confer with you

Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

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 both you 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, 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 both of you that I want to discuss.

EGEUS

With duty and desire we follow you.

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

[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?

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

HERMIA

(130) Belike for want of rain, which I could well

Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

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

LYSANDER

Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,

Could ever hear by tale or history,

The course of true love never did run smooth.

(135) But either it was different in blood—

Oh no! 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

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

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

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffèd in respect of years—

Or else they were very different ages—

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

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

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

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

HERMIA

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

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

LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,

Making it momentary as a sound,

Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,

(145) Brief as the lightning in the collied night;

That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and Earth,

And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"

The jaws of darkness do devour it up.

So quick bright things come to confusion.

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 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

(150) If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny.

Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,

(155) Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Then 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 are dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears.

LYSANDER

A good persuasion. Therefore, hear me, Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager

Of great revenue, and she hath no child.

From Athens is her house remote seven leagues,

(160) And she respects me as her only son.

There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee.

And to that place the sharp Athenian law

Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,

Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night.

(165) And in the wood, a league without the town—

Where I did meet thee once with Helena

To do observance to a morn of May—

There will I stay for thee.

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 sees me as a son. There, gentle Hermia, where the harsh laws of Athens can't follow us, I could marry you. 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 good Lysander!

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

Oh, noble Lysander! I swear to you - by Cupid's strongest bow, by his best gold-tipped arrow; by the innocent doves that drive the Goddess of Love's 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.

LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

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

[HELENA enters.]

HERMIA

(180) Godspeed, fair Helena! Whither away?

Welcome, beautiful Helena! Where are you going?

HELENA

Call you me “fair”? That “fair” again unsay.

Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!

Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue’s sweet air

More tunable than lark to shepherd’s ear

(185) When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.

Sickness is catching. Oh, were favor so,

Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go.

My ear should catch your voice. My eye, your eye.

My tongue should catch your tongue’s sweet melody.

(190) Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,

The rest I’d give to be to you translated.

O, teach me how you look and with what art

You sway the motion of Demetrius’ heart.

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. 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 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 upon him, yet he loves me still.

I frown at him, but he still loves me.

HELENA

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

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

HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

I curse him, but he responds with love.

HELENA

Oh, that my prayers could such affection move!

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

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

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

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

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

HERMIA

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

His foolishness, Helena, is not my fault.

HELENA

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

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

HERMIA

Take comfort. He no more shall see my face.

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see

(205) Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.
Oh, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!

Don't worry. He'll never again see my face. 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 in comparison he's turned what I thought was heaven into hell!

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.
Tomorrow night when Phoebe doth behold
(210) Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass
(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

Helena, we'll let you in on our plan. Tomorrow night, when Phoebe, the moon, 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.

HERMIA

(to HELENA) And in the wood where often you and I
(215) Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet.
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes
(220) To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow. Pray thou for us.
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!
Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

(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 midnight tomorrow.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

I will, my Hermia.

[HERMIA exits.]

Helena, adieu.

(225) As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

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

[LYSANDER exits.]

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!

Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.

He will not know what all but he do know.

(230) And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind.

(235) And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste—

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.

And therefore is Love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

(240) As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.

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

I can't believe how much happier and luckier some people can be than others. Throughout all of Athens I am considered to be as beautiful as Hermia. But who cares? Demetrius doesn't think so. He refuses to notice what everyone other than him knows. But just as he wanders around dazed by love, obsessing over Hermia's eyes, I'm doing the same thing while fixating on his qualities. Love can make things that are disgusting, awful, or insubstantial seem beautiful and dignified. When in love, people see not with their eyes but with their minds. And that's the reason that winged Cupid, the god of love, is shown in paintings as being blind. Love also doesn't have any judgment or taste—Cupid having wings but no eyes symbolizes love's reckless rush. That's why love is often said to be a child, because it's so often tricked into making bad choices. Like mischievous boys who play lying games, the boy Cupid is always breaking promises. Before Demetrius noticed Hermia's eyes, he showered me with so many oaths that he was completely mine that they were like hail falling from the sky. Yet when his feelings began to heat up for Hermia, he disappeared along with his melting promises. I'm going to go tell Demetrius about Hermia's plan to run away. Then he'll run after her into the forest tomorrow night. If he thanks me for giving him this secret news, it will be worth it even if he then chases after Hermia. Because I plan to use my pain to

*enrich myself, by letting him chase after her but in the end
return to me.*

[Helena exits.]

Act 1, Scene 2

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

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

Are all of us here?

BOTTOM

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

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

(editor's note: Bottom often mixes up words. Here he says "generally" when he means "separately".)

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

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

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

Will do. Our play is called The Very Tragic Comedy of the Awful Deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe .

BOTTOM

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

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

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for and proceed.

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

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

You, Nick Bottom, will be Pyramus.

BOTTOM

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

What's Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

The raging rocks

And shivering shocks

Shall break the locks

Of prison gates .

And Phoebus' car

Shall shine from far

And make and mar

The foolish Fates .

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

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. OK, now list the other actors. But in fact my true talent is to play a tyrant. I'd make a wonderful Hercules, 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 the sun god's car

Will shine from far

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 style. A lover would be more weepy.

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

Francis Flute, the bellows-repairman?

FLUTE

(15) Here, Peter Quince.

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

Flute, you'll play the part of Thisbe.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

Who's Thisbe? A knight on a quest?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Thisbe is the lady who Pyramus loves.

FLUTE

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

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

QUINCE

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

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

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!"

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 lover! I'm your dear Thisbe, your dear lady!"

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

Well, okay. Continue.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

(25) Here, Peter Quince.

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

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

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

You'll be Pyramus's father. 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

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

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

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

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

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.

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

That would hang us, every mother's son.

They'd hang every single one of us.

BOTTOM

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

gently as any sucking dove. I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

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. (editor's note: Bottom thinks aggravate means quiet or moderate, when in fact it means the opposite.) I'll roar like a melodic nightingale.

QUINCE

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

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

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

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

QUINCE

Why, what you will.

Uh, whatever you want.

BOTTOM

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

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 one of those golden coins, a French crown.

QUINCE

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

Some French heads have no hair at all (because syphilis, "The French disease", has made all their hair fall out), 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 learn your lines by tomorrow night and then meet me 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

(40) We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains. Be perfect. Adieu. *We'll be there, and there we'll rehearse obscenely and courageously.* (editor's note: Bottom means "unseen," not obscene.) *Work hard, memorize your lines perfectly. Goodbye.*

QUINCE

At the duke's oak we meet.

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

BOTTOM

Enough. Hold, or cut bowstrings.

Enough. Show up, or drop out of the play.

[They all exit.]

Act 2, Scene 1

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

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

What is going on, spirit? Where are you going?

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.

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 her fairy droplets. 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 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.

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 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 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,
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?

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, and stopping beer from foaming, and leading 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

Thou speak'st aright.
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
(45) When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
(50) And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And “Tailor!” cries, and falls into a cough,

(55) 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.

You are correct. I am that about, the merry 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'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!" before starting to cough, and then everyone around hold their bellies and laugh, 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 my mistress. Would that he were gone!
And here's my Queen. I wish he'd go away!

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

OBERON

(60) Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.
I'm not glad to see you this night, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.
What, are you jealous, Oberon? Fairies, let's leave this place. I've sworn I'll never sleep with him or be near again.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

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

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady. But I know

(65) When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland,

And in the shape of Corin sat all day,

Playing on pipes of corn and versing love

To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,

Come from the farthest steep of India?

(70) 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.

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 speaking 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 them with joy and prosperity.

OBERON

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

(75) Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,

Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night

From Perigouna, whom he ravished?

And make him with fair Ægles break his faith,

(80) With Ariadne and Antiopa?

How can you shamelessly making 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 the forgeries of jealousy.
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
(85) To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
(90) Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
(95) The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
(100) The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
(105) And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,

And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
(110) Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
(115) From our debate, from our dissension.
We are their parents and original.

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, and in revenge have made nasty fogs rise up from the sea and fall as rain upon the land so that rivers have grown so large they flood the land around them. All the work done by farmers' and their oxen have 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 the 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

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

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

Set your heart at rest.
The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order,
And in the spicèd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
(125) And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
(130) Following—her womb then rich with my young squire

—

Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.
(135) And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

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 coming back 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 within this wood intend you stay?

How long do you plan to stay in this forest?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.

If you will patiently dance in our round

(140) And see our moonlight revels, go with us.

If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Perhaps until after Theseus's 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 will go with thee.

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

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!

We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

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

[TITANIA and her followers exit.]

OBERON

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

(150) Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid's music?

Well, do what you want. 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 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?

ROBIN

I remember.

I remember.

OBERON

That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)

(155) Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.

(160) 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.

(165) 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
(170) 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.

On that night, I saw—though you could not—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 continue on with her virginal thoughts. 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 it the "love-in-idleness" flower. 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 a whale sea monster can swim three miles.

ROBIN

I'll put a girdle round about the Earth
(175) In forty minutes.
I'll circle the world in forty minutes.

[ROBIN exits.]

OBERON

Having once this juice,

I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon—
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
(180) 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—
I'll make her render up her page to me.
(185) But who comes here? I am invisible.
And I will overhear their conference.

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.

[DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.]

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
(190) 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.

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

HELENA

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant.

(195) 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.

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 entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or rather, do I not in plainest truth

(200) Tell you I do not, nor I cannot, love you?

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 never will love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.

I am your spaniel. And, Demetrius,

The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.

Use me but as your spaniel—spurn me, strike me,

(205) Neglect me, lose me. Only give me leave,

Unworthy as I am, to follow you.

What worser place can I beg in your love—

And yet a place of high respect with me—

Than to be used as you use your dog?

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, even though I'm not good enough for you, to follow you. Is there a worse place I could ask to hold in your heart than to be treated as you would treat a dog? And yet I would consider it a place of honor.

DEMETRIUS

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

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

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
(215) 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.

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 (and all the bad ideas that occur to people in deserted places).

HELENA

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

Your goodness will protect me. And anyway the beauty of your face shines, so it doesn't seem like nighttime to me. And 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 from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

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

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be changed.
(230) 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.

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

*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

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.

(240) We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

Well, you've already done me bad things to me in the church, in the town, and in the fields. Geez, 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.]

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

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

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

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

[ROBIN enters.]

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.
Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.
Yes, here it is.

OBERON

I pray thee, give it me.
(takes flower from ROBIN)

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
(250) Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,

Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
(255) Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

(gives ROBIN some of the flower)

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

Please, give it to me. (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 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. (gives ROBIN part of the flower) You take some of it and search the forest A sweet Athenian lady 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 his 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

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

Don't worry, my lord. I'll do just what you say.

[They all exit, in opposite directions.]

Act 2, Scene 2

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

TITANIA

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

Come, dance in a circle and sing a fairy song. Then go off for a while to do your work: some of you, kill the worms plaguing the rosebuds; some of you to fight with bats for their leathery wings, so we can use them to make coats for my small elves; some of you to 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

(sings) You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen.
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong.
Come not near our fairy queen.
(singing) Snakes with spots forked tongues,
And prickly porcupines, don't be seen.
Poisonous lizards, do no harm.
Don't come near our fairy queen .

FAIRIES

(10) *(sings)* Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
Nor spell nor charm

(15) Come our lovely lady nigh.
So good night, with lullaby.

(singing) Nightingale, melodically
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.
(20) Worm nor snail, do no offense.
(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

(sings) Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
(25) Nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh.

So good night, with lullaby.
(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

Hence, away! Now all is well.
One aloof stand sentinel.
Come on, let's go! All is well. One of us remain alone and
stand guard.

[The FAIRIES exit.]

[OBERON enters.]

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.
(he squeezes 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, to your eye, it will look like your love. May you wake up when something disgusting is close by.

[OBERON exits.]

[LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.]

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.

Beautiful love, wandering like this in the wood is making you weaker and weaker, and to speak truthfully, I'm lost. Let's take a rest, if you think it's a good idea, and wait until it's daytime and less difficult.

HERMIA

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

For I upon this bank will rest my head.

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

LYSANDER

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both.

(45) One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

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

HERMIA

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

Lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.

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

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.

Oh, my sweet, 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 riddles very prettily.

Now much beshrew my manners and my pride

If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy

(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 has some skill with words. A curse upon my manners and my pride if I was saying that you were a liar. But, my noble love, for the sake of love and propriety, sleep a little further away. With that sort of separation is the proper way for a well-behaved bachelor and girl to sleep. For now, stay a distance away. And, good night, my sweet friend. May your love for me never changes for your whole life!

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!

*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

With half that wish the wisher's eyes be pressed!
May half that rest be yours.

[HERMIA and LYSANDER sleep.]

[ROBIN enters.]

ROBIN

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

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 clammy, dirty ground. Pretty girl! She shouldn't lie near this hard-hearted, crude man. (squeezes flower juice on LYSANDER 's eyelids) Jerk, 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

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

I demand that you get out of here, and don't keep following me like this.

HELENA

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

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

DEMETRIUS

Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go.

If you don't stay it will be dangerous for you. I'm going on alone.

[DEMETRIUS exits.]

HELENA

(90) Oh, I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,
For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.

(95) If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,
For beasts that meet me run away for fear.

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

(100) What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

(sees *LYSANDER*) But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?
Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

(105) Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

*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 was a monster. What cruel and lying mirror that I owned made me think to compare my own eyes to Hermia's eyes as bright as stores? (sees *LYSANDER*) But who is this here? Lysander, on the ground? Is he dead or asleep? I see no blood or injuries. Lysander, if you're alive, good sir, wake up.*

LYSANDER

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

(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

*(110) 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.
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

*Content with Hermia? No. I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
(115) 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.
(120) Things growing are not ripe until their season.
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
(125) Love's stories written in love's richest book.*

*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
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
the richest collection of love stories ever written.*

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
(130) 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.
(135) Oh, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused!

*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 more kind and
noble 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 sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there.
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
(140) 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.

(145) And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight.

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) 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.

(150) Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.

Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.

Lysander! What, removed? Lysander, lord!

What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word?

(155) Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.

Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.

No? Then I well perceive you all not nigh.

Either death or you I'll find immediately.

(waking up) *Help me, Lysander, help me! Pull this snake off of my chest. Oh God! What a dream I had! Lysander, look how I'm shaking with fear. I thought a snake was eating my heart while you sat smiling. Lysander! What, not here? Lysander, my lord! What, is he out of earshot? Gone? Not a sound, not a word? Oh no, where are you? Say something, if you can hear me. Say something, for love of God! I'm almost fainting with fear. Nothing? Then I must be right that you're not nearby. I'll go find you, or die trying, immediately.*

[HERMIA exits.]

Act 3, Scene 1

[While TITANIA sleeps onstage, the clowns enter: BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING.]

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

Are we all here?

QUINCE

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

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.

Peter Quince.

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

What is it, my fine friend Bottom?

BOTTOM

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

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 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

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

STARVELING

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

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

BOTTOM

Not a whit. I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed. And for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear.

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 them from being afraid.

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

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

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Won't the women be frightened of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

I'm worried about, I really do.

BOTTOM

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

Sirs, you should all think about this: bringing in—God protect us!—a lion in front of women is really an awful thing to do. Because there's not a more frightening wild bird than the lion. We should remember that.

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

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

BOTTOM

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

And there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

No, you should announce to the audience his actual name and make it so that half of face is visible through the lion costume. And he himself should say something like the following, or something else to the same defect (editor's note: Bottom means to say "effect" rather than 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.

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.

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

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

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

BOTTOM

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

A calendar, we need a calendar! Look in an almanac. Look up moonshine, look up moonshine!

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

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

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

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. (editor's note: English peasants believed that the man in the moon carried a bundle of sticks on his back. Also, Quince incorrectly uses the word "disfigure" when he means to say "figure.") *Then there's another problem: we need to have a wall in the great room. Because, as the story goes, Pyramus and Thisbe talked to each other through a little hole in a wall.*

SNOUT

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

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

BOTTOM

Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him

to signify wall. And let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

Someone has to play the part of Wall. As 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 (holds up his hand with two fingers split slightly apart) , and Pyramus and Thisbe can whisper to each other through that crack.

QUINCE

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

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 was a curtain offstage. Everyone else, do the same according to whether you should be on or offstage.

[ROBIN enters, unseen by anyone onstage.]

ROBIN

(25) *(aside)* What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here,

So near the cradle of the fairy queen?

What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor.

An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

(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, stand forth.

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, come forward.

BOTTOM

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

(as PYRAMUS) *Thisbe, flowers with odious smelling sweet—*

QUINCE

“Odors,” “odors.”

“Odors,” “odors.”

BOTTOM

(as PYRAMUS)

—odors savors sweet,

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.

But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,

(35) And by and by I will to thee appear.

(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

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

(to himself) *A stranger Pyramus has never been performed
anywhere.*

[ROBIN exits.]

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

Should I talk now?

QUINCE

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

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

(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

"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."

That's "Ninus's 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. Pyramus, enter. You missed your cue. It's "never gets tired."

FLUTE

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

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

[BOTTOM enters, with an ass's (i.e. a donkey's) head instead of his own. ROBIN also enters.]

BOTTOM

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

(as PYRAMUS) If I were handsome, my lovely Thisbe, I would still be entirely yours.

QUINCE

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

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

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

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll lead you about a round
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier.

(50) Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire.

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,

Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

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

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

[SNOUT enters.]

SNOUT

(55) O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee?
Oh, Bottom, you've been changed! What have you got on your head?

BOTTOM

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

[SNOUT exits.]

[QUINCE enters.]

QUINCE

Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated.
God bless you, Bottom, God bless you. You've been transformed.

[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.

(sings)

The ouzel cock, so black of hue

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill—

I see what 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

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

BOTTOM

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

(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?* (editor's note: the similarity of the words "cuckoo" and
"cuckold" led to common jokes about cuckoo's and men with
unfaithful wives.)

TITANIA

(65) I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
Mine ear is much enamored of thy note.
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape.
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

I beg you, noble human, 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

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

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.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

You're as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

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

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

Out of this wood do not desire to go.

Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.

(75) I am a spirit of no common rate.

The summer still doth tend upon my state.

And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.

I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.

And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,

(80) And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.

And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

*Don't wish 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 shall be a spirit
of the air. Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed,
come here!*

[Four fairies enter: PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and
MUSTARDSEED.]

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

Ready.

COBWEB

And I.

Me too.

MOTH

And I.

Me too.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

Me too.

ALL

(85) Where shall we go?

Where should we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.

(90) The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,

And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs

And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes

To have my love to bed and to arise.

And pluck the wings from painted butterflies

(95) To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

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. Bow and curtsy to him.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

Hello, mortal!

COBWEB

Hail.

Hello!

MOTH

Hail.

Hello!

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

Hello!

BOTTOM

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

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

COBWEB

Cobweb.

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

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

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.

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?

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

MUSTARDSEED

(105) Mustardseed.

Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

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

Good Mister Mustardseed, I know how you have patiently suffered, and how those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have been 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 Mister Mustardseed.

TITANIA

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

Come, serve him. Take him to my bed. The moon, I think, looks as if she has tears in her eyes. When she cries, every little flower also cries, mourning that someone has been stopped from having sex, or is being forced to have sex. Make sure my lover does not talk. Bring him to me in silence.

[They all exit.]

Act 3, Scene 2

[OBERON, the Fairy King, 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.

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

[ROBIN enters.]

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit?
(5) What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

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

ROBIN

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

Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So at his sight away his fellows fly;
(25) And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls.
He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch,
(30) Some sleeves, some hats—from yielders all things
catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear
And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
When in that moment so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

My mistress is in love with a monster. While she was sleeping nearby in her secret bed beneath a canopy of flowers, a bunch of fools, ignorant manual workers who earn their money working in shops in Athens, met to rehearse a play they hope to perform on Theseus's 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's 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 friend 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, 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

(35) This falls out better than I could devise.

But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

*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 took him sleeping—that is finished too—
And the Athenian woman by his side,

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

*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

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

(speaking only to ROBIN) *Be quiet. This is the Athenian we
were talking about.*

ROBIN

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

(speaking only to OBERON) *That's the woman I saw, but
that is not the man.*

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why rebuke you him that loves you so?

Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

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

enemy.

HERMIA

(45) Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse.
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

(50) The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the center creep and so displease

(55) Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

I'm scolding you at the moment, but I should be treating you even worse than that. Because 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

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

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

That's how someone who's been murdered should look, and that's how I should look, 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's this to my Lysander? Where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

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 had rather give his carcass to my hounds.
I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

(65) Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou drivest me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?

Henceforth be never numbered among men!

Oh, once tell true, tell true even for my sake—

Durst thou have looked upon him being awake,

(70) And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!

Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?

An adder did it, for with doubler tongue

Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Get away, dog! Away, 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 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 spend your passion on a misprised mood.

(75) I am not guilty of Lysander's blood.

Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

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 pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

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

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

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

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.

(80) And from thy hated presence part I so.

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

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 is no following her in this fierce vein.

Here therefore for a while I will remain.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

(85) For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe,

Which now in some slight measure it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

(lies down and sleeps)

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 you also have had a lack of sleep.

Now I'll try to lighten my sadness by getting a little sleep.
(lies down and falls asleep)

OBERON

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

(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

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

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.

OBERON

(95) About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find—
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.

(100) I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

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 go, I go. Look how I go,

Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

I go, I go, see how I go—faster than an arrow from a Tartar's bow. (editors note: Tartar's were renowned for their skill at archery.)

[ROBIN exits.]

OBERON

(squeezing flower juice into DEMETRIUS 's eyes)

Flower of this purple dye,

(105) Hit with Cupid's archery,

Sink in apple of his eye.

When his love he doth espy,

Let her shine as gloriously

As the Venus of the sky.

(110) When thou wakest, if she be by,

Beg of her for remedy.

(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.]

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,

Helena is here at hand,

And the youth, mistook by me,

(115) Pleading for a lover's fee.

Shall we their fond pageant see?

Lord, what fools these mortals be!

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

OBERON

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

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

ROBIN

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

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

[LYSANDER and HELENA enter.]

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

(125) Scorn and derision never come in tears.

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

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

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, when I swear my love for you, I cry. And when vows are made by someone who is crying, that origin 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

(130) You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
(135) Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

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 judgment when to her I swore.

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

HELENA

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

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

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

(140) To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. Oh, how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,

Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

(145) When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

(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

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

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 so offend an innocent girl, or torture a poor soul's patience all so you can have some fun.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.

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

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

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

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,

Whom I do love and will do till my death.

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 until I die.

HELENA

(170) Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

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

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.

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

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,

And now to Helen is it home returned,

(175) There to remain.

Lysander, 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 now my heart has returned home to Helena and it will remain with her.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

Helena, it's not true.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,

Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.

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

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

(180) Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,

The ear more quick of apprehension makes.

Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,

It pays the hearing double recompense.

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found.

(185) Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound

But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

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 my ears, thankfully, heard your voice. Why did you so cruelly leave me alone?

LYSANDER

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

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

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

What love could make you move from my side?

LYSANDER

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

*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 speak not as you think. It cannot be.
You don't believe what you're saying. It can't be.

HELENA

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

(215) So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crownèd with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?

(220) It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Oh ho, 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? We used to sit together Hermia, like two gods of craftsmanship, and sew one flower with our two needles, working on the same single piece of cloth, sitting 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 yet 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 am amazèd at your passionate words.
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

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

HELENA

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

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 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 understand not what you mean by this.
I don't understand what you're saying.

HELENA

(240) Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up—
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
(245) You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

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

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

HELENA

(250) Oh, excellent!

Oh, nice one!

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

(to LYSANDER) My love, don't mock her like that.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

(to LYSANDER) If Hermia's pleas don't get you to stop, I can force you to.

LYSANDER

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

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

I swear by that which I will lose for thee
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

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 guy to prove he's lying when he says that I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

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

DEMETRIUS

(260) Quick, come.

You're on. Let's do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lysander, what does all this mean?

[HERMIA holds LYSANDER back.]

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Away, you Ethiopie!

(to HERMIA) Go away, you African!

DEMETRIUS

No, no. He'll

Seem to break loose. Take on as you would follow,
(265) But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

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) Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

(to HERMIA) *Let go of me, you cat, you clingy burr. Let go of me, vile thing, or I'll shake you off of me like a snake.*

HERMIA

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

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

LYSANDER

Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

(270) Out, loathed medicine! O hated potion, hence!

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

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

Are you not joking?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

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

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

*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

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

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

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?

(280) 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?

*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

Ay, by my life,
(285) And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.
Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

Yeah, 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. Be clear, there's nothing more true than this: it's not a joke that I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA

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

Oh no! (to HELENA) You trickster, you flower-bud-eating little worm! You thief of love! What, did you sneak in at night and steal my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
(295) Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

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

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

"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, she won 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 pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me. I was never cursed.

(310) I have no gift at all in shrewishness.

I am a right maid for my cowardice.

Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

(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 like a girl should be, shy. Don't let her hit me. You might thinking, because she is somewhat shorter than me, that I can overpower her.

HERMIA

"Lower"? Hark, again!

"Shorter!" See, again!

HELENA

(315) Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.

I evermore did love you, Hermia,

Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—

Save that, in love unto Demetrius,

I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

(320) He followed you. For love I followed him.

But he hath chid me hence and threatened me

To strike me, spurn me—nay, to kill me too.
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
(325) And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Good Hermia, please don't be so angry with me. I always loved you, Hermia, and kept your secrets confidential, 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, out of love, I followed him. 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

Why, get you gone! Who is 't that hinders you?
So, get going! Who's stopping you?

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.
My silly heart, which I'm leaving behind here.

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?
What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.
With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

(330) Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee, Helena.
Don't be afraid. She won't hurt you, Helena.

DEMETRIUS

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

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

HELENA

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

She was a vixen when she went to school.

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

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 "low" and "little"!

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

"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 you gone, you dwarf,

(340) You minimus of hindering knotgrass made,

You bead, you acorn!

(to HERMIA) *Get out of here, you dwarf, you tiny little creature made of knotgrass weed, you tiny thing, you acorn!*

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.

Take not her part. For if thou dost intend

(345) Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

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

Now she holds me not.

Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

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

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

[DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.]

HERMIA

(350) You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.

Nay, go not back.

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

HELENA

I will not trust you, I,

Nor longer stay in your curst company.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.

My legs are longer though, to run away.

*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

(355) I am amazed and know not what to say.

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

[HERMIA exits.]

OBERON

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

(to ROBIN) *This is your fault. You continually make mistakes,
or else you're making trouble on purpose.*

ROBIN

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

*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

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

With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.

(gives ROBIN another flower)

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,

Whose liquor hath this virtuous property

(380) To take from thence all error with his might

And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

When they next wake, all this derision

Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.

And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,

(385) With league whose date till death shall never end.

Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,

I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy.

And then I will her charmèd eye release

From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

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's voice. And in that way you'll lead them away from each other until tiredness comes

creeps over them with its heavy legs and bat-like wings that they fall dead asleep. (OBERON 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 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

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

My fairy lord, all this must be done quickly. The dragons that pull the goddess of 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 and for that reason did not receive a Christian burial, but were instead buried at crossroads or on 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

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

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, and

spreads its rays over the ocean, 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

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

*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 art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.
Where are you, arrogant Demetrius? Say something.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS)

(410) Here, villain. Drawn and ready. Where art thou?

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

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.
I'll find you in a moment.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then

To plainer ground.

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) *Follow me, then, to flatter ground
(which is better for fighting).*

[LYSANDER exits.]

[DEMETRIUS enters.]

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again!

(415) Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?

Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

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

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER) Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,

(420) And wilt not come? Come, recreant. Come, thou child!
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

(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 don't actually come find me? Come, coward! Come,
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

Yea, art thou there?

Hey, are you there?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)

Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

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

[They exit.]

[LYSANDER enters.]

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.

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

The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.

I followed fast, but faster he did fly,

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me.

(lies down)

(430) Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

(sleeps)

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 jerk 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. (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. (falls asleep)

[ROBIN and DEMETRIUS enter.]

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)

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

(in LYSANDER's voice) *Ha, ha, ha! Coward, why aren't you coming?*

DEMETRIUS

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

*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. You're Where are you now?*

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER) Come hither. I am here.
(in LYSANDER's voice) *Come this way. I'm here.*

DEMETRIUS

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear
If ever I thy face by daylight see.
(440) 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*)

*No, you're just playing with 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. (lies
down and sleeps)*

[HELENA enters.]

HELENA

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

Oh, exhausting, long, and boring night, please end already. Start shining in the east you reassuring dawn, 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 you forget your sorrows, help me escape for a while from my own company. (lies down and sleeps)

ROBIN

Yet but three? Come one more.

(450) Two of both kinds make up four.

Here she comes, cursed and sad.

Cupid is a knavish lad

Thus to make poor females mad.

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 for making poor girls crazy.

[HERMIA enters.]

HERMIA

Never so weary, never so in woe,

(455) Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,

I can no further crawl, no further go.

My legs can keep no pace with my desires.

Here will I rest me till the break of day.

Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!

(lies down and sleeps)

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 the two of them do end up fighting! (lies down and sleeps)

ROBIN

(460) On the ground

Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye.
Gentle lover, remedy.
(squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER 's eyes)

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

(470) 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.

(475) The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.

*Sleep well on the ground. I'll put this cure, gentle lover, on your eyes. (squeezes the love juice on LYSANDER's eyes)
When you wake you'll be truly delighted to see, and be seen by, the woman you once loved. When you wake up, you'll be a perfect example of the old peasant about how each man should be faithful to his own love: "Jack will have Jill and all will be well."*

[ROBIN exits.]

Act 4, Scene 1

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA continue to sleep onstage. TITANIA enters with BOTTOM, who still has a donkey's head, as do 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.

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

BOTTOM

(5) Where's Peaseblossom?

Where's Peaseblossom?

PEASEBLOSSOM

Ready.

At your service.

BOTTOM

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

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

COBWEB

Ready.

At your service.

BOTTOM

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

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.]

(10) Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

Where's Sir Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

Ready.

At your service.

BOTTOM

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

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

MUSTARDSEED

What's your will?

What would you like?

BOTTOM

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

Nothing, good sir, except to help Sir Cobweb to 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

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

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

BOTTOM

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

I have a fairly good ear for music. Let's have someone play the triangle and smack some sticks together. (editor's note: the triangle and sticks played as a kind of clapper were not instruments that anyone with a good ear for music would regularly listen to)

TITANIA

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

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

BOTTOM

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

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

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

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

BOTTOM

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

I'd rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, please, don't let any of your people wake me up. An exposition for sleep has come over me. (editor's note: Bottom means "disposition" rather than "exposition," and is trying to say simply that he's in the mood to sleep.)

TITANIA

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

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

[The FAIRIES exit.]

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

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.]

[ROBIN enters.]

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?

(30) Her dotage now I do begin to pity.

For, meeting her of late behind the wood,

Seeking sweet favors from this hateful fool,

I did upbraid her and fall out with her.

For she his hairy temples then had rounded

(35) With a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers,

And that same dew, which sometime on the buds

Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,

Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes

Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.

(40) When I had at my pleasure taunted her

And she in mild terms begged my patience,

I then did ask of her her changeling child,

Which straight she gave me and her fairy sent

To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.

(45) And now I have the boy, I will undo

This hateful imperfection of her eyes.

And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp

From off the head of this Athenian swain,

That, he awaking when the other do,

(50) May all to Athens back again repair

And think no more of this night's accidents

But as the fierce vexation of a dream.

But first I will release the fairy queen.

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 fool's head.

After I had enjoyed all the taunting of her that I wanted to, while she quietly asked me to stop, I then asked her for the Indian boy. Right away she agreed to give him to me, and sent a fairy to bring him to my place in Fairyland. Now that I have the boy, I'll undo the awful flaw affecting her eyes. And, gentle Puck, remove the ass's 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 no more than the wild troubles of a bad dream. But first I'll cure the fairy queen.

[OBERON squeezes the juice from the second flower, which cures the effects of love juice, into TITANIA's eyes.]

Be as thou wast wont to be.

(55) See as thou wast wont to see.

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

Hath such force and blessèd power.

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

Be they way you used to be, and see the way you used to see. This juice comes from a flower bud belonging to Diana, the goddess of virginity, and it has the power to overturn the effects of the juice from Cupid's flower. Now, Titania, wake up, my sweet queen.

TITANIA

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

(60) Methought I was enamored of an ass.

(waking up) *Oberon, what a wild dream I had! I dreamed I was in love with an ass.*

OBERON

There lies your love.

Your love is lying right there.

TITANIA

How came these things to pass?
Oh, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!
How did all this happen? Oh, my eyes can't stand to see his face now!

OBERON

Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.
Titania, music call, and strike more dead
(65) Than common sleep of all these five the sense.
Be quiet for a while. Robin, remove his ass's head. Titania, call to your fairies for some music, so that these five humans (editor's note: the four lovers and Bottom) will sleep more deeply than is normal.

TITANIA

Music, ho! Music such as charmeth sleep!
Music, now! Play music that magically makes people sleep.

[Music plays.]

ROBIN

(taking the ass's head off BOTTOM)
Now when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes peep.
(removing the ass's head from BOTTOM) *When you wake up, see once more through your own foolish eyes.*

OBERON

Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
(70) 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,
(75) And bless it to all fair prosperity.
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Play the music! Come here, my queen, take my hands, and we'll dance on the ground where these sleepers are lying, thereby rocking 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's 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.

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

OBERON

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

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 in our flight
(85) Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

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, find out the forester.

For now our observation is performed.

(90) And since we have the vaward of the day,

My love shall hear the music of my hounds.

Uncouple in the western valley. Let them go.

Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.

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.]

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

(95) And mark the musical confusion

Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

My beautiful queen, we'll go up the mountaintop and listen to the musical chaos of the barking of the hounds at the same time as the echoes of that barking.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,

When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear

With hounds of Sparta. Never did I hear

(100) Such gallant chiding. For, besides the groves,

The skies, the fountains, every region near

Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard

So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

I was with (the Greek mythological heroes) Hercules and Cadmus 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 part of the same communal cry. I'd never heard such wild music, such lovely thunder.

THESEUS

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

But, soft! What nymphs are these?

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 here asleep.
(115) And this, Lysander. This Demetrius is.
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena.
I wonder of their being here together.

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

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

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.

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

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

[One of the servants exits.]

[A horn blows and shouts sound offstage. LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA, wake up suddenly.]

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

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

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all kneel.]

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

Forgive us, my lord.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.

Please, all of you, stand up.

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

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I know you two are rival enemies.

(130) How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy
To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?

(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 shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking. But as yet, I swear,

(135) 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—

I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,

(140) Without the peril of the Athenian law—

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 have enough!

I beg the law, the law, upon his head.

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

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

(to THESEUS) *Enough, enough, my lord. You've heard enough: I ask that the law, the law, be brought down upon his head. They were going to run away, Demetrius, 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, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood.

And I in fury hither followed them,

(150) Fair Helena in fancy following me.

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power—

But by some power it is—my love to Hermia,

Melted as the snow, seems to me now

As the remembrance of an idle gaud

(155) Which in my childhood I did dote upon.

And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,

The object and the pleasure of mine eye,

Is only Helena. To her, my lord,

Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia.

(160) But like in sickness did I loathe this food.

But as in health, come to my natural taste,

Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,

And will for evermore be true to it.

(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, love her, and long for her, and will always be true to her.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.

(165) Of this discourse we more will hear anon.

Egeus, I will overbear your will.

For in the temple by and by with us

These couples shall eternally be knit.

And, for the morning now is something worn,

(170) Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.

Away with us to Athens. Three and three,

We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

Come, Hippolyta.

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. In the temple, later on, 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 women, we'll throw a feast and celebration. Come, Hippolyta.

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

DEMETRIUS

These things seem small and undistinguishable,

(175) Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Everything that happened seems distant and difficult to tell apart, like far-off mountains may actually be clouds.

HERMIA

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

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

HELENA

So methinks.

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

*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 are awake? It seems to me

(180) That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

*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

Yea, and my father.

Yes I do, and my father was here too.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

And he did bid us follow to the temple.

And he told us to follow him to the temple.

DEMETRIUS

Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him
(185) And by the way let us recount our dreams.

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

(waking up) Call me when my cue comes, and I will say my line. My next cue is "Most handsome Pyramus." Hey there! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-repairman? Snout the repairman? Starveling? God save me, have they all run off and left me sleeping here? I had such a dream—a dream that is beyond the abilities of men to describe. Any man who tried to explain this dream would be an ass. I thought I was—no man can say what I thought I was. I thought I was... I thought I had—but any man who tried to explain what I thought I had would be a fool. Not one man's eye has ever heard, not one man's ear has ever seen, not one man's

hand has ever tasted, nor tongue understood, nor heart explained what my dream was like. I'll get Peter Quince to write a ballad about this dream. It will be called "Bottom's Dream" because it's so deep that it has no bottom. And I'll sing it for the duke in the intermission of the play. Or perhaps, to make it even more elegant, I'll sing it when Thisbe dies.

[BOTTOM exits.]

Act 4, Scene 2

[QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING enter.]

QUINCE

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

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

STARVELING

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

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

FLUTE

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

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

QUINCE

It is not possible. You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

It wouldn't be possible. Other than he, there's not another man in all of Athens who can play Pyramus.

FLUTE

(5) No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

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

QUINCE

Yea, and the best person too. And he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

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

FLUTE

You must say "paragon." A "paramour" is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

You mean "paragon." A "paramour" is, God bless us, something naughty. (editor's note: a "paramour" is a mistress to a married man.)

[SNUG enters.]

SNUG

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

Sirs, 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.

FLUTE

(10) 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.

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 sixpence a day, or nothing at all.

[BOTTOM enters.]

BOTTOM

Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?

Where are my boys? Where are my good fellows?

QUINCE

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

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

BOTTOM

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

Sirs, 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

Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Tell us, good Bottom.

BOTTOM

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

No, you won't get a word from me. All I'll tell you is that the duke has finished dinner. Go get your costumes, and strings to attach your false beards, and new ribbons for your shoes.

Then meet up right away at the palace. All of you, study your lines again. To get to the point: our play has been chosen to be performed in front of the duke. So, make sure Thisbe has on clean underwear. And don't let the one of you who is playing the lion cut his nails, because he needs them to stick out to look like lion's claws. And, my beloved actors, don't eat any onions or garlic, because we must speak with sweet-smelling breath. If we do all this, I have no doubt that they will say, "it's a sweet comedy." No more talking. Let's go, let's go!

[All exit.]

Act 5, Scene 1

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

What these lovers are describing is strange, my Theseus.

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!

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 one's 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 those that are heavenly, and take the unreal things that tumble out of their imagination and writes about them as if they were actual places or things. People who have such strong imaginations, when they feel some kind of joy, then imagine 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 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.

But the full story that they are telling of 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.

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

THESEUS

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

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.

LYSANDER

More than to us

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

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

THESEUS

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we have

To wear away this long age of three hours

Between our after-supper and bedtime?

(35) Where is our usual manager of mirth?

What revels are in hand? Is there no play,

To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?

Call Philostrate.

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

PHILOSTRATE

Here, mighty Theseus.

I'm here, Theseus.

THESEUS

Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?

(40) What masque, what music? How shall we beguile

The lazy time if not with some delight?

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 paper)

There is a brief, how many sports are ripe.

Make choice of which your highness will see first.

(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

(reads)

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

(45) We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
(50) Of learning, late deceased in beggary."

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe. Very tragical mirth."

"Merry" and "tragical"? "Tedious" and "brief"?

That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord?

(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, 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 strange snow. What will we think of this play which claims to be such contradictory things?

PHILOSTRATE

(55) A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play.
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious. For in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

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

It is a play, my lord, 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

(65) What are they that do play it?
Who are the people performing 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.

*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

(70) And we will hear it.

And we will watch it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord.

It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world—
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain

(75) To do you service.

*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 will enjoy their efforts to please you despite their
bad acting and incorrectly remembered lines.*

THESEUS

I will hear that play.

For never anything can be amiss

When simpleness and duty tender it.

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

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

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

HIPPOLYTA

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

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

THESEUS

Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.
Why, my noble love, you won't see any such thing.

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.
Philostrate says they're not good at acting.

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake,
(85) And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes,
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
(90) Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practiced accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,

Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome,
(95) And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.

Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

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 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 finished by suddenly breaking off without having finished or 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, love and tongue-tied simplicity say the most precisely by saying the least.

[PHILOSTRATE enters.]

PHILOSTRATE

*(100) So please your grace, the Prologue is addressed.
May it please your grace, the actor who will deliver the prologue is ready.*

THESEUS

Let him approach.
Let him come forward.

[QUINCE enters, performing as the PROLOGUE.]

PROLOGUE

If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
(105) That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to contest you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
(110) The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

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

(Editor's note: Quince completely alters the meaning of this speech by speaking it with the punctuation in the wrong places. Had he spoken it with the punctuation in the right places, it would read like this: If we offend, it is our intention that you know we did not come here to offend. But it is our intention to show you our small acting skills. That is the true purpose for our coming. Understand, then, that we come, but not in a spirit of ill will. Our purpose is to make you happy. Our true goal is to bring you complete delight. We are not here so that later you will regret this. The actors are ready, and by watching their play you'll understand everything.)

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

This guy doesn't pay attention to punctuation.

LYSANDER

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

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

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

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

THESEUS

(115) His speech was like a tangled chain. Nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

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

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.

(120) This man, with lime and roughcast, doth present Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

(125) Presenteth Moonshine. For, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb—there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which “Lion” hight by name,

The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

(130) Did scare away, or rather did affright.

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain.

(135) Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.

And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

(140) At large discourse, while here they do remain.

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 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 flirt and 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. At that, he raised his sword, his bloodthirsty responsible blade, and bravely stabbed his the hot blood in his 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 more fully while they stand here on the stage.

THESEUS

I wonder if the lion be to speak.

I wonder if the lion will speak.

DEMETRIUS

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

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

[PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.]

WALL

In this same interlude it doth befall

(145) 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.

(150) 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.

At this moment of the play I, Snout, play a wall. A wall, I want you to know, that 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.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Would you ever hope to hear plaster speak more eloquently?

DEMETRIUS

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

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

[PYRAMUS enters.]

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!

Pyramus is approaching the wall. Be quiet!

PYRAMUS

O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!

O night, which ever art when day is not!

(160) 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,

(165) Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne!

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, 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!

(170) Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

Thanks, considerate wall. May Zeus 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!

THESEUS

The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.
Since the wall has thoughts and feelings, I think it should curse back at him.

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.

(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

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

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 will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face. Thisbe?

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

THISBE

My love thou art, my love, I think.
You are my love, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace.

(185) And like Limander am I trusty still.

Whatever you think, I am your gracious lover. And, like Limander, I'm still faithful to you. (editor's note: the correct reference is to the Greek hero Leander. There is no Limander.)

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

And I'll be as faithful as Helen of Troy, until the day I'm destined to die. (editor's note: the correct reference is to the Greek heroine Hero, who was Leander's faithful lover. Helen of Troy was notoriously unfaithful.)

PYRAMUS

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

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

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

I'm as faithful to you as Shafalus was to Procrus. (editor's note: correct reference is to Cephalus and Procris, who were also famous lovers in Greek myth.)

PYRAMUS

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

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

THISBE

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

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

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

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

THISBE

Tide life, tide death, I come without delay.

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

[PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.]

WALL

Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so.

And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

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

[WALL exits.]

THESEUS

(195) Now is the moon down between the two neighbors.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

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

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

This is the silliest thing I've ever seen.

THESEUS

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

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

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

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

THESEUS

(200) 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.

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 and MOONSHINE enter.]

LION

You, ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear

The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,

(205) 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

(210) Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

You ladies, who fear in your gentle hearts 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.

THESEUS

A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

It's a noble beast, with a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

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

He's the best actor at being a beast that I've ever seen, my lord.

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox for his valor.

This lion seems more sly like a fox than courageous.

THESEUS

(215) True. And a goose for his discretion.

True. And he's like a goose in the way he is careful with what he says. (editor's note: in other words, he's not careful at all in what he says.)

DEMETRIUS

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

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

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.

He's not discreet enough to be brave, actually, just as the goose can't carry the fox. No matter. Let's leave all this to his discretion, and listen to the what the moon has to say.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present—

This lantern symbolizes the horned moon. (editor's note: the "horned moon" is the crescent moon.)

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

He should have worn the horns on his head. (editor's note: horns on the head indicate a man whose wife has been unfaithful to him.)

THESEUS

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

He's not shaped like crescent, so his horns are probably invisible inside the circle.

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present.

Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be.

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"?

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 dares not come there for the candle. For you see, it is already in snuff.

He dares not go in there because of the candle. Because, you see, it must first be put out.

HIPPOLYTA

(225) I am weary of this moon. Would he would change!

I'm tired of this moon. If only he would wane away.

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.

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

Proceed, Moon.

Continue, 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.

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

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

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

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

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

LION

(roaring) O!

(roaring) Oh!

[THISBE runs off, leaving her cloak behind.]

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion!

Nice roar, Lion!

THESEUS

Well run, Thisbe!

Nice running, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA

Well shone, Moon! Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

Nice shining, Moon! Really, the Moon shines quite well.

[LION bites and shakes THISBE's cloak, staining it with
blood.]

THESEUS

Well moused, Lion!

*Way to shake that mantle around the way a cat shakes a
mouse, Lion!*

[PYRAMUS enters.]

DEMETRIUS

(235) And then came Pyramus.

And then Pyramus arrived.

[LION exits.]

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

So then the lion disappeared.

PYRAMUS

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.

For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
(240) I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

(245) How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What, stained with blood?

Approach, ye Furies fell!

(250) O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum.

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

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 love! Your beautiful cloak, what, 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

This passion and the death of a dear friend would go near to make a man look sad.

Watching this performance would be almost enough to make a man sad, so long as a good friend of yours was died while you were watching it.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Curse my heart, but I feel sorry this man.

PYRAMUS

(255) O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer.
Come, tears, confound!

(260) Out, sword, and wound!
The pap of Pyramus—
Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop. (*stabs himself*)
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

(265) Now am I dead.
Now am I fled.
My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light.
Moon, take thy flight.

Oh why, Mother Nature, did you create lions? A dreadful lion has deflowered my darling (editor's note: Bottom means to say "devoured," not deflowered) , 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. (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.

[MOONSHINE exits.]

(270) Now die, die, die, die, die.
(*dies*)

Now die, die, die, die, die. (*dies*)

DEMETRIUS

No die, but an ace for him, for he is but one.

This guy is just a single face of a die—the one, because he's a true original. (editor's note: Demetrius is using "die" to mean the singular of "dice," as in dice for gaming)

LYSANDER

Less than an ace, man. For he is dead. He is nothing.

He's a die with even fewer than one dot. He's dead, so he's nothing.

THESEUS

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and prove an ass.

With the help of a doctor he might recover and become an ass.

HIPPOLYTA

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

What's going to happen since Moonshine has left before Thisbe comes back. How will she be able to find her lover?

THESEUS

(275) She will find him by starlight. Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

She'll see him by starlight. Here she comes. Her crying will end the play.

[THISBE enters.]

HIPPOLYTA

Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus. I hope she will be brief.

I don't think this Pyramus deserves a whole lot of crying. I hope she does it quickly.

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.

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.

She's seen him already with those sweet eyes of hers.

DEMETRIUS

(280) And thus she means, *videlicet* —

And so she'll start moaning, as we expected—

THISBE

Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

(285) Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips,

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks

(290) Are gone, are gone.

Lovers, make moan.

His eyes were green as leeks.

O Sisters three,

Come, come to me

(295) With hands as pale as milk.

Lay them in gore,

Since you have shore

With shears his thread of silk.

Tongue, not a word.

(300) Come, trusty sword.

Come, blade, my breast imbrue. (*stabs herself*)

And, farewell, friends.

Thus Thisbe ends.

Adieu, adieu, adieu.
(dies)

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 lips as white as a lily, nose red as a cherry, cheeks yellow as a marigold 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. (stabs herself) Goodbye, friends! This is how Thisbe dies. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. (dies)

THESEUS

(305) Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS

Ay, and Wall too.

Yes, and Wall too.

BOTTOM

(out of character) No, assure you. The wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

(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, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse—for when the players are all dead, there needs none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it

would have been a fine tragedy. And so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

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 leave off on your epilogue.

[The actors dance. BOTTOM and FLUTE exit.]

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.
Lovers, to bed. 'Tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn
As much as we this night have overwatched.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels and new jollity.

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.

[They all exit.]

[ROBIN enters.]

ROBIN

(310) Now the hungry lion roars
And the wolf behowls the moon,

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
(315) Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
(320) Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide.
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team
From the presence of the sun,
(325) Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic. Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house.
I am sent with broom before
To sweep the dust behind the door.

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, the goddess of the night, following darkness like a dream—are merry. 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.

[OBERON and TITANIA enter with all their servants and followers.]

OBERON

(330) Through the house give glimmering light,

By the dead and drowsy fire.
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier.
And this ditty, after me,
(335) Sing and dance it trippingly.

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 by rote,
To each word a warbling note.
Hand in hand with fairy grace
Will we sing and bless this place.

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 and TITANIA and the FAIRIES sing and dance.]

OBERON

(340) Now until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride bed will we,
Which by us shall blessèd be.
And the issue there create
(345) Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be.
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand.
(350) Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despisèd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field dew consecrate,

(355) Every fairy take his gait.
And each several chamber bless
Through this palace with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blessed
Ever shall in safety rest.

(360) Trip away. Make no stay.
Meet me all by break of day.

Now, until the dawn, each fairy wander through this house. Titania and I will go to the bless royal marriage bed, so that the children conceived in it bed 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 harelips, or scars, or abnormal birthmarks, all of which will cause upset if a baby is born with it. Every fairy 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.

[All exit except for ROBIN.]

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
(365) While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
(370) And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.

(375) So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

If we actors have offended you, just think of it like this and all will be fixed—you've been sleeping here when these visions appeared. And this silly little tail, was just the product of a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, do not scold. If you forgive us, we'll make it right. And, since I'm an honest Puck, I swear that if we have the undeserved luck to not get hissed at, we'll make it up to you soon. Otherwise, you can call me a liar. So good night to you all. Give me applause if we are friends, and Robin will make it up to you in the future.

[He exits.]

Just the Modern Translation

Act 1, Scene 1

[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, looking in the sky like a silver bow newly bent into a curve, 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 spirit of fun. Send sadness out to funerals, that pale emotion has no place at our festivities.

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

Hippolyta, I flirted 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 enters with his daughter HERMIA, along with
LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.]

EGEUS

Joy to you Theseus, our famous and distinguished duke!

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus. What's going on with you?

EGEUS

I've come, 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 her obedience (*which she owes me*) into harsh stubbornness. And, my gracious duke, if she, 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 the law expressly states for just such a case as this: either she marries Demetrius, or she dies.

THESEUS

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, nor 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.

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, goddess of the cold moon and chastity. Those who can control their passions and remain virgins their whole lives are three-times blessed. But a married woman more fully develops and is happier in *this* world than is a virgin

who achieves the blessing of chastity but grows, lives, and withers to death as a flower on the stem.

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 to 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

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 what is mine, because I love him, I will give to him. 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's, 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 as if he was 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 both you 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, 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 both of you that I want to discuss.

EGEUS

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

[They exit, except LYSANDER and HERMIA.]

LYSANDER

What's this, 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 no! 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 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 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

Then 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 are dreams, sighs, wishes, and tears.

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 sees me as a son. There, gentle Hermia, where the harsh laws of Athens can't follow us, I could marry you. 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

Oh, noble Lysander! I swear to you – by Cupid's strongest bow, by his best gold-tipped arrow; by the innocent doves that drive the Goddess of Love's 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.

LYSANDER

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

[HELENA enters.]

HERMIA

Welcome, beautiful Helena! Where are you going?

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. 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 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

His foolishness, Helena, 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 again see my face. 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 in 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, the moon, 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.

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 midnight tomorrow.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

[HERMIA exits.]

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

[LYSANDER exits.]

HELENA

I can't believe how much happier and luckier some people can be than others. Throughout all of Athens I am considered to be as beautiful as Hermia. But who cares? Demetrius doesn't think so. He refuses to notice what everyone other than him knows. But just as he wanders around dazed by love, obsessing over Hermia's eyes, I'm doing the same thing while fixating on his qualities. Love can make things that are disgusting, awful, or insubstantial seem beautiful and dignified. When in love, people see not

with their eyes but with their minds. And that's the reason that winged Cupid, the god of love, is shown in paintings as being blind. Love also doesn't have any judgment or taste—Cupid having wings but no eyes symbolizes love's reckless rush. That's why love is often said to be a child, because it's so often tricked into making bad choices. Like mischievous boys who play lying games, the boy Cupid is always breaking promises. Before Demetrius noticed Hermia's eyes, he showered me with so many oaths that he was completely mine that they were like hail falling from the sky. Yet when his feelings began to heat up for Hermia, he disappeared along with his melting promises. I'm going to go tell Demetrius about Hermia's plan to run away. Then he'll run after her into the forest tomorrow night. If he thanks me for giving him this secret news, it will be worth it even if he then chases after Hermia. Because I plan to use my pain to enrich myself, by letting him chase after her but in the end return to me.

[Helena exits.]

Act 1, Scene 2

[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.
(editor's note: Bottom often mixes up words. Here he says "generally" when he means "separately".)

QUINCE

Here is the list of the names of every man in Athens who we consider good enough to perform 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

Will do. Our play is called *The Very Tragic Comedy of the Awful Deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, will be Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What's Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover who kills himself, very nobly, 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. OK, now list the other actors. But in fact my true talent is to play a tyrant. I'd make a wonderful Hercules, 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 the sun god's car

Will shine from far

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 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 who Pyramus loves.

FLUTE

No, really, 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 lover! I'm your dear Thisbe, your dear lady!"

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Well, okay. 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 be Pyramus's father. 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? Please, if you do, 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. *(editor's note: Bottom thinks aggravate means quiet or moderate, when in fact it means the opposite.)* 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

Uh, whatever you want.

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 one of those golden coins, a French crown.

QUINCE

Some French heads have no hair at all (because syphilis, "The French disease", has made all their hair fall out), 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 learn your lines by tomorrow night and then meet me 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 and courageously. (*editor's note: Bottom means "unseen," not obscene.*) Work hard, memorize your lines perfectly. Goodbye.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Enough. Show up, or drop out of the play.

[They all exit.]

Act 2, Scene 1

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

ROBIN

What is going on, 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 her fairy droplets. 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 a charming boy from an Indian king to be her servant. She's never kidnapped 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, and stopping beer from foaming, and leading 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 that about, the merry 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!" before starting to cough, and then everyone around hold their bellies and laugh, 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, the Fairy King, and his followers enter. On the other side of the stage, TITANIA, the Fairy Queen, and her

followers enter.]

OBERON

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

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Wait, you rash 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 speaking 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 them with joy and prosperity.

OBERON

How can you shamelessly making 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, and in revenge have made nasty fogs rise up from the sea and fall as rain upon the land so that rivers have grown so large they flood the land around them. All the work done by farmers' and their oxen have 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 the 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 coming back 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's 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.

[TITANIA and her followers exit.]

OBERON

Well, do what you want. 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 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?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

On that night, I saw—though you could not—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 continue on with her virginal thoughts. 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 it the "love-in-idleness" flower. 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 a whale sea monster can swim three miles.

ROBIN

I'll circle the world in forty minutes.

[ROBIN exits.]

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.

[DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.]

DEMETRIUS

I don't love you, so stop following me. Where are Lysander and beautiful Hermia? Lysander I want to kill, while Hermia kills me with her beauty. You told me they snuck into this forest. And here I am, going mad 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 never will love you?

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, even though I'm not good enough for you, to follow you. Is there a worse place I could ask to hold 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 (and 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. And 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 me bad things to me in the church, in the town, and in the fields. Geez, 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.]

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 enters.]

Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

ROBIN

Yes, here it is.

OBERON

Please, give it to me. *(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 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. *(gives ROBIN part of the flower)* You take some of it and search the forest. A sweet Athenian lady 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 his 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. I'll do just what you say.

[They all exit, in opposite directions.]

Act 2, Scene 2

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

TITANIA

Come, dance in a circle and sing a fairy song. Then go off for a while to do your work: some of you, kill the worms plaguing the rosebuds; some of you to fight with bats for their leathery wings, so we can use them to make coats for my small elves; some of you to 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 forked tongues,
And prickly porcupines, don't be seen.
Poisonous lizards, do no harm.
Don't come near our fairy queen .*

FAIRIES

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

FIRST FAIRY

*(singing) Spiders with your webs, stay away.
You long-legged things, begone!
Black beetles, don't come near.*

Worms and snails, don't be bad.

FAIRIES

(singing) 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 remain alone and stand guard.

[The FAIRIES exit.]

[OBERON enters.]

OBERON

(he squeezes 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, to your eye, it will look like your love. May you wake up when something disgusting is close by.

[OBERON exits.]

[LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.]

LYSANDER

Beautiful love, wandering like this in the wood is making you weaker and weaker, and to speak truthfully, I'm lost. Let's take a rest, if you think it's a good idea, and wait until it's daytime and less difficult.

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 sweet, 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. But, my noble love, for the sake of love and propriety, sleep a little further away. With that sort of separation is the proper way for a well-behaved bachelor and girl to sleep. For now, stay a distance away. And, good night, my sweet friend. May your love for me never changes 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 sleep.]

[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 clammy, dirty ground. Pretty girl! She shouldn't lie near this hard-hearted, crude man. (*squeezes flower juice on LYSANDER's eyelids*) Jerk, 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 don't keep following me like this.

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

If you don't stay it will be dangerous for you. I'm going on alone.

[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 was a monster. What cruel and lying mirror that I owned made me think to compare my own eyes to Hermia's eyes as bright as stores? (*sees LYSANDER*) But who is this here? Lysander, on the ground? Is he dead or asleep? I see no blood or injuries. Lysander, if you're alive, good sir, wake up.

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 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 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 more kind and noble 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) Help me, Lysander, help me! Pull this snake off of my chest. Oh God! What a dream I had! Lysander, look how I'm shaking with fear. I thought a snake was eating my heart while you sat smiling. Lysander! What, not here? Lysander, my lord! What, is he out of earshot? Gone? Not a sound, not a word? Oh no, where are you? Say something, if you can hear me. Say something, for love of God! I'm

almost fainting with fear. Nothing? Then I must be right that you're not nearby. I'll go find you, or die trying, immediately.

[HERMIA exits.]

Act 3, Scene 1

[While TITANIA sleeps onstage, the clowns enter: BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING.]

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 them 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 of the lion?

STARVELING

I'm worried about, I really do.

BOTTOM

Sirs, you should all think about this: bringing in—God protect us!—a lion in front of women is really an awful thing to do. Because there's not a more frightening wild bird 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 face is visible through the lion costume. And he himself should say something like the following, or something else to the same defect (*editor's note: Bottom means to say "effect" rather than 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.

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 moonshine, look up moonshine!

QUINCE

(takes out 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, [javascript:void\(0\);](#) or represent, the character of Moonshine. *(editor's note: English peasants believed that the man in the moon carried a bundle of sticks on his back. Also, Quince incorrectly uses the word "disfigure" when he means to say "figure.")* Then there's another problem: we

need to have a wall in the great room. Because, as the story goes, Pyramus and Thisbe talked to each other through a little hole in a wall.

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

Someone has to play the part of Wall. As 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 (*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 was a curtain offstage. Everyone else, do the same according to whether you should be on or offstage.

[ROBIN enters, unseen by anyone onstage.]

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.

[ROBIN exits.]

FLUTE

Should I talk now?

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’s 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. Pyramus, enter. You missed your cue. It’s “never gets tired.”

FLUTE

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

[BOTTOM enters, with an ass's (i.e. a donkey's) head instead of his own. ROBIN also enters.]

BOTTOM

(*as PYRAMUS*) If I were handsome, my lovely Thisbe, I would still be entirely yours.

QUINCE

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

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

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 have you got on your head?

BOTTOM

What do you think I've got 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 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? *(editor's note: the similarity of the words "cuckoo" and "cuckold" led to common jokes about cuckoo's and men with unfaithful wives.)*

TITANIA

I beg you, noble human, 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.

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

Don't wish 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 shall be a spirit of the air. Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed, come here!

[Four fairies enter: PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and
MUSTARDSEED.]

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. 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 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 Mister Peapod, your father. Good Mister 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 Mister Mustardseed, I know how you have patiently suffered, and how those cowardly, gigantic sides of beef have been 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 Mister Mustardseed.

TITANIA

Come, serve him. Take him to my bed. The moon, I think, looks as if she has tears in her eyes. When she cries, every little flower also cries, mourning that someone has been stopped from having sex, or is being forced to have sex. Make sure my lover does not talk. Bring him to me in silence.

[They all exit.]

Act 3, Scene 2

[OBERON, the Fairy King, enters.]

OBERON

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

[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, a bunch of fools, ignorant manual workers who earn their money working in shops in Athens, met to rehearse a play they hope to perform on Theseus's 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's 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 friend 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, 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

(speaking only to ROBIN) Be quiet. This is the Athenian we were talking about.

ROBIN

(speaking only to OBERON) 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. Because 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, 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, dog Away, 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 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 you also have had a lack of sleep. Now I'll try to lighten my sadness by getting a little sleep.
(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.

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 go, I go, see how I go—faster than an arrow from a Tartar's bow. (*editors note: Tartar's were renowned for their skill at archery.*)

[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.]

ROBIN

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

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 an unparalleled enjoyment. 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, when I swear my love for you, I cry. And when vows are made by someone who is crying, that origin 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

You don’t have any now, in my opinion, 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 so offend an innocent girl, or torture a poor soul's patience all so you can have some fun.

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 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 now 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 my ears, thankfully, 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

Oh ho, 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? We used to sit together Hermia, like two gods of craftsmanship, and sew

one flower with our two needles, working on the same single piece of cloth, sitting 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 yet 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 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 guy 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 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 clingy 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 Turk! Get away, you disgusting poison. You hated potion, get away!

HERMIA

Are you not 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

Yeah, 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. Be clear, there's nothing more true than this: it's not a joke that I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA

Oh no! (*to HELENA*) You trickster, you flower-bud-eating little worm! 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, she won 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 like a girl should be, shy. Don't let her hit me. You might thinking, because she is somewhat shorter than me, that I can overpower her.

HERMIA

"Shorter!" See, again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, please don't be so angry with me. I always loved you, Hermia, and kept your secrets confidential, 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, out of love, I followed him. 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 taker Hermia's side.

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 thing, 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's voice. And in that way you'll lead them away from each other until tiredness comes creeps over them with its heavy legs and bat-like wings that they fall dead asleep. (*OBERON 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 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 goddess of 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 and for that reason did not receive a Christian burial, but were instead buried at crossroads or on 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, and spreads its rays over the ocean, 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's voice) I'm over here, you villain, with my sword out and ready to fight. Where are you?

LYSANDER

I'll find you in a moment.

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) Follow me, then, to flatter ground (which is better for fighting).

[LYSANDER exits.]

[DEMETRIUS enters.]

DEMETRIUS

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

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) You coward, are you bragging to the stars and telling the bushes that you're looking for a fight, but then don't actually come find me? Come, coward! Come, 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.

[They 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 jerk 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. *(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. *(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. You're Where are you now?

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

No, you're just playing with 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. *(lies down and sleeps)*

[HELENA enters.]

HELENA

Oh, exhausting, long, and boring night, please end already. Start shining in the east you reassuring dawn, 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 you forget your sorrows, help me escape for a while from my own company. *(lies down and sleeps)*

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 for making poor girls crazy.

[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 the two of them do end up fighting! *(lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

Sleep well on the ground. I'll put this cure, gentle lover, on your eyes. *(squeezes the love juice on LYSANDER's eyes)* When you wake you'll be truly delighted to see, and be seen by, the woman you once loved. When you wake up, you'll be a perfect example of the old peasant about how each man should be faithful to his own love: "Jack will have Jill and all will be well."

[ROBIN exits.]

Act 4, Scene 1

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

TITANIA

(to BOTTOM) Come, sit here on this flowery bed while I caress your lovable cheeks, and stick the stems of 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 Sir Mustardseed?

MUSTARDSEED

At your service.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

What would you like?

BOTTOM

Nothing, good sir, except to help Sir Cobweb to 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?

BOTTOM

I have a fairly good ear for music. Let's have someone play the triangle and smack some sticks together. *(editor's note: the triangle and sticks played as a kind of clapper were not instruments that anyone with a good ear for music would regularly listen to)*

TITANIA

Or tell me, sweet love, what do 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 adventurous 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 people wake me up. An exposition for sleep has come over me. *(editor's note: 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.]

[ROBIN enters.]

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 fool's head. After I had enjoyed all the taunting of her that I wanted to, while she quietly asked me to stop, I then asked her for the

Indian boy. Right away she agreed to give him to me, and sent a fairy to bring him to my place in Fairyland. Now that I have the boy, I'll undo the awful flaw affecting her eyes. And, gentle Puck, remove the ass's 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 no more than the wild troubles of a bad dream. But first I'll cure the fairy queen.

[OBERON squeezes the juice from the second flower, which cures the effects of love juice, into TITANIA's eyes.]

Be they way you used to be, and see the way you used to see. This juice comes from a flower bud belonging to Diana, the goddess of virginity, and it has the power to overturn the effects of the juice from Cupid's flower. Now, Titania, wake up, my sweet queen.

TITANIA

(waking up) 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's head. Titania, call to your fairies for some music, so that these five humans *(editor's note: the four lovers and Bottom)* will sleep more deeply than is normal.

TITANIA

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

[Music plays.]

ROBIN

(removing the ass's head from BOTTOM) When you wake up, see once more through your own foolish eyes.

OBERON

Play the music! Come here, my queen, take my hands, and we'll dance on the ground where these sleepers are lying, thereby rocking 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's 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, 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 barking of the hounds at the same time as the echoes of that barking.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with (the Greek mythological heroes) Hercules and Cadmus 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 part of the same communal cry. I'd never heard such wild music, such lovely thunder.

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.

THESEUS

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

[One of the servants exits.]

[A horn blows and shouts sound offstage. LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA, wake up suddenly.]

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

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all kneel.]

LYSANDER

Forgive us, my lord.

THESEUS

Please, all of you, stand up.

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA 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. They were going to run away, Demetrius, 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, 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. In the temple, later on, 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

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

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

DEMETRIUS

Everything that happened seems distant and difficult to tell apart, like far-off mountains may actually be clouds.

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) Call me when my cue comes, and I will say my line. My next cue is “Most handsome Pyramus.” Hey there! Peter Quince? Flute the bellows-repairman? Snout the repairman? Starveling? God save me, have they all run off and left me sleeping here? I had such a dream—a dream that is beyond the abilities of men to describe. Any man who tried to explain this dream would be an ass. I thought I was—no man can say what I thought I was. I thought I was... I thought I had—but any man who tried to explain what I thought I had would be a fool. Not one man's eye has ever heard, not one man's ear has ever seen, not one man's hand has ever tasted, nor tongue understood, nor heart explained what my dream was like. I'll get Peter Quince to write a ballad about this dream. It will be called “Bottom's Dream” because it's so deep that it has no bottom. And I'll sing it for the duke in the intermission of the play. Or perhaps, to make it even more elegant, I'll sing it when Thisbe dies.

[BOTTOM exits.]

Act 4, Scene 2

[QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING enter.]

QUINCE

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

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. Other than he, there's not another man in all of Athens who can play Pyramus.

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

Yes, 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. *(editor's note: a "paramour" is a mistress to a married man.)*

[SNUG enters.]

SNUG

Sirs, 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.

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 sixpence 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

Sirs, 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

No, you won't get a word from me. All I'll tell you is that the duke has finished dinner. Go get your costumes, and strings to attach your false beards, and new ribbons for your shoes. Then meet up right away at the palace. All of you, study your lines again. To get to the point: our play has been chosen to be performed in front of the duke. So, make sure Thisbe has on clean underwear. And don't let the one of you who is playing the lion cut his nails, because he needs them

to stick out to look like lion's claws. And, my beloved actors, don't eat any onions or garlic, because we must speak with sweet-smelling breath. If we do all this, I have no doubt that they will say, "it's a sweet comedy." No more talking. Let's go, let's go!

[All exit.]

Act 5, Scene 1

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

HIPPOLYTA

What these lovers are describing is strange, my Theseus.

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 one's 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 those that are heavenly, and take the unreal things that tumble out of their imagination and writes about them as if they were actual places or things. People who have such strong imaginations, when they feel some kind of joy, then imagine 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 they are telling of 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.

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

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.

LYSANDER

May more joy even than you wish to 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 the three hours of time between dinner and bedtime? Where is our manager of fun? What entertainments do we have ready? Isn't there a play for us to watch to ease the torture of an empty hour? Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE

I'm here, Theseus.

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, 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 strange snow. What will we think of this play which claims to be such contradictory things?

PHILOSTRATE

It is a play, my lord, 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 will enjoy their efforts to please you despite 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 your betters. Go, bring them in. And find your seats, ladies.

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

HIPPOLYTA

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

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 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 finished by suddenly breaking off without having finished or 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, love and tongue-tied simplicity say the most precisely by saying the least.

[PHILOSTRATE enters.]

PHILOSTRATE

May 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. To show off our small skill in acting, will lead to us getting executed. Understand, then, that we come in a spirit of ill will. We don't come here with the purpose of making you happy. For your complete delight, we did not come. You should regret that the actors are ready. By watching their show, you'll find out everything you're likely to know.

(Editor's note: Quince completely alters the meaning of this speech by speaking it with the punctuation in the wrong places. Had he spoken it with the punctuation in the right places, it would read like this: If we offend, it is our intention that you know we did not come here to offend. But it is our intention to show you our small acting skills. That is the true purpose for our coming. Understand, then, that we come, but not in a spirit of ill will. Our purpose is to make you happy. Our true goal is to bring you complete delight. We are not here so that later you will regret this. The actors are

ready, and by watching their play you'll understand everything.)

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 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 flirt and 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. At that, he raised his sword, his bloodthirsty responsible blade, and bravely stabbed his the hot blood in his 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 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.

[PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.]

WALL

At this moment of the play I, Snout, play a wall. A wall, I want you to know, that 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.

THESEUS

Would you ever hope to hear plaster speak more eloquently?

DEMETRIUS

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

[PYRAMUS enters.]

THESEUS

Pyramus is approaching the wall. Be quiet!

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 Zeus 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!

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, I'm still faithful to you. *(editor's note: the correct reference is to the Greek hero Leander. There is no Limander.)*

THISBE

And I'll be as faithful as Helen of Troy, until the day I'm destined to die. *(editor's note: the correct reference is to the Greek heroine Hero, who was Leander's faithful lover. Helen of Troy was notoriously unfaithful.)*

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

I'm as faithful to you as Shafalus was to Procrus. *(editor's note: correct reference is to Cephalus and Procris, who were also famous lovers in Greek myth.)*

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.

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 and MOONSHINE enter.]

LION

You ladies, who fear in your gentle hearts 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.

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 more sly like a fox than courageous.

THESEUS

True. And he's like a goose in the way he is careful with what he says. *(editor's note: in other words, he's not careful at all in what he says.)*

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. No 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. *(editor's note: the "horned moon" is the crescent moon.)*

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head. *(editor's note: horns on the head indicate a man whose wife has been unfaithful to him.)*

THESEUS

He's not shaped like crescent, 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

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 dares not go in there because of the candle. Because, you see, it 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) Oh!

[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 love! Your beautiful cloak, what, 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 was died while you were watching it.

HIPPOLYTA

Curse my heart, but I feel sorry this man.

PYRAMUS

Oh why, Mother Nature, did you create lions? A dreadful lion has deflowered my darling (*editor's note: Bottom means to say "devoured," not deflowered*), 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. (*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.

[MOONSHINE exits.]

Now die, die, die, die, die. (*dies*)

DEMETRIUS

This guy is just a single face of a die—the one, because he's a true original. (*editor's note: Demetrius is using "die" to mean the singular of "dice," as in dice for gaming*)

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 it 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'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 lips as white as a lily, nose red as a cherry, cheeks yellow as a

marigold 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. (*stabs herself*) Goodbye, friends! This is how Thisbe dies. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. (*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 leave off on your epilogue.

[The actors dance. 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.

[They all exit.]

[ROBIN enters.]

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, the goddess of the night, following darkness like a dream—are merry. 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.

[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 and TITANIA and the FAIRIES sing and dance.]

OBERON

Now, until the dawn, each fairy wander through this house. Titania and I will go to the bless royal marriage bed, so that the children conceived in it bed 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 harelips, or scars, or abnormal birthmarks, all of which will cause upset if a baby is born with it. Every fairy 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.

[All exit except for ROBIN.]

ROBIN

If we actors have offended you, just think of it like this and all will be fixed—you've been sleeping here when these visions appeared. And this silly little tail, was just the product of a dream. Ladies and gentlemen, do not scold. If you forgive us, we'll make it right. And, since I'm an honest Puck, I swear that if we have the undeserved luck to not get hissed at, we'll make it up to you soon. Otherwise, you can call me a liar. So good night to you all. Give me applause if we are friends, and Robin will make it up to you in the future.

[He exits.]

Just the Original Play

Act 1, Scene 1

[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.
Turn melancholy forth to funerals.
(15) The pale companion is not for our pomp.

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

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

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

EGEUS

(20) Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke.

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
(25) This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander. And my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love tokens with my child.

(30) Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers
(35) Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace

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

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid:

To you your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
(50) By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

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

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

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

THESEUS

(65) Either to die the death or to abjure
Forever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires.
Know of your youth. Examine well your blood—
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
(70) You can endure the livery of a nun,

For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessèd they that master so their blood
(75) To undergo such maiden pilgrimage.
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

HERMIA

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

THESEUS

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

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

EGEUS

(95) Scornful Lysander, true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her

I do estate unto Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

With duty and desire we follow you.

[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

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffèd in respect of years—

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends—

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
(145) Brief as the lightning in the collied night;
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and Earth,

And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.
So quick bright things come to confusion.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
(170) By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,
(175) By all the vows that ever men have broke

(In number more than ever women spoke),
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

[HELENA enters.]

HERMIA

(180) Godspeed, fair Helena! Whither away?

HELENA

Call you me “fair”? That “fair” again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!
Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue’s sweet air
More tunable than lark to shepherd’s ear
(185) When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching. Oh, were favor so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go.
My ear should catch your voice. My eye, your eye.
My tongue should catch your tongue’s sweet melody.
(190) Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I’d give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius’ heart.

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA

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

HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

Oh, that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

Take comfort. He no more shall see my face.

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see

(205) Seemed Athens as a paradise to me.

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

That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.

Tomorrow night when Phoebe doth behold

(210) Her silver visage in the watery glass,

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass

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

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

HERMIA

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

(215) Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my Lysander and myself shall meet.

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes

(220) To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow. Pray thou for us.

And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!

Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia.

[HERMIA exits.]

Helena, adieu.

(225) As you on him, Demetrius dote on you!

[LYSANDER exits.]

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!

Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.

He will not know what all but he do know.

(230) And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind.

(235) And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste—

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.

And therefore is Love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.

(240) As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.

For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,

He hailed down oaths that he was only mine.

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

(245) So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.

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

Then to the wood will he tomorrow night

Pursue her. And for this intelligence

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
(250) But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

[Helena exits.]

Act 1, Scene 2

[QUINCE the carpenter, SNUG the cabinetmaker; BOTTOM the weaver, FLUTE the bellows-repairman, SNOUT the repairman; 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

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

The raging rocks

And shivering shocks

Shall break the locks

Of prison gates .

And Phoebus' car

Shall shine from far

And make and mar

The foolish Fates .

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

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

FLUTE

(15) Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor?

STARVELING

(25) Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

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

SNUG

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

Why, what you will.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

At the duke's oak we meet.

BOTTOM

Enough. Hold, or cut bowstrings.

[They all exit.]

Act 2, Scene 1

[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,
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.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
(45) When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
(50) And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me.
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And “Tailor!” cries, and falls into a cough,
(55) 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

And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

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

OBERON

(60) Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

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

OBERON

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
(75) 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 ravishèd?
And make him with fair Ægles break his faith,
(80) With Ariadne and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy.
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
(85) To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
(90) Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
(95) The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
(100) The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
(105) And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
(110) Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,

The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
(115) From our debate, from our dissension.
We are their parents and original.

OBERON

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

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest.
The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order,
And in the spicèd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
(125) And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
(130) Following—her womb then rich with my young squire

—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.
(135) And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

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

OBERON

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[TITANIA and her followers exit.]

OBERON

(145) Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury. (*to ROBIN GOODFELLOW*)
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
(150) Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid's music?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
(155) Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
(160) 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.
(165) 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
(170) Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

I'll put a girdle round about the Earth
(175) In forty minutes.

[ROBIN exits.]

OBERON

Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon—
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
(180) 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—
I'll make her render up her page to me.
(185) But who comes here? I am invisible.
And I will overhear their conference.

[DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.]

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.

(240) We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

[DEMETRIUS exits.]

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

[HELENA exits.]

OBERON

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

[ROBIN enters.]

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.

OBERON

I pray thee, give it me.

(takes flower from ROBIN)

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
(250) Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
(255) Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
(gives ROBIN some of the flower)
(260) Take thou some of it and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes.

But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
(265) By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

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

[They all exit, in opposite directions.]

Act 2, Scene 2

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

TITANIA

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

[The FAIRIES sing.]

FIRST FAIRY

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

FAIRIES

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

FIRST FAIRY

(sings) Weaving spiders, come not here.
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!

Beetles black, approach not near.
(20) Worm nor snail, do no offense.

FAIRIES

(sings) Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby.
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby.
Never harm
(25) Nor spell nor charm
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.

[The FAIRIES exit.]

[OBERON enters.]

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.

[OBERON exits.]

[LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.]

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.

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

[ROBIN exits.]

[DEMETRIUS and HELENA enter, running.]

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

Stay, on thy peril. I alone will go.

[DEMETRIUS exits.]

HELENA

(90) Oh, I am out of breath in this fond chase.
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,
For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears.

(95) If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear,
For beasts that meet me run away for fear.
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

(100) What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?
(sees *LYSANDER*) But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?
Dead or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

(105) Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

(110) 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.
(115) 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.
(120) Things growing are not ripe until their season.
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
(125) Love's stories written in love's richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
(130) 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.
(135) 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
(140) 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.
(145) And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honor Helen and to be her knight.

[LYSANDER exits.]

HERMIA

(*waking*) 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.
(150) Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
Lysander! What, removed? Lysander, lord!
What, out of hearing, gone? No sound, no word?
(155) Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear.
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No? Then I well perceive you all not nigh.
Either death or you I'll find immediately.

[HERMIA exits.]

Act 3, Scene 1

[While TITANIA sleeps onstage, the clowns enter: BOTTOM, QUINCE, FLUTE, SNUG, SNOUT, and STARVELING.]

BOTTOM

Are we all met?

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

Peter Quince.

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

STARVELING

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

BOTTOM

Not a whit. I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed.

And for the more better assurance, tell them that I,
Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will
put them out of fear.

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

STARVELING

I fear it, I promise you.

BOTTOM

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

SNOUT

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

[ROBIN enters, unseen by anyone onstage.]

ROBIN

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

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus. Thisbe, stand forth.

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

"Odors," "odors."

BOTTOM

(*as PYRAMUS*)
—odors savors sweet,
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
But hark, a voice! Stay thou but here awhile,
(35) And by and by I will to thee appear.

[BOTTOM exits.]

ROBIN

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

[ROBIN exits.]

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

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

FLUTE

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

[BOTTOM enters, with an ass's (i.e. a donkey's) head instead of his own. ROBIN also enters.]

BOTTOM

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

QUINCE

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

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

ROBIN

I'll follow you. I'll lead you about a round

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

[ROBIN exits.]

BOTTOM

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

[SNOUT enters.]

SNOUT

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

BOTTOM

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

[SNOUT exits.]

[QUINCE enters.]

QUINCE

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.

(sings)

The ouzel cock, so black of hue

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill—

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

(sings)

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

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

TITANIA

(65) I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
Mine ear is much enamored of thy note.
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape.
And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go.

Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
(75) I am a spirit of no common rate.
The summer still doth tend upon my state.
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
(80) And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep.
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
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

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

And I.

ALL

(85) Where shall we go?

TITANIA

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes.
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
(90) The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glowworms' eyes
To have my love to bed and to arise.

And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
(95) To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail, mortal.

COBWEB

Hail.

MOTH

Hail.

MUSTARDSEED

Hail.

BOTTOM

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

COBWEB

Cobweb.

BOTTOM

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

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

BOTTOM

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

MUSTARDSEED

(105) Mustardseed.

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

[They all exit.]

Act 3, Scene 2

[OBERON, the Fairy King, 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. How now, mad spirit?
(5) What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

ROBIN

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

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

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

[DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.]

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

(45) Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse.
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,

And kill me too.

(50) The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole Earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the center creep and so displease
(55) Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.
(75) I am not guilty of Lysander's blood.

Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more.

(80) And from thy hated presence part I so.

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

[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

(85) For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe,

Which now in some slight measure it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

(lies down and sleeps)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite,

(90) And laid the love juice on some true love's sight.

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue

Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o'errules that, one man holding troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

(95) About the wood go swifter than the wind,

And Helena of Athens look thou find—

All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,

With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
(100) I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

ROBIN

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

[ROBIN exits.]

OBERON

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

[ROBIN enters.]

ROBIN

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

OBERON

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

ROBIN

(120) Then will two at once woo one.
That must needs be sport alone.

And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

[LYSANDER and HELENA enter.]

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

(130) You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
(135) Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS

(*waking*) O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
(140) To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. Oh, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
(145) When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss

This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

(170) Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

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

(175) There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

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

[HERMIA enters.]

HERMIA

(180) Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes.
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found.
(185) Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

(195) Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
(200) To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—oh, is it all forgot?
(205) All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
(210) As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry—seeming parted
But yet an union in partition—
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
(215) So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crownèd with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
(220) It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

(225) Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?

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

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

(240) Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up—
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
(245) You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

(250) Oh, excellent!

HERMIA

(to *LYSANDER*)

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

(260) Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

[HERMIA holds LYSANDER back.]

LYSANDER

(to HERMIA) Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS

No, no. He'll
Seem to break loose. Take on as you would follow,
(265) But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

(270) Out, loathèd medicine! O hated potion, hence!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

I would I had your bond, for I perceive

A weak bond holds you. I'll not trust your word.

LYSANDER

(275) 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?

(280) I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.

Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,

(285) And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.

Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest

That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me! (*to HELENA*) You juggler! You canker-blossom!
(290) 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
(295) Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

“Lower”? Hark, again!

HELENA

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

(to *HERMIA*) Get you gone, you dwarf,
(340) You minimus of hindering knotgrass made,
You bead, you acorn!

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

[DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.]

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

[HELENA exits.]

HERMIA

(355) I am amazed and know not what to say.

[HERMIA exits.]

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

OBERON

(365) Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight.
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night.
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
(370) As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
(375) Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
(*gives ROBIN another flower*)
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property
(380) To take from thence all error with his might

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

ROBIN

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

OBERON

(400) But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And like a forester the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,
(405) 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.

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)

(410) Here, villain. Drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then
To plainer ground.

[LYSANDER exits.]

[DEMETRIUS enters.]

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, speak again!

(415) Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?

Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER) Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,

(420) And wilt not come? Come, recreant. Come, thou child!
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER)

Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

[They exit.]

[LYSANDER enters.]

LYSANDER

He goes before me and still dares me on.

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

The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.

I followed fast, but faster he did fly,

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me.

(lies down)

(430) Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

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

(435) 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

If ever I thy face by daylight see.
(440) 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,
(445) That I may back to Athens by daylight
From these that my poor company detest.
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
(lies down and sleeps)

ROBIN

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

[HERMIA enters.]

HERMIA

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

ROBIN

(460) On the ground

Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye.
Gentle lover, remedy.
(squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER 's eyes)
(465) When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye.
(470) 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.
(475) The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be
well.

[ROBIN exits.]

Act 4, Scene 1

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA continue to sleep onstage. TITANIA enters with BOTTOM, who still has a donkey's head, as do 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

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

[COBWEB exits.]

(10) 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

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

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

BOTTOM

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

TITANIA

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

[The FAIRIES exit.]

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

[BOTTOM and TITANIA fall asleep.]

[ROBIN enters.]

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?

(30) Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favors from this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
(35) With a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers,
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
(40) When I had at my pleasure taunted her
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child,
Which straight she gave me and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.

(45) And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That, he awaking when the other do,
(50) May all to Athens back again repair
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

[OBERON squeezes the juice from the second flower, which
cures the effects of love juice, into TITANIA's eyes.]

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

TITANIA

(*waking*) My Oberon, what visions have I seen!
(60) Methought I was enamored of an ass.

OBERON

There lies your love.

TITANIA

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

OBERON

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

TITANIA

Music, ho! Music such as charmeth sleep!

[Music plays.]

ROBIN

(taking the ass's head off BOTTOM)

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

OBERON

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

(70) And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

(dances with TITANIA)

Now thou and I are new in amity,

And will tomorrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

(75) And bless it to all fair prosperity.

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

ROBIN

Fairy King, attend, and mark.

I do hear the morning lark.

OBERON

(80) Then, my queen, in silence sad,

Trip we after the night's shade.

We the globe can compass soon

Swifter than the wandering moon.

TITANIA

Come, my lord, and in our flight

(85) Tell me how it came this night

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground.

[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.

(90) And since we have the vaward of the day,

My love shall hear the music of my hounds.

Uncouple in the western valley. Let them go.

Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.

[One of the servants exits.]

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

(95) And mark the musical confusion

Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

HIPPOLYTA

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,

When in a wood of Crete they bayed the bear

With hounds of Sparta. Never did I hear

(100) Such gallant chiding. For, besides the groves,

The skies, the fountains, every region near

Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard

So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THESEUS

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,

(105) So flewed, so sanded, and their heads are hung

With ears that sweep away the morning dew,

Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls,

Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,

Each under each. A cry more tunable

(110) Was never hollaed to, nor cheered with horn,

In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.

Judge when you hear.

But, soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS

My lord, this is my daughter here asleep.

(115) And this, Lysander. This Demetrius is.
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena.
I wonder of their being here together.

THESEUS

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

EGEUS

It is, my lord.

THESEUS

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[One of the servants exits.]

[A horn blows and shouts sound offstage. LYSANDER,
DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA, wake up suddenly.]

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

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA all kneel.]

LYSANDER

Pardon, my lord.

THESEUS

I pray you all, stand up.

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

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I know you two are rival enemies.

(130) How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy

To sleep by hate and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER

My lord, I shall reply amazèdly,
Half sleep, half waking. But as yet, I swear,
(135) 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—
I came with Hermia hither. Our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
(140) Without the peril of the Athenian law—

EGEUS

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

DEMETRIUS

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

Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

THESEUS

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
(165) Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will.
For in the temple by and by with us
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
(170) Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

Yea, and my father.

HELENA

And Hippolyta.

LYSANDER

And he did bid us follow to the temple.

DEMETRIUS

Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him
(185) And by the way let us recount our dreams.

[LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA exit.]

BOTTOM

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

[BOTTOM exits.]

Act 4, Scene 2

[QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING enter.]

QUINCE

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

STARVELING

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

FLUTE

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

QUINCE

It is not possible. You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

FLUTE

(5) No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

QUINCE

Yea, and the best person too. And he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

FLUTE

You must say "paragon." A "paramour" is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

[SNUG enters.]

SNUG

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

FLUTE

(10) 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

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

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

[All exit.]

Act 5, Scene 1

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

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.

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

THESEUS

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

LYSANDER

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

THESEUS

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

PHILOSTRATE

Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS

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

PHILOSTRATE

(giving THESEUS a paper)

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."

(45) We'll none of that. That have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

"The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
(50) Of learning, late deceased in beggary."

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe. Very tragical mirth."

"Merry" and "tragical"? "Tedious" and "brief"?
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE

(55) A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play.

But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious. For in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

(60) And tragical, my noble lord, it is.
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.

Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water—but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS

(65) What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

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

THESEUS

(70) And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE

No, my noble lord.

It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world—
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain
(75) To do you service.

THESEUS

I will hear that play.
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in. And take your places, ladies.

[PHILOSTRATE exits.]

HIPPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged
(80) And duty in his service perishing.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

He says they can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake,
(85) And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect

Takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes,
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
(90) Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practiced accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome,
(95) And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most, to my capacity.

[PHILOSTRATE enters.]

PHILOSTRATE

(100) 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.
That you should think we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
(105) That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to contest you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
(110) The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

THESEUS

This fellow doth not stand upon points.

LYSANDER

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

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

(115) His speech was like a tangled chain. Nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

[BOTTOM enters as PYRAMUS, FLUTE as THISBE, SNOUT as WALL, STARVELING as MOONSHINE, and SNUG as LION.]

PROLOGUE

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

This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.

(120) This man, with lime and roughcast, doth present
Wall, that vile wall which did these lovers sunder.

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

(125) Presenteth Moonshine. For, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb—there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which "Lion" hight by name,
The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

(130) Did scare away, or rather did affright.

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain.
(135) Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
(140) 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.

[PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE exit.]

WALL

In this same interlude it doth befall
(145) 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.
(150) This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall. The truth is so.
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

THESEUS

Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

DEMETRIUS

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

[PYRAMUS enters.]

THESEUS

Pyramus draws near the wall. Silence!

PYRAMUS

O grim-looking night! O night with hue so black!

O night, which ever art when day is not!

(160) 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,

(165) 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!

(170) Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS

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

BOTTOM

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

[THISBE enters.]

THISBE

O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,

For parting my fair Pyramus and me!

My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,

(180) Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

My love thou art, my love, I think.

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

PYRAMUS

Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

THISBE

As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

PYRAMUS

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

THISBE

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

PYRAMUS

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

THISBE

Tide life, tide death, I come without delay.

[PYRAMUS and THISBE exit.]

WALL

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

[WALL exits.]

THESEUS

(195) Now is the moon down between the two neighbors.

DEMETRIUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS

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

HIPPOLYTA

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

THESEUS

(200) 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 and MOONSHINE enter.]

LION

You, ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
(205) 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
(210) Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

THESEUS

A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

This lion is a very fox for his valor.

THESEUS

(215) True. And a goose for his discretion.

DEMETRIUS

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

THESEUS

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

MOONSHINE

This lanthorn doth the hornèd moon present—

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn the horns on his head.

THESEUS

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

MOONSHINE

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

THESEUS

This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the “man i' th' moon”?

DEMETRIUS

He dares not come there for the candle. For you see, it is already in snuff.

HIPPOLYTA

(225) I am weary of this moon. Would he would change!

THESEUS

It appears by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane. But yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

LYSANDER

Proceed, Moon.

MOONSHINE

All that I have to say is to tell you that the lantern is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thornbush, my thornbush; and this dog, my dog.

DEMETRIUS

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

[THISBE enters.]

THISBE

(230) 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

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

(235) And then came Pyramus.

[LION exits.]

LYSANDER

And so the lion vanished.

PYRAMUS

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright.

For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,

(240) I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

(245) How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What, stained with blood?

Approach, ye Furies fell!

(250) O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum.

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

THESEUS

This passion and the death of a dear friend would go near to
make a man look sad.

HIPPOLYTA

Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

PYRAMUS

(255) O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer.
Come, tears, confound!

(260) Out, sword, and wound!
The pap of Pyramus—
Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop. (*stabs himself*)
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

(265) Now am I dead.
Now am I fled.
My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light.
Moon, take thy flight.

[MOONSHINE exits.]

(270) Now die, die, die, die, die.
(*dies*)

DEMETRIUS

No die, but an ace for him, for he is but one.

LYSANDER

Less than an ace, man. For he is dead. He is nothing.

THESEUS

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and prove
an ass.

HIPPOLYTA

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

THESEUS

(275) 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. I hope she will be brief.

DEMETRIUS

A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better. He for a man, God warrant us, she for a woman, God bless us.

LYSANDER

She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

DEMETRIUS

(280) And thus she means, *videlicet* —

THISBE

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
(285) Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks
(290) Are gone, are gone.
Lovers, make moan.
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters three,
Come, come to me
(295) With hands as pale as milk.

Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word.
(300) Come, trusty sword.
Come, blade, my breast imbrue. (*stabs herself*)
And, farewell, friends.
Thus Thisbe ends.
Adieu, adieu, adieu.
(*dies*)

THESEUS

(305) 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 epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse—for when the players are all dead, there needs none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy. And so it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask. Let your epilogue alone.

[The actors dance. BOTTOM and FLUTE exit.]

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.
Lovers, to bed. 'Tis almost fairy time.
I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatched.
This palpable-gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels and new jollity.

[They all exit.]

[ROBIN enters.]

ROBIN

(310) Now the hungry lion roars
And the wolf howls the moon,
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
(315) Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
(320) Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the churchway paths to glide.
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team
From the presence of the sun,
(325) Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic. Not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallowed house.
I am sent with broom before
To sweep the dust behind the door.

[OBERON and TITANIA enter with all their servants and
followers.]

OBERON

(330) Through the house give glimmering light,

By the dead and drowsy fire.
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier.
And this ditty, after me,
(335) Sing and dance it trippingly.

TITANIA

First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note.
Hand in hand with fairy grace
Will we sing and bless this place.

[OBERON and TITANIA and the FAIRIES sing and dance.]

OBERON

(340) Now until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride bed will we,
Which by us shall blessèd be.
And the issue there create
(345) Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be.
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand.
(350) Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despisèd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field dew consecrate,
(355) Every fairy take his gait.
And each several chamber bless
Through this palace with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blessed
Ever shall in safety rest.
(360) Trip away. Make no stay.

Meet me all by break of day.

[All exit except for ROBIN.]

ROBIN

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—
That you have but slumbered here
(365) While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
(370) And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long.
Else the Puck a liar call.
(375) So good night unto you all.
Give me your hands if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

[He exits.]